

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 18

by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan

A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 18, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

77 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 18
1. 1964-1965: The Editor's Column
2. The Altar at Bethel
3. The Apostle Paul at Home
4. The Approaching Age of the Lawless One: the Editor's Column
5. Babylon
6. The Bible: Poetry
7. Broken Glimpses
8. Caleb the Son of Jephunneh
9. Children of Light
10. Christ - God's Power - God's Rest
11. Christ Our Object
12. Christ Our Object: Part 2
13. Christ Pleased Not Himself
14. Christ's Perfect Humanity
15. The Circle of the Church's Affections
16. Lectures on Colossians
17. Comparison Between Two Verses: John 5:31 and 8:14
18. Confidence in God
19. Contentment
20. Contrast Between Israel and the Church
21. David's Life Exemplifies True Meekness and Humility
22. Divine Love
23. Lessons From Elijah
24. The Eye on Christ, Not on Events
25. The Final Word
26. The First Fruits
27. Floods in the N.W. Pacific - Millenium: the Editor's Column
28. God's Sufficiency Learned: Dicipline
29. An Honest and Good Heart
30. The Hope Set Before Us
31. The House of Dates
32. In Storm and Calm: Mark 4:35-41
33. Jacob at Peniel
34. Jesus: the Author and Finisher of Faith
35. Thoughts on John 10, 11, and 12
36. Some Thoughts on John 17
37. John Baptist's Head in a Charger
38. John of the Book of Revelation

39. Some Thoughts on John's Gospel
40. The Judgment Seat of Christ
41. Expository Jotting on Laodicea
42. The Lord's Supper
43. A Merciful and Faithful High Priest: Hebrews 2
44. A Misnomer - Festival of Faith: the Editor's Column
45. Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman
46. The Night Watches in Scripture
47. Songs of Degrees
48. Politico - Religious Controversy in Italy: the Editor's Column
49. Pope's Visit to Bombay - Eucharistic Con.: the Editor's Column
50. Proverbs 3:5
51. The Proverbs
52. The Proverbs: Chapter 6:27-7:23
53. The Proverbs: Chapter 7:24-8:21
54. The Proverbs: Chapter 8:22-9:6
55. A Refutation of an Attack on the Bible: the Editor's Column
56. Lessons From the Life of Samson
57. Savor of Christ in a Busy Life
58. The Secret of Life
59. Self-Judgment
60. The Servant of God in a Day of Failure: 2 Timothy
61. Sifted As Wheat
62. So Let Him Eat
63. The Speculations of Men of Science
64. Spikenard
65. Strange Fire and the Fire From Heaven
66. Strength Made Perfect in Weakness
67. A True Heart and Its Contrast
68. Unholy Alliance: the Editor's Column
69. The Ways of Grace and of Faith: the Book of Ruth
70. What Is It to Follow Christ?
71. Woman
72. A Woman of Worth
73. The World and the Love of God
74. World Conditions Worsening: the Editor's Column
75. The World's Esteem
76. Zaphnath-Paaneah

Christian Truth Volume 18

1964-1965: The Editor's Column

1964 was an eventful year, beset with sorrow and strife in many places. People who were not touched by conflicts thought of it as a year of peace; but there were sixteen different places on earth where fighting was in progress and blood was being shed. These were mostly undeclared wars and were called "brush conflicts," "peace-keeping missions," "tribal conflicts," "civil war," "local uprisings," etc. Nevertheless, all these incidents indicate the tragic reality of the world's rejection of the "Prince of Peace," and prove that "the way of peace have they not known."

1965 comes in with the world ill at ease, for many disturbing factors abound. The whole continent of Africa is teeming with unrest; and the vast population is being agitated, often by foreign troublemakers, and troubles are sure to increase. During the past year, numbers of missionaries who sought to tell those people of the love of God were brutally murdered. It seems as though the enemy of Christ has sown the doctrine among the populace, that the preachers of the gospel are relics of a colonialism which must be eradicated. Thus, he is having his sway over the passions of men in a strong effort to force the gospel out of the continent. If men will not have the truth, God will allow them to have a lie by which they will further degrade themselves. In the recent blind hatred of the gospel, men and women who were invaluable as physicians and nurses were killed or shamefully treated, and that to the detriment of the local people.

In looking over the map in view of the new year, the outlook is anything but bright. Asia is still in foment, and wars are almost sure to increase rather than decrease. Europe has many uncertain factors on the horizon besides financial and economic problems. Personal ambitions dot the world scene; and little dictators here and there add to the uncertainty. South and Central America pose problems that could affect world tranquility seriously. And in North America, the United States through its far-flung treaties and commitments is caught in world unrest on all continents.

Where then is the true Christian to look in a troubled world, and in a world fraught with many explosive situations? His peace deepens on his looking upward beyond the scene of strife and turmoil, for his God whom he knows as his Father is above all the unrest. We need to remember (as another has said) that events do not affect God's throne, nor stay His hand. We belong to the One who is above all circumstances of earth, and who works all things according to the counsel of His own will. The poet Cowper well said,

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,

And scan His work in vain;

God is His own interpreter,

And He will make it plain."

We can safely rest in His love and His care. Circumstances cannot affect our peace if we rest in Him whom nothing disturbs.

1964 brought changes in world governments, and 1965 is bound to bring more of the same; but not one thing will happen without God's overruling power and design. Floods, fire, and windstorms brought death and destruction in different places. By these things God would bring man to a realization that he has to do with Him. But modernists in the professing church are bold enough now to challenge the truth of a God who is supreme and overrules all things. Shocking and daring unbelief and atheism now plague Christendom. We marvel at the longsuffering grace of God that allows the world that cast His Son out of it, and even now rejects Himself, to go on with unbridled lips of defiance any longer. They mistake His forbearance for either indifference or incapacity to judge; but judgment is sure and certain.

Fellow-Christians, may we have grace to sing with the poet:

"O think not of this world of woe,

Though subject still to grief;

But seek your portion there to know,

For this will give relief.

"Aye, trust, forever trust in God

For every promise given,

And dwell with Him, thro' Jesus' blood,

Within the veil of heaven."

1965 is that much closer to the coming of the Lord to claim His own than 1964 was; His coming is imminent. It is the blessed hope of the Christian and may be realized before the year's end. We would desire that the hope of seeing Him who gave Himself for us may cheer our hearts and keep us in lively anticipation of the coming nuptial moment when Christ will call His bride-the true Church, composed of all who accept Him as their only Savior-to Himself. Then He will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

It is better that the hope of seeing Him should draw our hearts out of this world, than that they should be driven out by adverse circumstances. If the knowledge of His love fails to draw our hearts away, the Lord may see it necessary to drive them out. The language of the former is found in the words of a hymn, " 'Tis the treasure we've found in His love that has made us now pilgrims below."

"O worldly pomp and glory,

Your charms are spread in vain!

I've heard a sweeter story;

I've found a truer gain.

Where Christ a place prepareth,

There is my loved abode;

There shall I gaze on Jesus;

There shall I dwell with God."

When the Apostle Paul stood before the Roman governor Felix, he reasoned with him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"; and at that "Felix trembled." O that some modern theologians would imitate the conduct of Felix on this occasion! But it is far otherwise with many today who are apostates from the faith of Christianity. In the November 1, 1964 issue of The United Church Observer, published by the United Church of Canada, a prominent churchman, Dr. George W. Goth, set forth what amounts to bold atheism. He attacked faith in Christ and all that we hold dear as having come by revelation from God to us. We read in Hebrews 1 that "God... hath... spoken unto us." What great grace that He should do so, for He was under no obligation to do it. But now that He has spoken, man is under obligation to hear what He has said.

The infidel preacher denies that salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. He would allow that Moslems, Jews, humanists, agnostics, and a host of others will attain heaven. But God says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. To reject that statement and set up some other way to salvation is to make God a liar. Surely that man will not go unpunished for controverting the plain word of Him who cannot lie.

The noted preacher also says, "I do not believe in some illusory second coming of Christ." Is not this the language of the scoffers described by the Apostle Peter?-"There shall come in the last days scoffers... saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" God's word spoken by Peter also says that the "heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment." And again, "The earth... and the works that are therein shall be burned up"; but Dr. Goth says, "I cannot believe that the creator plans to destroy the good earth and the whole temple of man's achievement in history." Has he never read how that God once destroyed the temple of man's achievement in history at the flood? Has he not known of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Nineveh, of Babylon, and of many other civilizations and their works? The man must be spiritually blind who does not see "reserved unto fire" written on all man's enterprises. Judgment is on its way, and man's devices cannot delay it when God's time has come. "God is not mocked."

We might then ask, What does Dr. Goth envision for this world of man's achievement? He says that he believes in "the kingdom of God on earth." Does he then imagine that God will tolerate men and women in His kingdom who challenge His rights and power? He also says since he is looking for that kingdom of God on earth, that he is "not persuaded that this would be a better place if we were to achieve the kind of salvation that these people [those who preach the gospel of God] offer." Is that salvation purchased by God at the cost of the death of His Son esteemed by a so-called minister of the gospel as of so little worth that it can be despised with impunity? He must utterly reject God's word which says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

May the increasing numbers of those who are deceived and are deceiving others only indicate to us the sureness of the Lord's coming at any moment (2 Tim. 3:13).

These "false apostles" not only reject the true faith, but say that those who preach the firm foundation truths are outside of "the true Christian tradition." The moment is at hand when persecution for Christ's sake may be the lot of those who would bear faithful witness for God.

Rejection of the truth may well lead to persecution of real Christians as it has in other lands. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of" is the word of God to us. We are called upon to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). But "hold fast," dear Christian reader, for very soon "He that shall come will come." We have not long to wait. As wickedness and apostasy increase and abound, look up, for He is coming!

The Altar at Bethel

The inspired commentary on idolatry which we find in Romans 1 gives us to know that it had its source in the corruption of the human mind; the haughtiness of the intellect becomes the parent of it (vv. 22-25). The Apostle tells us also that the "heart of unbelief" (Heb. 3:12) is an "evil" one. And at the opening of this scripture we find that it was the love of the world that erected the idolatrous altar at Bethel. Jeroboam thought it was the only way by which he could secure the kingdom.

He corrupted the religion of the people. He did not in infidel scorn deny it, because he owned that God's people had been brought out of Egypt; but he corrupted it- as a guilty thing - for it was turning it to his own account, or making it serve his own ends.

At the opening of chapter 13 we learn how the Lord deals with this corruption. It is according to His usual method. He sends His servant, under a fresh communication of His mind and a fresh anointing of His Spirit, from the land of Judah to the altar at Bethel, to denounce it and deliver the judgment of God against all who had connected themselves with it, but staying the execution of that judgment until the time of Josiah, the future king of David's house. But He also gives a present pledge of such execution; for the altar was rent at the moment, and the ashes that were upon it were poured out. The judgment here pronounced was executed to the very letter (2 Kings 23), Josiah being prophesied of by name, as was Cyrus afterward (Isa. 44).

This is His common way. He pronounces judgment, but delays the execution, though giving a present pledge of it. The interval is called "His long-suffering"; and we know it is "salvation," a time for quickening and gathering (2 Pet. 3:15). Enoch pronounced the judgment of the ungodly, and we know from God that this judgment is still to be executed; but the flood was as a pledge fulfillment. The Lord pronounced the judgment of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, and we know from the very terms of the sentence that it is still to be executed; but the Roman invasion was a pledge fulfillment of it.

Jeroboam was indignant at the man of God who had pronounced this sentence against his altar, and he stretched out his arm as commanding his servants to lay hold of him. But the hand of God laid hold on Jeroboam, and his outstretched arm became rigid and withered. Then his mind is changed; he repents himself - to be sure he does - he is gracious when pangs come upon him; and he sues the man of God to pray for the restoration of his arm. This is done; and he invites the man of God to come home with him to his palace for refreshment and reward. But in the spirit of Daniel he lets the king know that he may keep his gifts to himself and give his rewards to another. He leaves the scene of God's curse and sets himself on the way back to Judah, having done the business committed to him by "the word of the LORD." The altar and its fruits are left to meet the judgment of God in its season.

Now, however, and from hence to the end, the scene changes. We have no further sight of the man of God and of the king together; but we are to see the man of God in company with an old prophet, who at that time lived in Bethel.

We are exposed to special temptations, if we live on borderlands or in equivocal circumstances and conditions.

The old prophet, saint of God as he was, lived (something in the way of a Lot in Sodom) near the altar. The devil uses him; and with a lie in his mouth, that he was bidden of an angel to do so, he brings the man of God back, from the road that was leading him down to Judah, to eat and drink with him in his house at Bethel.

The man of God was not on the Apostle's elevation or in the Apostle's strength, who could and would stand for the word of the Lord in the face of all pretension or assumption. Paul would pronounce an anathema upon even an angel, if he dared to gainsay that word which he had received from God. He cared not who it was, so to speak, come he from earth, hell, or heaven. He would hold by the Word of God in the face of them all (Gal. 1 and 2), just as he could turn his back upon Jerusalem and rebuke the chief of the apostles, even Peter, and withstand him before all.

But the man of God was not in this vigor of Paul. He surrendered the word which he had received from God to the word (as he judged it to be) of an angel; and he goes back to eat and drink in the place of which the Lord had said to him, "Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there."

And here another divine principle gets a very striking illustration. God is judging according to every man's work (1 Pet. 1:17); that is, He is disciplining His people now. Judgment at the house of God has begun (1 Pet. 4:17). And so it is here. The judgment on Jeroboam and his priests is delayed; the judgment of the man of God shall be immediate. He shall now be judged of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world (or Jeroboam) by-and-by (see 2 Kings 23:17, 18). The word alights upon him - falls in judgment on him, as he sits at the table of the old prophet eating and drinking; for he was eating and drinking judgment to himself. And shortly after, as he resumes his journey home to Judah and is on his way thither, a lion meets and slays him.

How very arresting of our thoughts, and full of solemn meaning, all this is! The judgment of the world is stayed; the discipline of the saints is proceeding. So it is here; yea, and more. There was a personal pledge of the future judgment of the world; and there shall be now a present pledge of the future salvation of the saint. The altar was rent, as we saw, and the ashes poured out; and, so also, the lion is not allowed to touch the carcass of the man of God, or to lay his deadly paw upon the ass that had carried him. His body is reserved for final honor, though his life was a present forfeit to the righteous judgment or holy discipline of God. It would have been the nature of the lion to kill the ass as well as its rider, and to devour the carcass; but he acted as truly under divine commission in the death of the man of God, as the man of God himself had acted when he pronounced judgment on the altar. What varied and instructive illustrations of truth all these things are!

And the old prophet too is to be again before us. There was in him that which was of God, as well as that which was of nature or the flesh. But he was now old, and gray hairs were sadly numerous upon this Ephraim, as Hosea speaks. He had lived carelessly as a saint; he had taken up his dwelling in an unclean place; he was too much like an old professor that needed reviving virtues. Satan uses him (as we have seen, but sad to tell it) to corrupt his younger brother, a freshly anointed vessel of the Spirit. But still he seems to have been a "righteous man," like Lot, though living in a Sodom. His lamentation over the man of God was genuine, and as that of one saint over

another - genuine as the lamentation of David over Jonathan. It was the sorrow of a saint of God; and he charges his sons, when he should die, to bury him in the same sepulcher where he was now religiously laying the remains of him whom he calls his "brother," the man of God.

All this bespeaks the better nature in him. And when the hand of the Lord executes by Josiah the judgment he had now pronounced by the man of God, when the power of his hand comes to make good the declarations of His Spirit, and the day of the world's doom arrives - this Jeroboam-world of which we are speaking - the hand of God respects the old prophet as it does the man of God. Josiah saves the sepulcher of these men, and preserves the bones of each of them from the common penal burning, under which he was putting all others found in that unclean place around the altar at Bethel, as we read so fully and strikingly in 2 Kings 23.

It is thus; and all this reads us a lesson of very various moral instruction. We see the way of God in the judgment of the world, and in the discipline of His saint; we see the danger of living near Sodom; and we learn afresh that God's Word must be clung to in the face of all and everything.

The Apostle Paul at Home

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 seen few, if any, brethren, he at last finds himself approaching Rome (chap. 28:13-15). He had some time before written to the saints there, expressing his desires toward 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
that he might come to the saints at Rome;
to be comforted in them;
to have some fruit among them.

These had been his desires (Rom. 1:10-13), and these are, each and all of them, answered. (See Acts 28:15-24.) He sees them, he takes courage, and, through preaching, gathers fruit there as well as among other Gentiles.

The Approaching Age of the Lawless One: the Editor's Column

The recent Los Angeles riots brought the racial strife into focus. In just a few hours the southern part of the city was a seething caldron. It came about through the arrest of a drunken driver, and the enraged citizens defending the offender. Tempers flared; before long liquor stores were looted, and people were inflamed by alcohol. Things went from bad to worse very quickly, as the spirit of mob violence took over. 36 persons died, and many hundreds were seriously injured. Looting began in earnest. Many blocks were razed by incendiary action; the fire department tried to quell the blazes, but were often hindered from performing their duties. Even ambulances were blocked from getting to the scenes of injured persons.

The next day matters were even worse. Large grocery markets were emptied to the walls, and people took things they really had no need of. Then they put the stores to the torch. The fire department calculated that 1000 fires had been deliberately set, 300 of which became major conflagrations. Automobiles were pillaged, and many were wrecked. Many people procured what are called "Molotov Cocktails," by which they could throw burning liquid on anything flammable. The next night brought with it a complete breakdown of law and order. Many big fires had to be left to burn themselves out, and a heavy pall of smoke hung over the city, which could be seen far out to sea. Never had a breakdown of law and order come so quickly, and with such violence.

We may well note how much lawlessness there is all over the world. 2 Timothy reminds us "that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more [rather] than lovers of God." The very course described by. God is increasing rapidly. The younger generation today are abounding in wickedness, as moral delinquency increases.

One thing that is impressive today is the breakdown of family relationship. For some time the younger generation has been marked by lack of parental authority. Many families are bereft of fathers, and the children are left to shift for themselves. Only the direst consequences will come from these backgrounds. Surely the fear of God is not taught in most homes; and where that is lacking, there is "no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18).

But we should remember that the lawless one is soon to "be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth." The antichrist will soon come, and he will be revealed with all "deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." (2 Thess. 2:8, 10.) Satan will be active with the antichrist, and this world is going to be led on by him. He will first gain the ear of man, and by devious means will deceive many. Many will be led on by him, and apostate Christendom will accept the antichrist. The time of the lawless one is coming apace. This will speed the apostasy which will accelerate the coming of the broad segment of atheism with its rejection of God and acceptance of the Darwinian theory of evolution.

We who are the Lord's are just waiting for His coming, and the marks of the end are prevalent everywhere. We are persuaded that there is nothing to be looked for in this world but certain judgment, but we wait and watch for His coming to take His own out of the world. May He come soon!

Babylon

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17. 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 formed 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 through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." An act may be unholy, though done with a good conscience, because "the truth," and not the conscience, is the rule of holiness.

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense or the religious sense of man approves, how it would 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 might 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 separating 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 and heavenly Christ.

The whole system, 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 on a mission to draw out the Rehabs; but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and capabilities of the

world. The world, as including other thoughts, is also any moral or religious system or undertaking which does not act in company with a rejected and heavenly Christ. Such doings would be unholy, not according to "the truth," however morally conducted or benevolently intentioned.

To glory without going on to "perfection" in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the "perfection" in 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? Revelation 18 gives us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness, as chapter 17 more 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 also had this mark: it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression. So with 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 outwardly ignores 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; Psalm 40). The kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth are 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 desolation of Jerusalem; Christendom externally 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, trading 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 Medo-Persian power is another creature. He removes Babylon, but exalts himself (Dan. 4). 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 worshiped, 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 (that is, of the rejection of Christ).

The Bible: Poetry

"O what a Bible reading have we here,

Not barren theory-musty, dry and drear-

But Christ, the 'altogether lovely,' full in view, Himself the preacher, text and sermon, too."

And thus we learn that if our souls are to be kept healthy, vigorous, and strong; that if our work for God is to be of an enduring character; that if we are to combat successfully the principalities and powers which are arrayed against us and which are determined to resist every advance in the knowledge of God-we must read and meditate upon the Word of God.

"House of treasure ! here I find

Food and medicine for the mind,

Sword to wield against the foe,

Helm and shield to ward his blow,

Garments for the heavenly born,

Gems the spirit to adorn,

Songs of praise in sunny hours,

Dirges when the tempest lowers-

But I need not thus go on

Naming treasures one by one;

Why should I the rest recall?

Christ is here, and Christ is all."

Let me just add, on the other hand, that to the neglect of that Word can be traced joylessness, powerlessness, sin, failure, spiritual disaster. On one of the pages of the Bible belonging to a young friend, these words are written: "This Book will keep me from sin, or sin will keep me from this Book."

The statement is profoundly true. Love for both can no more co-exist than ice under a tropical sun, or darkness with light.

Broken Glimpses

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight." Luke 24:31.

How aptly does this describe what must have been the spiritual experience of most of us or all, at some time. The momentary glimpse caught, so sweet, so brief as to be almost a sorrow in memory, won as it would seem by effort, but which no effort could retain. What is the meaning of this, and what is its remedy? Is it normal for us, the necessity of a life of faith, or the failure of faith, and to be judged as such?

In the case of the two at Emmaus, what held their eyes? Was it divine power for their discipline, or human weakness, or what else?

It is plain they had failed in faith. The Lord's words were a rebuke; His difficulty in yielding to their desire a greater rebuke. These are things which those who know their Lord should have no difficulty in interpreting. The latter we may find again, or what resembles it, in a case which should be familiar to us in the earliest book of the Old Testament. Lot in the gate of Sodom found his angelic visitors slow to yield to an invitation which at Abraham's hands a greater than they had accepted without the smallest hesitation. Here the Lord Himself had stayed behind with Abraham. Sodom could not receive Him save in judgment. Lot's dwelling there kept God out of his dwelling. Was it arbitrary dealing that we read in his case no such words as meet us in the case of the "friend of God" - no appearance of Jehovah to him, no "I am the God of Lot"? As little was it arbitrary dealing when the messengers of judgment had to say, "Nay; but we will abide in the street all night."

And when his importunity had prevailed, and he had put such fare as he had before his guests, and they had sat down, was he accountable or not for the clamor of the men of Sodom at his doors which interrupted them? Did he not abhor the wickedness? Did he not grieve for the interruption? Both, most undoubtedly. Yet Abraham had no men of Sodom to interrupt. Was that to his credit, certainly as it was his gain? Clearly it was the result of being where the men of Sodom had no place. Lot had chosen Sodom, and he must have the conditions attaching to his choice.

What does this tell in our ears? Does it tell nothing? The thoughts that throng in upon us as unbidden, if not as unclean, guests, when we would so gladly have them away-at the Lord's table, at the prayer meeting - hindering communion. Have we any similar responsibility as to these? The effort necessary to obtain what we cannot hold, while other things throng in uncalled, when we do not want them-why are these things so? There is no accident, be assured. There is nothing arbitrary. How often would the Lord be absent from us when He might be present? No; we have lost authority to keep out, what (so licensed) must keep Him out. We have given the key of the house to those who now hold it in defiance of us; we have resigned our authority and lost it. They control us, when we should be controlling them. We have shut Him out, who could control them by the necessity of His holiness.

With Lot there was not even a glimpse of the Lord possible, but it was the fruit of a place where association was not only defiled, but where much rather the choice of such association was in itself defilement. How many thus by these associations, shut out the sunshine from their hearts effectually? It is not only a lesser degree of a similar cause when but a ray now and then struggles with the clouds that again banish it.

Caleb the Son of Jephunneh

It is in connection with the sending of the spies to search out the land of Canaan that the name of Caleb first appears. From the account given by Moses in Deuteronomy 1, it is very clear that this mission was the fruit of the people's unbelief. Commanded to go up and possess the land (compare Deut. 9:23), they came near and said to Moses, "We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come." v. 22. The Lord met the people in their unbelief, and commanded Moses to send the men (Numb. 13:1, 2), not as approving the desire of the people, but as permitting them to carry out their purpose, so that, knowing all the consequences involved, He might use these for their chastisement and instruction. The folly of unbelief was never more manifest. The Lord had guided His people by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and now they will trust to the information the spies may bring as to the way they shall take. After so long an experience of the Lord's faithfulness, they think more of the wisdom of men than of His perfect knowledge. Alas! how often have we fallen into the same snare.

The spies were chosen at the commandment of the Lord, and among them were Caleb for the tribe of Judah, and Joshua the son of Nun for the tribe of Ephraim. For forty days they "searched" the promised land, and brought back with them a cluster of grapes from the brook of Eshcol, together with pomegranates and figs, in token of its fruitfulness. All the congregation was assembled to hear their report. At the commencement they confirmed in every particular the word of Jehovah: "We came unto the land whither Thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." So far it was well; but no sooner had they stated what they could not deny, than the unbelief which was lurking in their hearts burst forth. "Nevertheless," they proceeded to say, "the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover [reserving the greatest difficulty till the last] we saw the children of Anak there"; and in a few additional words they sketched the location of the several nations. Remark, that they had not added anything to the information given them already by the Lord Himself; they had only looked upon the obstacles to the conquest of the land with the natural eye instead of with the eye of faith. The consequence was they left Jehovah out, and measured the foes to be encountered by their estimate of their own strength instead of the Lord's. Instead of saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" the thought of their heart was, How can we overcome such powerful adversaries?

The effect was disastrous, for their words evidently produced a dangerous agitation among the congregation. At this juncture Caleb stepped forth and, dissociating himself from his companions, "stilled the people before Moses." He did not, indeed could not, contradict the testimony which had been rendered; but he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." As the subsequent history shows, this was the language of faith begotten by confidence in Jehovah and His word. He knew that the God who had brought them out from under the power of Pharaoh, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, could bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. The utterance of his confidence in the Lord only

intensified the opposition of the natural mind; and the men that went up with him said, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." As boldness in testimony gives increased certainty, so the expression of unbelief augments its power. Caleb and the ten spies are striking illustrations of these principles.

The increase of the unbelief of the ten is most marked. They now brought up an evil report of the land which they had before described as flowing with milk and honey, and they magnified through their fears the greatness of the enemy. In the presence of the sons of Anak, they were in their own sight, they said, as grasshoppers, "and so," they added - what could only be a matter of conjecture - "we were in their sight." Unbelief, which is always contagious, infected all the congregation;

and they "lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." They murmured moreover against Moses and against Aaron; they bitterly complained that they had not died in the land of Egypt; they reproached Jehovah for all the straits and dangers which existed only in their fears; and, finally, they broke out into open rebellion, saying, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." On the borders of their inheritance, a land on which the eyes of the Lord always rested, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year (Deut. 11), filled with doubts and apprehensions, they were ready to sacrifice everything in their forgetfulness of their God and Redeemer. Moses and Aaron, helpless in the presence of such a manifestation of evil, could only fall on their faces in silent appeal to God before all the assembly.

Joshua and Caleb were God's chosen instruments to stem, and to testify against, this torrent of unbelief. Expressing their horror at the sin of the people, they rent their clothes, and, raising their voices above the din and confusion that reigned in the congregation, they courageously reiterated their declaration that the land they had searched out was "an exceeding good land." They thus boldly contradicted the "evil report" of their fellows, and, in so doing, separated themselves morally from their company, and took their stand on the Lord's side. They also stated plainly the conditions of possessing the land. First, "If the LORD delight in us," they said, "then He will bring us into this land." In this they showed that they were in communion with Jehovah's mind. He did delight in His people, and they knew it, and consequently that all depended upon what He was, and upon His power, and not upon what the people were or could do (compare the Apostle's argument in Rom. 5:8-10).

Second, they said, "Only rebel not... neither fear ye the people of the land." The children of Israel had only to follow their divine leader. And, last, they declared (what was the source of all their strength) that the Lord was with them, and therefore fear of the enemy was needless.

Such were the simple conditions (conditions which are as applicable today as when they were propounded) under which alone the possession of the land could be obtained. Let them be well pondered, for they unfold the pathway into all spiritual blessing. If they be forgotten or refused, believers now, as well as the Israelites, will either turn back in heart to Egypt, or wander aimlessly in the wilderness, to their own sorrow and loss. But faithful testimony, when rendered before carnal minds, is never acceptable. Indeed, it cannot fail to arouse the bitterest hostility. The Lord's servants are apt to forget this, and to expect the favor and approbation of His people. So enraged were the congregation with Joshua and Caleb that they bade "stone them with stones." As with those who listened to Stephen, cut to the heart, and filled with hatred, they would fain have murdered the faithful witnesses. But the glory of the Lord appeared in vindication of His servants,

and for the punishment of His stiff-necked and rebellious people. What a contrast, as ever, between the Lord's estimate and that of man's! His favor rested on those whom the children of Israel would stone!

Passing over the details of the judgment pronounced upon Israel for their unbelief, our attention may be arrested by the approbation expressed as to Caleb. (The reason that Caleb is so often mentioned alone, though Joshua had been equally faithful, is that Joshua becomes afterward a type of Christ as the leader in spirit of His people in their conflicts.) "My servant Caleb," said Jehovah, "because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it." Chap. 14:24. This reveals how grateful to the Lord's heart Caleb's testimony had been, pattern as he was of the remnant of another day who should keep the word of Christ, and not deny His name. He also exemplified the spirit of devoted discipleship in an evil day; he followed fully, and this became his distinguished characteristic - a characteristic which Caleb himself delighted to accept and recall. Surely he was the Paul of the Old Testament in his wholehearted fidelity and devotedness. Would that the consideration of his example might be used to stir up many of us to tread in his steps!

Caleb and Joshua, spared in the judgment that was upon the guilty people, lived still; and both, according to the word of the Lord, crossed the Jordan, and shared, in their respective positions, in the victories of faith, when engaged in conflict with the enemy for the possession of the land. Coming to Joshua 14, Caleb is again brought to our notice. He came unto Joshua in Gilgal to apply for the inheritance which the Lord had promised to him. His address is full of interest. First of all, he recalled the past (vv. 6-8); then he reminded Joshua (showing how he had treasured it up in his heart) of the promise made to him by Moses (v. 9); next, he testified to the Lord's faithfulness in preserving him alive, and in continuing to him his strength through all his lengthened and varied experiences; and last, requesting the possession of his inheritance, he expressed his confidence that, if the Lord should be with him, he would be able to drive out the Anakim, and to take their cities, notwithstanding they were great and fenced, as the spies had reported. The assurance of the Lord's presence always adds courage to faith, and thus Caleb confidently anticipated the conquest of the enemy. Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to him as his inheritance "because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel." The man of faith must ever be foremost in the conflict with the enemy, but his victory is assured.

Once more Caleb is seen in the history of God's people. In the next chapter the narrative is given of his expelling from Hebron the three sons of Anak, and of his giving his daughter Achsah "to wife" to Othniel his nephew, who had smitten and captured Kirjathsepher. At her instance, and at the request of her husband, Caleb gave her a field, "a south land." Emboldened by his grace, on his further asking, "What wouldest thou?" she said, "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water." Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. In the land, warring in the power of the Spirit, and victorious over the enemy in the energy of faith, he walked in the truth of grace, and could thus be a giver. Springs of water would be, typically, life in the power of the Holy Ghost; and consequently, in figure, Caleb's gift would comprise heavenly and earthly blessings - blessings characteristic of the heavenly and earthly people. The lesson for us is, that the one who maintains fidelity to God in walk and testimony, the one who rises to the level of his calling, is kept in spiritual power and becomes the most faithful representative to God - the God of grace - to all with whom he comes into contact. Indebted

himself to grace for all that he possesses and enjoys, he will, being formed by it, become the exponent of grace in his walk and ways. He will be in the energy of the Spirit whether for communion, or for walk and testimony on the earth. All things, moreover, are possible to him that believeth.

Children of Light

In Matthew 18 we see the spirit of childlike lowliness, and gracious consideration for the welfare of others is brought before us as that which should characterize us. In Eph. 4:2, 3 the exhortation is, "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

It is said of a blind man that, when asked why he always carried a lantern at night, he replied that, being himself unable to see, the light was therefore not to preserve his own feet, but to prevent others from stumbling over him.

May the Lord keep us each walking "as children of light"; and then not only will our feet be kept from stumbling, but we shall be no occasion of stumbling to others! On the contrary, may our care for each other in the sight of God be more and more apparent (2 Cor. 7:12; 1 Cor. 12:25), remembering that He who was the "merciful" was also the "faithful" (Heb. 2:17); and that He who was perfectly "holy," was equally "harmless" (Heb. 7:26). Let us never seek to show mercy at the expense of divine principle and practical holiness, nor mistake hardness and harshness for firmness and faithfulness.

Christ - God's Power - God's Rest

Acts 8:1-25

It is a striking fact which is found in this scripture, and is true at all times, and in all places in the world, that the displays of God's power are always manifested in delivering from the active positive power of evil which has been working beforehand. No matter what the circumstances may be, God's power is ever thus displayed. It is the coming in of God into a scene where the power of evil and Satan are, to deliver from it.

Now this putting forth of power is not rest, for God cannot rest where there is evil. The time will come when we shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem, and then we shall have rest; because then the glory of God and the Lamb will be displayed in a scene where nothing that works abomination or makes a lie can ever possibly enter. This is rest. There will never be rest till then. The power we read of in this scripture is not rest, for it is exercised in a scene where evil is. In the heavenly Jerusalem evil is forever put away. In the Church we find lie-makers;

Ananias and Sapphira arise and lie to the Holy Ghost. This is not rest. In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be no lie, or, as it is expressed in other words, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

It is not a question whether there may not be joy where God's power is working. The power that overcame Satan in Samaria caused great joy in that city, but Simon Magus was there. It was power where evil was, giving joy, but not rest.

And then too we have the sorrowful side - that where God's power works, there is in man the principles and roots of decay. This is always true, whether we speak of the Church which, alas, is so striking an example of the decay of the power which is in this chapter, or whether we speak of the individual soul.

The power of God is working in a sphere of evil, and where the roots of decay are sapping the power that has been displayed. Thus, we see, it is not rest. We may get discouraged by the evil. That is all wrong. We are not to be "weary in well doing," so it becomes a question of patience in a scene of failure and decay, and of grace to overcome as the evil goes on. We see it thus all through the Word. Wherever God set up anything, this principle of decay appeared. God made this earth and saw it "very good," and rested from His work; but man never entered into that rest. He sinned - evil came in, and the rest was gone. Look too at all the distinct putting forth of power, whether in Israel, or in Solomon, or in the Church; and all closes in evil.

We need then power to be applied to the evil, that we may overcome. It is never rest here, but overcoming evil to enter into God's rest. I do not deny that there may be seasons when the power of evil is less felt, God in His grace granting us refreshings by the way, just as the ark in the wilderness went on one occasion a three days' march before the people to seek out a rest for them. There are these mercies in detail. So, in our chapter, after the persecutions, God gave His

people a season of quietness; and in the next chapter we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Acts 9:31. But these are seasons of occasional rest only. It is not rest in result. It is not the rest that remains for the people of God. Now what we need is the faith that overcomes in the scene of Satan's power, as we read in the Word so often of "him that overcometh." We need a power superior to the evil through which we have to pass, as in the Psalms, "They go from strength to strength: each one will appear before God in Zion." J.N.D. Trans. The secret of this strength is in the heart living with Christ, and growing up into Him who is above the power of evil which we have to overcome, entering into fellowship with the Father's delight in the Son, which is beyond all the range of the evil that is against us, and carrying this kind of rest through the conflict, however varying the circumstances may be.

Take Israel for an example of this. We know what they went through in the wilderness, learning themselves and learning what the wilderness was, often murmuring and chastened of God; but under all they never lost the cloud, the token of God's presence, a guide at all times according to God's mind, a witness of God's power with them. It led them on all their way. It could not rest in the wilderness, but it wandered with them; and when, by their unbelief, they were turned back for thirty-eight years, the cloud turned back with them. It could not rest, but it never left them, leading them by day and by night, until in the days of Solomon we find it taking up its abode in the Temple.

Now this is what we need- to have our hearts above the evil and the principles of decay which are in ourselves, living with Christ and carrying this rest, where God Himself rests, with us through the world.

There are two things in connection with this presented in our chapter. The disciples preach "Christ," and those who believe have the Holy Ghost. I was very much struck with that verse in reading the chapter through -"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." He "preached Christ." It does not say he preached to poor sinners, though we know he did; but the Spirit of God puts before us what is before all other objects. He "preached Christ"; his primary object was not "sinners," but "Christ," the delight of God before ever the world, or evil was.

Let us see the sphere of blessing this opens out to us. The gospel is the proclamation of One who is God's own eternal delight presented to us an object for our hearts, the "wisdom of God," and the "power of God."

It is just as we carry the secret of the preciousness of Christ by faith through the wilderness, that our hearts will have an object superior to all the circumstances of sorrow and evil that we are in. In the wilderness we need God's wisdom to guide, and His power to overcome. Christ is both. The spirit of faith makes all the difference which we find in Israel on the one hand, and Caleb and Joshua on the other. They all went through the same trials, and were in the same sphere of evil, but the grapes of Eshcol brought out the murmurings of the people; they thought of the children of Anak, and were in their own sight as grasshoppers - they lacked faith to connect the power of God with themselves, so that it was only a question of what their enemies were, and what they were in their own sight; whereas Caleb and Joshua, bringing in by faith God's power and love, found the report good, the grapes of Eshcol strengthened their faith, they thought of God's promise to them, and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Numb. 13:30. What were the walls of Jericho to faith, though they were builded up to heaven? Because God was

with those who had faith, the walls could not stand against the blast of rams' horns!

But it is well for us to remember also, that if God was with them, one Achan in that camp is detected, and the power is withdrawn. It is not that He forsakes them, but He teaches them that He cannot go on with evil. We must have all brought to light. These inward exercises are humbling, but most profitable. We get broken down and humbled by them. God cannot fail, we know; but if I take a wrong way, He will not go with me in it. I shall find that there is no strength. But I will suppose that the soul is walking with God; and as Joshua and Caleb replied in faith, "If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." Numb. 14:8. So with us, we find what God's thoughts about us are, in His delight in Christ, which lifts us above the evil we are passing through. Our strength is that the Lord has delighted in us, and is leading us on through all the evil, to bring us out of it all to Himself.

Now what do we find that the testimony of Philip was? He "preached Christ unto them." That which the Holy Ghost ever ministers is Christ. Philip preached this wondrous fact of Christ, who was God's delight before ever the world was. We thus get at God's mind about Christ before ever the scene of evil began. It is Christ, the object of the Father's delight; and the world is only a scene come in by the way-an important thing, it is true, because it is the platform on which God's eternal thoughts about Christ were to be displayed. But we go back to God's counsels, and see His delight in Christ before ever the world or evil were.

Now all depends, dear friends, upon knowing this blessed Object of the Father's delight, living in Christ as He is in the thoughts of God from all eternity, seeing Him "set up from everlasting," God's eternal delight! When I begin to look at myself, it is a perfect contrast to Christ; but before ever evil was, this blessed Object of the heart of God was. After the world is over, He will still be the delight of God's heart.

Christ Our Object

From the first moment that we are awakened by the Spirit of God, Christ is presented to us as our object. Thus when the jailor, wrought upon by the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of what he may have heard, and the supernatural occurrences of that eventful night, came and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:29-31.) This is in accordance with the Lord's own words: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15. The reason is evident. When the sinner is made to feel his guilt, God appears to his soul in the character of a judge - of a holy God, whose claims he has failed to meet, and under whose righteous judgment he has consequently fallen. His one need, therefore, is to find a way of escape, both from his state and the condemnation under which he is groaning; and since this is found alone in Christ, Christ is the first Object to which his eyes are directed. So Paul brings out this truth most fully in the epistle to the Romans. He says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:23-26. Having thus Christ in all the efficacy of His atoning work presented to him, and believing, receiving God's testimony concerning Him - concerning what He is and what He has done - the sinner (now a believer) is justified, cleared from all guilt - from everything that was against him - and he has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

He has much more besides; but now we only call attention to the fact that, looking believingly to the Object held out before his soul in the time of his need, he is saved. Has he then done with Christ? Far be the thought! For it will be found, on examination of the Scriptures, that the Object to which his eye was directed as a guilty sinner, is the Object which is still kept before him after that, by the grace of God, he has been saved. Yea, the Object to which the sinner turns to find relief from the heavy burden of his sins, is that which is to fill his gaze in all his pathway as a saint, and, indeed, throughout eternity.

We propose then to collect a few examples of this-to show that the eye of the believer is ever to be fixed on Christ - that He is held out to us as the one Object that is to fill our gaze and absorb our souls.

1) As He is the Object of faith for salvation to the sinner, so is He the Object for the life of faith to the saint. The Apostle Paul thus writes: "I am crucified with Christ: 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, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. That is-touching only on the clause which we have emphasized - the life which the Apostle lived down here had the Son of God as the Object of its faith. Corresponding with this are the words of the Lord Himself. When the disciples were

plunged into great sorrow at the prospect of His speedy separation from them, He said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." John 14:1. He thus teaches that though He was soon to be absent from them, no longer to be seen by their natural eyes, they were to believe in Him, have Himself as the Object of their faith, even as they already believed in God; and thereon He revealed to them the character of the place to which He was about to go. It was the Father's house, a house of many mansions, in which He would prepare a place for them, in anticipation of the time when He should return for them. Meanwhile, they were to be occupied with Him, have Him as their Object; and how sweet and blessed a thing to raise our eyes to - nay, to have them always upon - Christ as occupied with and for us in the Father's house! The clouds may be very dark round about our earthly path, and trials may abound, but nothing can obscure Him - Him in all the tenderness of His love, in all that He is for us before God-from the gaze of our faith; and light, and joy, and peace always stream from His presence.

But there is more than this. It is not only that He is the Object of our faith, but our faith is sustained-we live by Him as our Object. Christ as our Object is the life of our faith. Thus He said, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by [because of] the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by [because of] Me." John 6:57. Now eating Christ is but the constant appropriation of Him in all that He is by the exercise of faith; and it expresses, therefore, our entire dependence upon Him as the source of life; that just as food sustains and nourishes our bodies, so Christ sustains and nourishes our souls. Thus He is the Object, and we live by the exercise of faith, according to that word in the Hebrews, "Now the just shall live by faith" (chap. 10:38). With Him is the fountain of life, and faith is the channel which connects us with the fountain, and through which, in the power of the Spirit, the life flows. We therefore live both by faith in, and by dependence upon, Christ.

2) Christ is also our Object in service; nay, the whole of our life has Him as its end and aim. The Apostle Paul thus says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for the m, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. Still more comprehensive (though of the same character) is his language in another epistle: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). At this time he was in prison; and yet he was so utterly oblivious of self, that he was able to cherish the earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing he should be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or death; and he gives us the ground of this confidence, "To me to live is Christ." That was the one Object of his life; in all his manifold activities, in all that he desired, and in all that he did, everything had respect to Christ. He was thus perhaps the closest approximation to the example of our blessed Lord that has ever been seen on earth. For Christ never sought to please Himself, but He always did those things that pleased the Father; He found His meat in doing His Father's will and finishing His work (John 4:34; 6:30; 8:29). The truth is strikingly set forth by the Apostle in connection with the death of Christ. "Be ye... followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Eph. 5:1, 2. True that He loved the Church and gave Himself for it, but it was God who was the object before His soul, His glory which He sought, and which was the governing motive of His death; for He became obedient-obedient surely to God - obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So also it should be with us -Christ alone the Object of our lives, of our thoughts, feelings, designs, occupations, activities. We are His, for He has redeemed us with His own precious blood; and He therefore claims us for His own- that we should live not to ourselves, but to Him who has died for us and risen again. What a searching, practical test does this supply! Do I purpose this or that? Is it then for Christ? Do I desire anything? Is it for Christ? Am I busy in service? Is it for Christ? Can I look round my dwelling and say of all that I behold, It is for Christ? Thus, "for Christ" supplies us with a principle that can be applied to the whole of our daily lives - a principle that should reign supreme, governing us in all our works and ways-a principle which makes nothing of self - of man - but which makes everything of Christ.

3) Again, Christ is brought before us as an object to be possessed. This aspect is unfolded to us in Philippians 3. In the beginning of the chapter the Apostle gives a list of the advantages which he had as a Jew - as a man in the flesh-and which formed his ground of confidence as such.

"If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He had thus everything which could exalt a natural man in his own eyes before God. Morally, religiously, and ecclesiastically, he lacked nothing, according to man's judgment. Nay,

more; writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he is able to say that "touching the righteousness which is in the law" he was "blameless." Like the young man who asked of the Lord Jesus, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" and, when referred to the commandments, replied, "All

these things have I kept from my youth up"-so Saul-and he might have added with the young man, "What lack I yet?" (Matt. 19:16-20). But when Saul, in his zeal of persecuting the Church, was on his way to Damascus, the Lord in glory met him-that same Jesus whom Saul had with his nation rejected and cast out, but now risen from the dead and glorified, appeared to him; and thereon Saul discovered the true value of his precious things in the light of the glory which shone round him - saw their utter worthlessness, and hence by grace was able to say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for [because of] the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for [because of] whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:7, 8. Now he had discovered the fine gold, and by the side of it he could see that what he had been priding himself upon was but wretched tinsel; and, estimating it at its proper value, he now desired only to win Christ-that is, to have Christ as his gain. Everything which had been so precious in his eyes disappeared, and Christ only remained; but it was Christ only that he now desired to possess, not only as his ground of confidence before God, but also as his everlasting possession. For Christ had won his heart, and the heart can never rest until it has gained the object of its affections.

But inasmuch as it was a Christ in glory whom he had thus seen and desired, it was only in the glory that He could be possessed. Hence the whole future course of the Apostle was governed by this fact. With heart and eyes fixed upon his Object, he says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend" (if I may get possession of that for which also I have been taken possession) "of Christ Jesus." And in the energy of his soul - being all aglow with fervent desire-he adds: "Brethren, I

count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [the calling on high] of God in Christ Jesus." This was the prize on which his heart was now set; and, like a racer, he bent his rapid steps toward the goal, and the varied objects of the surrounding scene passed by him unheeded, or were seen but dimly as he hastened onward; for his eyes were on a glorified Christ, and he could see naught else for the glory of that light. This was the Object that possessed his heart, controlled and formed his life below, and drew him unweariedly forward in the race he ran, while he waited for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would change the vile body of His servant, that it might be fashioned like unto the body of His glory; and then Paul would be both like, and with, his Object for evermore.

Such also is the object set before every believer. Well might we examine ourselves by the light of this scripture -by the light of the energy, the ardent desire, the concentrated affection of the Apostle. Does Christ, let us each ask ourselves in the presence of God, so possess our hearts that we desire no other object? Are we satisfied to lose everything but Himself? Do we, like Paul, count all that the natural man esteems but loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord? The prayer is often heard and, it may be, presented by ourselves, that our hearts may be set upon Christ. He Himself said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matt. 6:21. If our hearts, therefore, are not upon and occupied with Him, it is because He is not sufficiently our treasure. If then we would have our hearts detached from this scene and its objects, we must begin with Christ; we must trace out His manifold perfections, His varied beauties, His ineffable grace and unchanging love; and then our hearts will be drawn out toward Him, and, inflamed with holy desire after Him, He will absorb our affections, and attract us wholly to Himself. We often sing- "Jesus, Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill," and nothing can be truer; but the question for us to answer, when the words are upon our lips, is, Do we know this practically? Can we take the ground of wanting nothing outside of Christ? If we were bereft of everything else, should we be able to say, We are satisfied with Christ? These are searching questions, but questions that need to be answered. For it is only when we are satisfied with Christ, that no other object will divert our gaze; and then we shall long for the moment when, like Him, we shall see Him as He is, and be with Him forever.

"Forever to behold Him shine!

For evermore to call Him mine!

And see Him still before me;

Forever on His face to gaze,

And meet the full assembled rays,

While all His beauty He displays

To all the saints in glory!"

Christ Our Object: Part 2

4) He is also set before us as the Object to which we are to be conformed. This is implied in what we have just considered, but we have it distinctly set forth in another scripture. We are thus told that God has predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). The Apostle likewise alludes to the fact when he says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. But it is the Apostle Paul who brings out this truth in its most definite form. Writing to the Corinthians, and contrasting the ministry of righteousness with the ministry of condemnation, and being led to state the full and blessed place into which believers are now brought, he says, "We all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18. He refers to Exodus 34, where we read that Moses was compelled to put a veil upon his face to conceal the glory that lingered there (after he had come down from the mount, where he had been with the Lord forty days and forty nights), because Aaron and all the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh him." "And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out." (vv. 28-34.) Only Moses went in, under that dispensation, before the Lord with unveiled face; but now we all - all believers - with open (unveiled) face behold the glory of the Lord, etc.

The truth then is, that all who are in the Christian place and position are set down in the light, as God is in the light; and there they behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. Christ in glory is the Object on which they gaze. This was shown, albeit in an extraordinary way, in the death of Stephen.

"He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:55. This scene is significant from the fact that now the heavens are opened for every believer, and that he therefore sees by faith, without a veil, with nothing between, a glorified Christ at the right hand of God. For upon the death of Christ the veil was rent, expressive of the fact that the atonement He made by His death was accepted by God as a full and complete answer to all the claims of His holiness, so that He could now come forth in all His grace and love to meet the sinner and bring him in, through faith in Christ, unto Himself, to dwell in His own immediate presence, in the holiest of all. Such is the place of every saint of God.

A caution, however, may be needed. It is undoubtedly true that this place belongs to every believer; but it is another and, indeed, a most momentous question, whether we are occupying it. We are brought into it according to the efficacy of the work of Christ, and through His death and resurrection; and it is thus our blessed privilege to be ever occupied with Christ as our Object. God would have us thus occupied; for He would have us share His own delight in gazing upon the face of Him who has retrieved His glory by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Are we then occupying the place into which we have been brought by the grace of our God, and having fellowship with Himself as to the Object of His own heart? Perhaps there is no greater danger at the present time than knowing the full truth of our position without seeking to answer it practically. But if we boast in our standing, and neglect our state, we fall into the very evils which characterized the Jews in the time of our Lord. It should, therefore, be a very solemn matter of inquiry with us whether we maintain the attitude of Stephen - whether our faces, like his, are ever turned upward to the glory of the Lord.

But the marvelous thing is, that the Christ we thus behold as our object, is the model to which we are to be conformed. God, according to the purposes of His infinite grace, and delighting to mark His appreciation of the work of Christ, will have us to be like Him whom He has glorified. Even now we can say, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17); that is, our acceptance, even now 'while in this scene, is as perfect as His at the right hand of God. But the time will come when we shall be fashioned after His own likeness, when even these poor bodies of ours shall also be conformed to the likeness of His glorious body. 'What grace! That we-such as we were, and such as we are - should be able to raise our eyes to Christ in glory, and be permitted to say, "We shall be like Him"!

How, then, we may inquire, is this change wrought out in us? This same scripture gives the answer - "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18. While on the one hand Christ in glory is the model to which we are to be conformed, beholding Him, there is, on the other, the instrumentality in the power of the Spirit by which it is effected. How simple! We behold and are changed -changed into the same image from glory to glory-for it is a gradual process-as by the Spirit of the Lord. We receive the impress of the One on whom we look; the rays of the glory of His face falling on us, penetrate into, and transform us morally into, the likeness of our Lord.

Herein then lies our responsibility. The Object is before us; before Him we stand with unveiled face, and it is divine power alone that can mold us into His likeness; but the activity of that power -through the Spirit - God has been pleased to connect with our beholding. Who the n would not ever stand with upturned face, catching every ray of the glory that falls from such an object, in the earnest desire to obtain growing conformity to Him on whom we gaze? This is the secret of all growth in grace -uninterrupted contemplation of Christ on the Father's throne. But it should be remembered that it is only increasing likeness we attain even by such a process. Full conformity waits, as the Apostle John teaches, for the moment when we shall see Him as He is. There is no perfection therefore here, since God's standard of holiness is Christ in glory; and He will never rest until we are perfect according to it. May we keep our eyes ever upon the Object, that we may daily grow in resemblance to Him to whom we are to be conformed!

"To see Thy glory, and to be In everything conformed to Thee."

5) Since He is God's Object, He is also ours; for our fellowship is with the Father as well as with the Son (1 John 1:3). When He was down here on the earth, twice a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son." He was all God's delight, and God rested in Him with perfect complacency. Ere He left this scene He said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. By the work which He accomplished on the cross, glorifying God therein, even about the question of sin, and laying the foundation on which

God could righteously save the believer, and reconcile all things to Himself (Col. 1:20), He established a new claim upon God. Hence He said, in anticipation of the cross, "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." John 13:31, 32. And God has done it, and Christ, the glorified Man, now sits at His right hand; for God rejoiced thus to respond to the claim which had thus been established upon Him, and (if we may reverently use the word) to mark thus His estimate of the value of His work. There He sits, the Object of God's heart as well as the center of the glory; and God feasts upon the One who has vindicated His honor, glorified Him in every attribute of His character; and He invites us to participate with Him in His own joy. This is what we are called to share with God in His thoughts and affections concerning His beloved Son. He is enough for the heart of God, and surely also enough for ours; and if He fills the eye of God, He may well absorb our gaze.

It is well for us to consider this aspect of the truth. It is not only that Christ is a Savior suited to all our needs, but He is one who is suited to the heart of God-the Man after God's own heart. And God would have us prize Him according to His own thoughts of His value and preciousness, to enter into and rejoice with Him in His appreciation of the worth of Him who gave up all for His glory. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9-11.

And as He is our Object now, so He will be throughout eternity. We shall be ever with the Lord. Himself will be with us - the Lamb that was once slain-then, as now, the Man - for He will nevermore lay aside the humanity He has assumed; and then He will fill our gaze and our hearts, perfectly and completely. What an infinite study to trace out and contemplate His varied and manifold excellencies! We shall see His face, and shall never weary of drinking in His beauty! We shall hear His voice; and oh, how we shall hang upon every word that falls from His lips! And all that we see and hear will but fill our souls with ineffable delight, and our ceaseless joy will be to prostrate ourselves at His feet in adoration and praise. Lord, in anticipation of this time, turn our eyes from all that might obscure Thee from our view, and Thyself attract and occupy us altogether!

"Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son; God manifest,
God seen and heard,
The heaven's beloved One; Worthy,
O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.
"In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's self doth shine;
Fullness of Godhead, too, the Blest-

Eternally divine.

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou

That every knee to Thee should bow."

Christ Pleased Not Himself

It has just struck me, that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did this. Nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of introducing Himself to their favor. He did not seek to please, and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself.

This was very blessed, and the same thing in anyone is always a symptom of moral power. If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to please. This is true, I doubt not; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes a fellow creature supreme; and we deal with him as though his favor was life to us, which God's is, but His only.

But to bind one in full confidence to us - to draw the heart - to have ourselves in the esteem and affection of others without ever in one single instance having that as our object-this is morally great. For nothing can account for this, but that constant course of love which, by necessity of its own virtue, tells others that their real interests and prosperity and blessing are in deed and in truth the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And thus was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to please them; but everything that He did told them that He sought to bless them.

And again I say-I believe that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself to their favor. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on many occasions which we might have resented. And both of these, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of moral perfection which took their rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him to put Him to an effort to please, malice had no part in Him to make Him quick to resent. He could not be flattered into graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness.

Look at Luke 22:24-30. They had just betrayed nature, striving through pride about the highest place. He corrects this; but He does not hold that object long before Him, but allows another to command His heart and His thoughts respecting them - "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations."

Was that exactly the moment for remembering this fact? Was it just the time for looking at them so steadily in so favorable a light? No, not for nature to do so; but for Jesus it was just the time. And He is our example, that we should follow His steps, and partake of His mind. And after the pattern of this little occasion, we have to remember that it is not the present act that has to decide our thoughts and hearts respecting each other. It may have much of the vileness or working of nature in it, as this strife had; but it may be, as this strife was, the act of those in whom much of the preciousness of the Spirit dwells; and "the precious" should be remembered for the commanding of our thoughts often, even in the very presence of "the vile."

Strange this may appear. Yes, and the ways of divine, unselfish love are strange. Here is our pilgrim part, and the part of a stranger in a scene of multiform selfishness like this. It may not be

well to be always understood. Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren in a moment of their sorrow. But Joseph was not to be the servant of the present moment, but of their good. He was seeking to bless them, not to please them. Jesus told Thomas in a moment of repentance, that there was a character of still higher blessing to which he did not belong. But Jesus was true to the truth, true to us all, true to Thomas himself, when He might have been flattered into softness. Like Joseph, He was serving Thomas, and not the moment or occasion.

O the perfection of it all! O the unspottedness of the path of His spirit within, as of His feet abroad! O the beauty of all that which love does or says! We shall understand it all by-and-by, and have pages open to us which now we have no eyes to read. Through selfishness, we mistake the doings of love, and expect gratifications, when we find ourselves passed by, and are sent away with the material of some solid, lasting benefit, when we hoped for a mere present, pleasurable excitement.

O for more of that love that is "in deed and in truth," which eyes the solid good of others, and can sacrifice their favor toward ourselves to their own blessing.

Christ's Perfect Humanity

There is one consideration which should weigh heavily in the estimation of every Christian, and that is, the vital nature of the doctrine of Christ's humanity. It lies at the very foundation of Christianity; and, for this reason, Satan has diligently sought from the beginning to lead people astray in reference to it. Almost all the leading errors which have found their way into the professing church disclose the satanic purpose to undermine the truth as to the Person of Christ. And even when earnest, godly men have sought to combat those errors, they have, in many cases, plunged into errors on the opposite side. Hence, therefore, the need of close adherence to the veritable words which the Holy Ghost has made use of in unfolding this profound and most sacred history. Indeed, I believe that, in every case, subjection to the authority of holy Scripture, and the energy of the divine life in the soul, will prove effectual safeguards against every complexion of error.

It does not require high theological attainments to enable a soul to keep clear of error with respect to the doctrine of Christ. If only the word of Christ be dwelling richly, and "the Spirit of Christ" be in energy in the soul, there will be no room for Satan to thrust in his dark and horrible suggestions. If the heart be delighting in the Christ which Scripture unfolds, it will assuredly shrink from the false Christs which Satan would introduce. If we are feeding upon God's reality, we shall unhesitatingly reject Satan's counterfeit. This is the best possible way in which to escape the entanglements of error in every shape and character. The sheep hear His voice, and follow Him; for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10:3-5). It is not by any means needful to be acquainted with the voice of a stranger in order to turn away from it; all we require is to know the voice of "the good shepherd." This will secure us against the ensnaring influence of every strange sound. While, therefore, I feel called upon to war n the reader against strange sounds in reference to the divine mystery of Christ's humanity, I do not deem it needful to discuss such sounds, but would rather seek, through grace, to arm him against them by unfolding the doctrine of Scripture on the subject.

There are few things in which we exhibit more failure than in maintaining vigorous communion with the perfect manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it is that we suffer so much from vacancy, barrenness, restlessness, and wandering. Did we but enter with a more artless faith into the truth that there is a real Man at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens-One whose sympathy is perfect, whose love is fathomless, whose power is omnipotent, whose wisdom is infinite, whose resources are exhaustless, whose riches are unsearchable, whose ear is open to our every breathing, whose hand is open to our every need, whose heart is full of unspeakable love and tenderness toward us - how much more happy and elevated we should be, and how much more independent of creature streams, through what channel soever they may flow!

There is nothing the heart can crave which we have not in Jesus. Does it long for genuine sympathy? Where can it find it, save in Him who could mingle His tears with those of the bereaved sisters of Bethany? Does it desire the enjoyment of sincere affection? It can only find it in that

heart which told forth its love in drops of blood. Does it seek the protection of real power? It has but to look to Him who made the world. Does it feel the need of unerring wisdom to guide? Let it betake itself to Him who is wisdom personified, and "who of God is made unto us wisdom." In one word, we have all in Christ. The divine mind and the divine affections have found a perfect object in "the man Christ Jesus"; and surely, if there is that in the Person of Christ which can perfectly satisfy God, there is that which ought to satisfy us, and which will satisfy us in proportion as, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, we walk in communion with God.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the only perfect man that ever trod this earth. He was all perfect - perfect in thought, perfect in word, perfect in action. In Him every moral quality met in divine and therefore perfect proportion. No one feature preponderated. In Him were exquisitely blended a majesty which overawed, and a gentleness which gave perfect ease, in His presence. The scribes and the Pharisees met His withering rebuke, while the poor Samaritan and the "woman that was a sinner" found themselves unaccountably, yet irresistibly, attracted to Him. No one feature displaced another, for all was in fair and comely proportion. This may be traced in every scene of His perfect life. He could say, in reference to five thousand hungry people, "Give ye them to eat"; and when they were filled, He could say, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." The benevolence and the economy are both perfect, and neither interferes with the other; each shines in its own proper sphere. He could not send unsatisfied hunger away; neither could He suffer single fragment of God's creatures to be wasted. He would meet with a full and liberal hand the need of the human family; and when that was done, He would carefully treasure up every atom. The selfsame hand that was widely open to every form of human need was firmly closed against all prodigality. There was nothing niggardly nor yet extravagant in the character of the perfect, the heavenly Man.

What a lesson for us! How often, with us, does benevolence resolve itself into an unwarrantable profusion! and, on the other hand, how often is our economy marred by the exhibition of a miserly spirit! At times, too, our niggard hearts refuse to open themselves to the full extent of the need which presents itself before us; while, at other times, we squander, through a wanton extravagance, that which might satisfy many a needy fellow-creature. Oh, my reader, let us carefully study the divine picture set before us in the life of "the man Christ Jesus." How refreshing and strengthening to "the inward man" to be occupied with Him who was perfect in all His ways, and who in all things must "have the preeminence."

See Him in the garden of Gethsemane. There, He kneels in the profound depths of a humility which none but Himself could exhibit; but not before the traitor's band He exhibits a self-possession and majesty which causes them to go backward and fall to the ground. His deportment before God is prostration; before His judges and accusers, unbending dignity. All is perfect. The self-emptiness and the self-possession, the prostration and the dignity, all are divine.

So, also, when we contemplate the beautiful combination of His divine and human relations, the same perfection is observable. He could say, "How is it that ye sought Me? 'wilt ye not that I must be about My Father's business?'" And, at the same time, He could go down to Nazareth, and there set an example of perfect subjection to parental authority. (See Luke 2:49-51.) He could say to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And yet, when passing through the unutterable agony of the cross, He could tenderly commit that mother to the care of the beloved disciple. In the

former case, He separated Himself, in the spirit of perfect Nazariteship, to accomplish His Father's will; while in the latter, He gave expression to the tender feelings of the perfect human heart. The devotion of the Nazarite and the affection of the Man were both perfect. Neither was permitted to interfere with the other; each shone with undimmed luster in its proper sphere.

The Circle of the Church's Affections

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." We get the whole circle of the Church's affections. When the Spirit of God is working in the saints, what will be the first affection? Christ. The Spirit and the bride turn to Him and say, Come. What is the next affection? It is the saints. Therefore it turns, and bids him that heareth say, Come. If you have heard Christ, you come and join the cry. Even if you have not the consciousness of relationship, would you not be happier if you saw Him as He is? Therefore say, Come. The first affection is toward Christ Himself; but the bride would have every saint to join in these affections, and in the desire to have the Bridegroom. But does it stop with those who have heard the voice of the Lord Jesus? No; the first effect of the Spirit's turning our eye to Christ is the desire that Christ should come; and next, that the saint who hears His voice should have the same affection. And what next? We turn round to those who may be athirst, bidding them come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. The saint who has the sense of the blessedness of having drunk of the living water which Christ gives, wants others to have it also.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 2:13-19)

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," etc. 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 is 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 to the value of the letter game and of the dissected map and of 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 imbedded 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 from 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 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," etc. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him," etc.

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... 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 matter, 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, etc. It is never in Christendom the open or despite denial of Christ, but the supply of certain aids to faith (!) or feelings besides Christ. This is precisely what the Apostle affirms to be so unbelieving and evil. "Blotting out the handwriting 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 Galatian 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," etc. 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 the 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 show 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. 2:6). 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 Revelation 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! 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 Ephesians 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 this 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." vv. 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 the 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 not an 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." v. 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 on, how can they expect blessing from those who do not see nor act upon it? These truths are fundamental for the Church, ministry, etc. 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.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 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." v. 13. Now, from verse 20 to 23, we have the consequences of being thus dead with Christ, as in chapter 3, from the first verse onward, 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, etc., are made worshipers, 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, which 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 a 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 this kind of language and ideas. You may 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. Thus 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 in Christendom.

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, hard, 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, yet 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. How 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 worshiped in his time. All works on toward 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 worshiping 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 show 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," etc.

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). Further, 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 against it as Christ known thus in full delivering grace? Like the captured sword of Goliath, "of weapons there is 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, that thus there may be abundant fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Lectures on Colossians

W.K. Translation of chapter 3

III (1) If therefore ye were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where the Christ is seated on [the] right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on the things above, not on those on the earth. (3) For ye died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God. (4) When the Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory. (5) Put to death therefore your members that [are] on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; (6) on account of which things cometh the wrath of God [upon the sons of disobedience]: (7) in which ye also once walked when ye lived in these things.

(8) But now do ye also put off the whole: wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, vile language out of your mouth. (9) Lie not to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and having put on the new that is renewed in full knowledge according to [the] image of him that created him; (11) where there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, free, but Christ the whole, and in all.

(12) Put on therefore, as elect of God, holy [and] beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; (13) forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any should have a complaint against any; even as also the Lord forgave you, so also [do] ye; (14) and in addition to all these, love, which is [the] bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of the Christ rule in your hearts, into which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful. (16) Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, in grace singing in your hearts to God. (17) And everything, whatever ye do in word or in work, [do] all in [the] name of [the] Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him.

(18) Wives, be subject to the husbands, as was fitting in [the] Lord. (19) Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. (20) Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in [the] Lord. (21) Fathers, do not irritate your children, that they be not discouraged. (22) Bondmen, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in simplicity of heart fearing the Lord. (23) And whatever ye do, heartily work as to the Lord and not to men, (24) knowing that from [the] Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance, ye serve the Lord Christ. (25) For he that doeth wrongfully shall receive what he did wrongfully, and there is no respect of persons.

Chapter 3

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, etc. 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 religious 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 entire ground of nature in not touching, tasting, or handling. This was Jewish in principle, and not this alone, for 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 betray 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- sense of sin, understanding of the grace of God, small indeed. 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, being 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 for 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 seems a difficulty to some is, that up to the cross of 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." v. 1. It is very beautiful, the allusion to Christ's place on high outside the world. Thus His settled peace in glory is 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.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 3:2-11)

"Let your mind be on the things above, not on the things on the earth." v. 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 urged 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. Suppose 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 soul 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 before the Lord, he is in danger of doing worse and going farther astray than an ordinary man. Humbling and grievous as this may be, 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, etc. Any or all these might become a snare. Where is 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 Christ; 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. The fact that 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 portion 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 we 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." v. 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 anyone who receives Christ is, that he is as good as gone. 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. Alas! Christendom 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 the Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." v. 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 the earth; fornication, uncleanness," etc. v. 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 the 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." vv. 6-7.

"But now do ye also put off these all, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, base language," etc. 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." v. 11.

How beautifully in keeping is the Christian motive seen in this, that we should not lie, etc., 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, etc., 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. The point of faith is to rise above all this. "Let your light so shine," etc. Where Christ is not steadily adhered to as an 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 by expecting and desiring Christ; but we look on Christ now, being 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.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 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 man 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. The 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, shown betimes in some and not in others; but all are false-lying one does see 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 put so as to prove the complement of each other. In Ephesians it is said that 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. Holiness is His nature alone and intolerant of evil; it 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 God, 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 brings in the idea of righteousness.

Hence, we see, 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," etc. 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 he 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 (2 Pet. 1).

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, as 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 be 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- both of course may be together.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." v. 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 be 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." v. 13. 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, love, which is the bond of perfectness." v. 14. 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." 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." v. 15. Thus it is peace, but not 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 troubled 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-perhaps to judge 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 God." v. 16. This is a remarkable contrast of the gospel with 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," etc. 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 and expression of our feelings. 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 to 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 everything in [the] name of [the] Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." v. 17. 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 everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." Thus our tone and speech, as well as ways, should testify our subjection to Him before whom all heaven bows.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 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 who 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." v. 18. 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 shows 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; Christian 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, etc., 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, 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." v. 19. 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 every day, 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." Let none presume to think it needless.

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 in [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." v. 21. 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." v. 22. 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 the 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 word-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 word. 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." This is very important. Feelings, habits, etc., 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 hard, fleshly way. 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 bondmen 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." vv. 23, 24. But 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." v. 25. 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.

Lectures on Colossians

W.K. Translation of chapter 4

Masters, justice and equity accord to your bondmen, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving; (3) 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 I am also bound, (4) that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. (5) Walk in wisdom toward those without, buying up the time. (6) Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with salt, to know how ye must answer each one.

(7) All my affairs shall Tychicus make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful servant in [the] Lord; (8) whom I sent unto you for this very thing, that he may know your concerns and comfort your hearts, (9) with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother who is of you. They shall make known all things here.

(10) Aristarchus, my fellow-captive, saluteth you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas, about whom ye received injunctions (if he come unto you, receive him), (11) and Jesus, that is called Justus; who are of the circumcision. These [are the] only fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who have been a comfort to me. (12) There saluteth you Epaphras, who [is] of you, a bondman of Jesus Christ, always striving for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all [the] will of God. (13) For I bear him witness that he hath much labor for you and those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. (14) There saluteth you Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas. (15) Salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly in their house. (16) And when the letter

hath been read by you, cause that it be read also in the assembly of Laodiceans, and that ye also may read that from Laodicea. (17) And say to Archippus, See to the ministry which thou didst receive in [the] Lord that thou fulfill it. (18) The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace [be] with you.

Chapter 4

It is evident that the first verse of chapter 4 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, also 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 being 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." v. 1. 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"-not grace.

You can never demand or claim 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."

"Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." v. 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 Ephesians 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 or 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." v. 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" (v. 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." vv. 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 with 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.

Lectures on Colossians

(Chapter 4:7-18)

Next come personal messages (vv. 7-18). Observe the remarkable care of the Apostle to sustain and commend truehearted 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." vv. 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 it is 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." vv. 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 someone 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--a 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." vv. 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." v. 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 but 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." vv. 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), have been questions 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 only those 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." v. 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." v. 18.

Comparison Between Two Verses: John 5:31 and 8:14

The hasty reader might think there was a contradiction between these two statements, and the pious reader might be perplexed; for they seem at the first blush to contradict one another. In John 5 the Lord disclaims bearing witness of Himself; in John 8 He insists on His divine right to do so. Indeed the language, in both passages, is the strongest possible. "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true," says our Lord in John 5. "Though I bear witness of Myself, yet is My witness true"; thus run the words in chapter 8. "Record" in the A.V. of the latter passage is really the same Greek word for "record" in the original.

Now one can imagine cavilers objecting; at least if the two statements were found in two different gospels, they might say that such contradiction was natural, and to be expected from conflicting minds. But not so. Both statements are found in the fourth Gospel. Needless to say, they are both profoundly true. Clearly also forgers would not require excessive caution to avoid such an apparent discrepancy, for they naturally fear an exposure of their subterfuge. And the truth! - what has it to fear? Nay, ours should be the care to heed that Word which is indeed as much God's as if orally heard from heaven.

What then is the solution of the seeming discrepancy? It seems this: In John 5 He speaks not only as Son but as become flesh, and doeth nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing. Our Lord's argument is that if He were the only one to bear witness of Himself, His witness would not be true. He thus graciously, though searchingly, meets the contention of the Jews that if a man bear witness of himself, his witness could not be true. Two witnesses there must be, three were better, more than adequate, according to Jewish law. So Christ says, "If I [alone] bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true." It could not be that His should be the solitary testimony concerning Himself. He had first John the Baptist bearing Him witness; next, the testimony of the works given Him to do; and third, that of the Father's voice. It was superabundant. If only on their one technical ground the Jews were bound to heed it.

Nay, there were the Scriptures likewise. Such is the force of the passage in John 5. He is the perfect and dependent Man, who referred His adversaries to the fourfold witness of John His herald, His own works, the Father's witness, and the Scriptures. Yet is He "Light of the world," "the Truth," "the Son," the "I am" (John 8). So, far from there being discrepancy in the statements of one and the same Evangelist, there is the most absolute agreement between him who wrote mainly for the Jews (Matthew) and the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John). He who said, "I am the light of the world," could also say, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Such a One only could be so great a light. A mere man would becomingly shrink from bearing testimony concerning himself. He who, when Thomas addressed Him as "My Lord and my God," accepted the homage, might indeed say, "Though I bear record of Myself, yet is My record true." Even here He adds, "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me." If two men were to be believed, how much more the witness of the Son and of the Father?

So it is with all Scripture. What seems at first a difficulty, a discrepancy, to our imperfect vision, is ever found to be fraught with some blessed meaning that had hitherto escaped us. The Holy Spirit alone can illuminate; but He does teach those who are subject to the written Word, surely not apart from it.

Confidence in God

"But," said a child of God, "my trials and difficulties are very real."

"Just so," replied the servant of Christ to whom she was speaking, "but are not the power and grace of Christ real things too? And is not the faith that makes us use them real also?"

Oh, for more real and simple confidence in our gracious God, such as will enable us to rely most implicitly and unshakingly upon His infinite goodness and might, without the shadow of a doubt as to their willing activity on our behalf. And what rest this will give, what peace within, however much the storm may rage without and around.

"Blessed [happy] is the man that trusteth in the LORD." Jer. 17:7.

Contentment

"Be content with such things as ye have." Heb. 13:5.

Why? Is it because you are so well off in the world? because you have all that your poor rambling hearts would seek after? because there is not so much as a single chink in your circumstances through which a vain desire might make its escape? Is this to be the ground of our contentment? By no means. What then?

"For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Blessed portion!

Contrast Between Israel and the Church

Ephesians 2 makes it impossible to mingle Jewish saints of the Old Testament with the Church. The middle wall of partition separated them off, but now in Christ it is broken down. The Jew as such was bound not to accept the foundation of the Church; that is, he had to keep up the middle wall of partition and not let the Gentile in. But the principle of Christianity is that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." If the doctrine that Paul preached had been preached, say, in Hezekiah's time, it would have broken down Judaism altogether. The mixture that exists today is really the refusal of the truth of the Church; it practically denies that there is any.

David's Life Exemplifies True Meekness and Humility

The happy confidence of the preceding Psalm is not to be condemned as presumption. Eliab may accuse David of naughtiness and pride of heart, but it is not so. Hope "in the LORD" may be bold; and such was David's then, and such is that of every poor sinner who has received the grace and salvation of the gospel.

The Psalm, therefore, strikingly and beautifully follows the preceding one. It was the feeling, possibly, of the really meek David, on turning away from the reproach of Eliab (1 Sam. 17:28, 29). And this assured "hope in the LORD" is ever, when real and spiritual, combined with the quietness and subjection of a weaned child.

This allusion to David leads me for a moment to look at him in 1 Samuel 16 and 17. We may call the time of those chapters the youth or springtime of David's soul. And how beautifully simple, and how full of real moral dignity it is!

He was the neglected one of the family. But he was content to be so. He could readily tend the sheep in the field, while his more esteemed brothers remained at home to receive the guests and do the honors of the house.

On the arrival of the prophet Samuel he is called in. But as scorn had not dejected him, distinctions do not elate him. As soon as the occasion is over, he is back again among the flocks.

He is then summoned to the court of the king to do a service which none but he could do. But again, when the service is done, he is in the wilderness with his few sheep, despised but contented (chap. 17:15).

A third time he is called for. He has to go to the camp, as before to the court. But after achieving the greatest feats, he is willing to be still unknown, and without thought of resentment tells who he was to those whose ignorance of him was itself a kind of slight or indignity (chap. 17:55-58).

What beauty, what true elevation of soul! And what was the secret of all this? He found his satisfaction in Christ. The sheepfold was as important to him as the court or the camp, because the Lord was with him. He did not live by excitement, nor pine under neglect. He let the world know that he was independent of what they could either give him or make him. Blessed attainment! It may remind us of those affectionate words in the little hymn-

"Content with beholding His face,

My all to His pleasure resigned,

No changes of season or place

Could make any change in my mind.

When blest with a sense of His love,

A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove
If JESUS would dwell with me there."

Divine Love

Love to the members of the body of Christ must flow from love to the Head, and the test of love to Him is keeping His commandments, His words, His sayings (John 14:21, 23, 24).

True, the Lord's people are commanded by Him to love one another, but unbroken fellowship is not necessarily the measure of divine affection any more than an unclouded brow and smiling face are the only accompaniments of a father's love toward his child. True love to an erring child often demands stern discipline, for lack of which Eli brought sore affliction upon himself, his whole family, and the people of Israel.

But the sternest rebuke should be without "bitterness." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4:31, 32.

Nevertheless, it is but a spurious affection to the members of Christ that can tolerate unholiness and disobedience to His Word. That Word warns us solemnly that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and also exhorts us not to do evil that good may come.

The same Word says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Exod. 23:2. And, however great and sorrowful may be the declension and confusion around us, the admonition to Timothy still holds good to each one of us individually, "Keep thyself pure."

Lessons From Elijah

Though Elijah was a remarkable servant of God, it is clear that his life inwardly was not sustained in proportion to his outward testimony. With him the fire, wind, and earthquake were everything; and when outward testimony excited the malignity of the enemy, as is usual, his faith was not equal to the pressure. But mark the blessed, tender way of Jehovah with His poor servant.

He is called to go and stand before the Lord, thus proving that solitude is useless unless it be with God. We may be even as he was, under a juniper tree, or in a cave (1 Kings 19:4-9), but that is only the solitude of disappointed nature; there is neither liberty, nor rest, nor listening in that. Oh, no, it must be with God. "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD."

The demands of nature must not be yielded to. This is typified by the prophet's fasting forty days and forty nights; that which had been supplied to him was the providing of Jehovah's hand - even a "cake baken" and "a cruse of water," supplies outside nature, in the strength of which all its claims can be set aside.

3) In consequence of the two former, the prophet listens; he hears "a still small voice" - and thus receives communications and commissions which previously would have been unintelligible to him.

The Eye on Christ, Not on Events

However high the waves may rise, there is no drowning of Christ's love and thoughts toward us. The test is to our faith. The question is, Have we that faith which so realizes Christ's presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as in the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or the smooth sea, when Peter was sinking in the water; for he would have sunk without Christ, just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was, the eye was off Jesus on the wave, and that made him sink.

If we go on with Christ, we shall get into all kinds of difficulty, many a boisterous sea; but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be off events, though they be ever so solemn, and I feel them to be so; but I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favorable.

I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people, and let the world go on as it may, no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea, if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil himself cannot touch us.

The Final Word

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." Psalm 76:10.

God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. He turns everything to His own glory and purpose, and then stops all the rest. Where faith is in exercise, it counts on God through all, sure that God will have the last and final word in the matter.

The First Fruits

The distinction between the "sheaf of the firstfruits" and the two loaves, which are also called first fruits, is exceedingly beautiful. The former is Christ, for the priest was directed to "wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath" (the first day of the week) "the priest shall wave it." v. 11. Thus it is that Paul writes, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20) - the first sheaf to be waved before the Lord before the ingathering of the harvest. And of what a harvest is He, as the first fruits, the pledge! Concerning Him in this character, another has written, "It" (His resurrection) was the beginning of the true harvest - harvest gathered by power outside and beyond the natural life of the world. According to the Jewish law, nothing of the harvest could be touched before. Christ was the beginning, the first-born from the dead.

With this first of the first fruits were offered sacrifices for a sweet savor, but not for sin. It is clear there was no need for it. It is Christ who has been offered to God, quite pure, and waved before God- placed fully before His eyes for us, as raised from the dead, the beginning of a new crop before God - man in a condition which not even innocent Adam was in, the man of God's counsels, the second Man, the last Adam. Not all hanging on obedience, which might fail, and did; but, after God had been perfectly glorified in the place of sin, past death, past sin (for He died unto sin), past Satan's power, past judgment, and consequently by this, wholly out of the scene where responsible man had stood, on a totally new footing with God after His finished work, and God perfectly glorified. Such a work too as gave Him title to say, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again," and made it God's righteousness to set Him at His own right hand in glory.

Following upon this, they were to number fifty days unto the morrow after the sabbath, and offer a new meat offering unto the Lord, composed of two wave loaves, of two tenth deals of fine flour, baked with leaven, "the firstfruits unto the LORD." It is no longer Christ here, but those who are His, the first fruits of His creatures. (See Jas. 1:18.) They are considered as being on earth, and leaven is found in them. Therefore, though offered to God, they were not burned as a sweet savor (Lev. 2:12); but with the loaves was offered a sin offering, which answered by its efficacy to the leaven found in them. They are the saints of which Pentecost commenced the gathering.

Once more we find the expression first fruits in Scripture. Of the hundred and forty-four thousand who will stand on Mount Sion with the Lamb (Rev. 14), it is said, "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." v. 4. These are the first fruits of the earth, after the Church has been caught away to be with the Lord, and will be gathered from among the two tribes who will be in the land during the sway and power of antichrist. They will pass through the unequaled sorrow of those days (see Matt. 24:21, 22), and the Lord will give them a special place with Himself in the kingdom; they will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. As the ingathering at Pentecost was the first fruits of the Church, these will be the first fruits of the kingdom.

Floods in the N.W. Pacific - Millenium: the Editor's Column

Floods In The Pacific Northwest Compared With Rain In "Due Season" In The Millennium

The floods which ravaged the Pacific Northwest in the areas of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington during December and January were described by one hydrologist as "a once-in-a-thousand years' storm." One United States Forest Service report likened the deluge to a "hydraulic hose gone wild." The magnitude of the damage is still uncalculated. The waters just came and continued to come until 24 inches of warm rain, in a 5-day period, had been dumped upon a heavy snow pack on the heights of the Sierra, Cascade, and Trinity Mountains. About 50 persons lost their lives; and highways, bridges, and railroads were washed out. Many months of costly rebuilding will be required to restore the transportation system of the vast area. One railroad is reported to have lost 92 freight cars which are presumed to have been washed out to sea; many more are covered with mud and debris.

The two states of California and Oregon estimated their damages to highways and bridges at \$84,000,000. All of this is in addition to the losses incurred by individuals, corporations, and municipalities. There is widespread unemployment in the lumbering region because of these things. Homes were torn from their foundations and soon became a part of the general wreckage. It is estimated that there is an accumulated damage of at least one billion dollars.

We were much interested in a report of the United States meteorology department which gave its accounting for the causes of the strange weather. The men who study the weather explained that usually there is what they call a Pacific High, which is a mass of high-pressure air that occupies most of the area between Alaska and Hawaii. This normally shields California in winter from the rain-bearing oceanic winds. This time, the Pacific High broke into two parts, the one moving southward to the latitude of Mexico, and the other moving northward to the Gulf of Alaska. Through the resulting low-pressure gap, warm, moist, tropical air flowed into Northern California, inundating cities and hamlets. The department further reported that at one time the break in the Pacific High seemed to have gone back together, but then it broke away again, and the storm repeated.

We were impressed by the lack of agreement among meteorologists as to the causes for all this. Various suggestions were made, but these experts "ruefully admit that they cannot spot the ultimate causes with any assurance." Meteorology is as yet an uncertain science. Not only is the control of the weather not in men's hands, but even the accounting for the shifts is beyond human estimation.

God still "moves behind the scenes, and moves all the scenes He is behind." Man is, after all, dependent on Him for all that he is and has on the earth, no matter how much he seeks to disregard the facts. Human beings are just transients on the earth, and there is none abiding. God asked a question of men: "Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and what is His

Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Pro. 30:4.

The prophet Amos said: "Seek Him... that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His name." Amos 5:8. He has only to call for the waters of the sea, and they obey Him. When the Lord Jesus was here on earth as a man, He had but to speak, "Peace, be still... and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). Psalm 148:8 says: "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word." Mankind has gone on with general indifference toward God, accepting all the mercies from His hand without thankfulness, and without the fear of Him. In the days of Noah, men went on their ways eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came "and destroyed them all." The very elements should remind men of the power of God, and of their accountability to Him. "The wickedness of man was great in the earth," and He sent the deluge by which "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." 2 Pet. 3:6.

When the Lord Jesus will come in power and great glory, and judge the living, He will set up His kingdom in righteousness. Then there will be great changes on the earth, including climatic changes. Violent storms will be quelled, and the earth will be at rest. God will not require to use the schemes of men for changing the surface of the earth. A sample of men's efforts to produce changes is witnessed in Israel with their great reforestation plans, their carrying water by aqueducts to the arid Negeb section of the country, and the schemes for converting sea water. He will call for the waters of the sea to furnish His land with water. For many centuries Israel has suffered from drought, and the reasons are given: "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." Isa. 5:6. Men may conjecture on the reasons for drought and deluge, but the Word of God lets us into the secrets. It was done in His government according to the design of His own hand; but in the days of Christ's kingdom "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35:1).

When Israel walked before the Lord in their land, He gave them rain from heaven "in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil." Deut. 11:14. They did not require irrigation, but the rain was sure "in due season." They were promised that "The LORD shall open unto thee His good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season." Deut. 28:12. The "first rain," elsewhere called the "early rain," fell regularly in about October (allowing for variations in the calendar) in the month "Bul," meaning rain, in time for their planting, or sowing. The "latter rain" fell about our month of February. This intervening season was set aside by God for harvesting their crops which would not thus be interfered with by rain.

In the days of Samuel, when the people rejected the Lord and asked for a king, it became a sign of God's signal displeasure that they would have rain during the harvest: "Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king." 1 Sam. 12:16, 17.

Now in the days of Israel's future blessing, the seasons will be in due order with the appointed rain; and "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hos. 6:3.

God's sure word for them in that day is: "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He hath given you the former rain moderately [or, in due measure], and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain...." Joel 2:23.

In those days after Israel's repentance and restoration, the abundance of produce will be so great that the one who harvests this year's harvest, will find such bountiful store that the one who sows next year's seed will find the reaper still gathering the previous crop (Amos 9:13). Our portion as Christians will be with Christ in heaven; that will be our portion, but when Christ reigns, the earth will be blessed abundantly.

"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and the righteous remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isa. 32:15-18.

In the days of the kingdom there will be no need for great fertilizer plants, nor for insecticides and pesticides. The face of the earth will scarcely be recognizable; but until then troubles and difficulties are bound to increase, for "all the foundations of the earth are out of course" (Psalm 82:5).

God's Sufficiency Learned: Discipline

In our course here we have to pass through a twofold discipline - the first on ourselves, and the other on that which we value. And each has, or produces, an effect very peculiar and distinct in itself. The one is to cast me on God for help, the other, to cast me on Him for comfort and rest. In the one, it is His power rather that I turn to; in the other, it is more to abide in His rest.

When saints are suffering because of their bodily afflictions, they are taught how powerless they are. All flesh is as grass; there is a sense of the impotence of man when one is languishing under a painful illness, and then it is that the saint turns to God and values His power, because all human power is felt to be at an end; and this is a great lesson. Job learned it: "I know [he says] that Thou canst do everything"-there is no power in me, all is in God. Now this removes the great impediment to faith; because if I am so reduced and helpless, I cannot do aught but turn to God, as Jonah did when in the bottom of the sea. "Twice [it needs to be repeated] have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." This is the great groundwork of dependence; it is the only ground the widow can take in going to the unjust judge (Luke 18); he had power; she had none. The pressure on her was so complete that she was driven to appeal to the only one that had power, though he was otherwise most repulsive.

The second kind of discipline is that which I value being removed, and for this I need comfort. If I am friendless, or like Jonah, gourdless, I have no one to comfort me but God. Thus you see whether your suffering is confined only to yourself, or whether it is from the breakup of things around; what you have to learn is the sufficiency of God. There is but the one thought with God in disciplining you; namely, to make your trials an opportunity for your heart to learn and discover more of His love, and the resources which are in Him, as He has revealed them to us in His Son, who has come near to us to acquaint our hearts with both the help and the comfort; and therefore He not only rests us, but gives us rest. In the one it is His power relieving us; in the other it is Himself imparting the state of rest-the thing itself to us.

May we each learn more fully what He can do, or, rather, that He can do all things; and may we know, to the exceeding comfort and unspeakable joy of our hearts, that all our springs are in Him.

An Honest and Good Heart

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Luke 19:8, 9.

It is plainly the language of a benevolent and conscientious heart without the knowledge of salvation, which the Lord brought that day to Zacchaeus' house. The tone of Zacchaeus is as different as possible from that of the self-righteous Pharisee who "stood and prayed... with himself" (chap. 18:11, 12). Here was the case of a man who was truly in earnest. Neither his diminutive stature nor the crowd around the Lord hindered him. Would that we might see many as truly in earnest as the blind beggar and Zacchaeus! The Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, called His own sheep by name; He said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Zacchaeus tells the Lord what had been the habitual practice of "an honest and good heart," which had yearned after better things; but still, however blessed it is to see human righteousness where it exists, there was no recognition of this when it was the question of bringing salvation to him - "This day is salvation come to this house... for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Hope Set Before Us

Heb. 10:23

It is difficult to understand why our translators have rendered the original of this scripture, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith." There is no question of any difference of reading, and yet the word "faith" has been substituted for "hope," and thereby the whole sense of the scripture altered. It should be then "the confession of the hope" which we are urged to hold fast. What then is "the hope" to which the writer refers? It is mentioned first in chapter 3:6: "If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Passing on to chapter 6, we read of those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (v. 18). And the next two verses explain that the hope, which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, is Jesus, who has entered there as our forerunner, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. In chapter 9, we further read that Christ will appear the second time, unto them that look for Him, without sin unto salvation (v. 28). If we now combine these scriptures, it seems evident that "the hope" of this epistle is Christ coming out of the heavenly sanctuary for the salvation-salvation final and complete-of His people. This hope, as so explained, would carry with it a peculiar force for the Hebrew saints, to whom this epistle was primarily written, accustomed as they had been, especially on the great day of atonement, to await the coming out of the high priest from the holiest, in evidence that all the rites of that day had been efficaciously accomplished.

An illustration of this is found in the Gospel of Luke. Zacharias (the priest) had gone into the temple of the Lord to burn incense, "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." Again, "And the people... marveled that he tarried so long in the temple" (chap. 1:10-21). So in the Epistle to the Hebrews,

Jesus, the Son of God, has, as the great High Priest, passed "through" the heavens into the heavenly sanctuary; and His people are waiting outside, down here, for His reappearing; and this constitutes their hope. Well might the Holy Ghost exhort us to hold it fast, for there is no part of the truth which believers are so liable to surrender as the hope of their Lord's return; for it is bound up with the very essence of Christianity, and with the nature of the heavenly calling.

The House of Dates

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:19, etc.; 12:1-8; Luke 24:50

I desire to trace a little some striking incidents connected with this place, and some blessed practical realities which flow out of them.

Bethany was a spot which had a peculiar place in the heart of the blessed Lord while journeying through this earth. He is presented in Scripture as the perfect stranger in this world, particularly in John where is set forth the fact of His rejection from the outset. He was Light in the midst of darkness, Life in the midst of death - a stranger out of sight and out of mind. At Bethany only did He find that which met His heart. There He was understood and appreciated, at least by one; and there He often loved to retire. Truly it was a spot where alone He found that which was congenial to His spirit.

There are three distinct namings of Bethany in the New Testament, for I cannot connect the scene of Luke 7 with it. I do not see any warrant for saying the woman in the 7th of Luke was Mary, or that it was at Bethany. Scripture lays stress on the fact that Martha received Him into her house, in all the love of her heart. Every service to Him found its full value in His eyes, who never overlooked anything; yet it was nothing compared with the ministry of Mary. The treasures of Martha's house were at His feet, but Mary gives Him her heart, her affections; and this is what the Lord looks for. And may I not say, as He looks around now on every side, He sees no lack of service-service abundant on every hand? and His heart fully values all that is done for Him. It surely has its place, and far be it from me to lessen it; but with all the activity and energy and zeal which have "the poor" for their object, what the Lord is looking for is those who will minister to His pleasure. The Lord appreciated the care of Martha; but when she sought to make a depreciating contrast between herself and Mary, His judgment and thoughts express themselves. And solemn it is to think, that though many may be serving after their own way and thoughts, there are but few who really enter into His mind and mission.

Mary turned her ear to Him as she sat at His feet, in order that He might relate to her waiting heart what He delights to tell. This is what He looks for now, as then; but, oh, how few of His beloved people understand the mind and ways of their Lord. There is nothing He so values as the listening ear turned to Him - nothing that meets Him like one that waits on His fullness. Mary is thus the vessel into which His own fullness is emptying its treasures. Do we know this blessed attitude? Oh, for that abstractedness of heart that has leisure from all around, and as well from all within, so as to sit and listen! "Mary... sat at Jesus' feet." The Christ, His Person and moral glory, so attracted her that it brought her into restfulness. We never can hear aright until we are restful, and we must be restful ere we can profit by what we hear. The Word is the voice of God to me. Till the heart is brought into a position of complete abstraction from things around, to wait in the presence of Christ and give Him the ear, there is no profit. Would to

God our hearts had a deeper sense of it! The Word is the communication He makes from Himself to us today; but in order to receive it, the heart must be at leisure, and the soul at rest, and the ear preoccupied by Christ.

"Martha was cumbered about much serving." There is a tendency to distraction in all service, blessed though it be in its place. All of us have some service given us to do for Christ - it would be sad indeed if we were in a position that we had nothing to do for Him - the great point is the way it is done. What is needed is the quietness of communion so as to go out from Himself, and then to return to Himself. There are those who work, thinking thereby to get into communion. They can never know or enjoy it this way. All real service must flow from communion; then it is Christ and Christ's thoughts. It is a wonderfully blessed thing to get outside the influences of the world, as well as our own hearts, into His thoughts. Nothing is so terribly soul-devastating as the influence of the age of this world; we must be abstracted from the atmosphere through which we are passing, in order to have rest and power.

Mary ministered to the heart of Christ, because she was in His secret. It is a blessed thing to be in the secret of Christ's heart, the secret of His love, and thus to be in communion with Him. Mary was as much in His secret when she sat and heard His word, as when she anointed Him with the ointment. When she sat and listened, He was molding her into His own mind and thoughts. Do we know how to be exercised as to whether we are in the secrets of Christ or not? Do we know what His desires, His longings, are? What His heart is set on? We have a beautiful illustration of this in 2 Sam. 23:15. There was no command or direction here, but there was a longing utterance of David's heart. "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem." David knew Bethlehem well; his heart pined for drafts from the waters of its well; he knew what was to be found there. Are we near enough to Christ, so abstracted from all around, as to wait at His feet with the attentive ear, and upturned eye, and outstretched neck, to catch the desires of His heart? Are we studying His pleasure, so as to do His will - not taking our own thoughts, but His thoughts, as to what would suit Him?

In Mary we find one in the world who was in His secret as to His mission in it. She opened, as it were, a sanctuary for Him. She was but a poor thing in herself, but her ear was opened to catch the sounds of His voice, so as to receive what He was so ready to communicate. The Lord give us to know what it is to be drawn aside by the excellency and beauty of this blessed One, thus to sit before Him and study the secret of His heart and pleasure.

Now turn to John 11. We get here the same town of Bethany, but devastated by death; it is a scene of everyday life in this world's history. The sisters are the same Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus; but death has come in. Blessed spot though it was, Bethany was no exception to the tale of sorrow that marks this world. As soon as death had come, we have Mary in the presence of Jesus uttering her need. There is the greatest difference between complaint and need. The need that waits upon His fullness is precious to Him.

We find complaint in Martha, need in Mary; and she expresses it. In verse 32 we find her at the spot that was familiar to her heart - "she fell down at His feet." It was a well-known spot to Mary. Is it so with us? These little incidents make the place where He meets with us, and we with Him, such familiar and blessed places to our souls. If you have burdens, or difficulties, or anxieties resting on your heart, do you know a spot so familiar to you, where you can come and leave them? She does

not come complaining, but casts herself at His feet, and spreads her sorrow in the presence of divine fullness - a broken heart in the presence of the Healer of hearts. What a scene! If we look at it on His part, we see how He enters into everything as to what had caused the sorrow as well as the sorrow itself. He bore it in His spirit before God. Human sympathy is only the expression of our helplessness and weakness; it is all we can do; but we find Christ meeting everything, groaning, weeping, carrying all in His spirit before God, thus bearing it before Him in a way none other could do.

Do you know how to study the groans and the tears of Jesus? He weeps at the grave; bears in His spirit the death that sin had brought in, though He was about to remove it by His power as Son of God, the quickener of the dead; yet this did not in any wise hinder His going underneath it all in spirit. His tears and His groans were not His sorrow for the family, not like human sympathy for the loss of a common loved friend; He was there as the Lord of life and glory, the quickener of the dead, to raise him up; but He first, as I have said, carries all in His own spirit before God. Am I speaking to some who are no strangers to need and sorrow? What do you do with those sorrows? What do you do with your cares? Blessed are the sorrows and cares that become opportunities of bringing us into the presence of the only One who is able to meet our every need. In this scene of John 11 we get not only the power of Christ, but Mary expressing her need in His blessed presence, and finding the expression of it enough.

Chapter 12. Here we have Mary again in the secret of Christ. She takes that which is most costly to her, and anoints the feet of Jesus. Two things are very striking here.

First, she felt the enmity of man toward Christ; second, the expression of how she appreciated Him, when all hated Him, and when He was about to die. She felt the enmity and hatred of both Israel and the Gentiles toward Christ. We are all naturally selfish, engrossed with our own things. Oh, how little are we at leisure from self to be of like mind with Him! Her heart was free enough to think of the enmity of man toward Him, and she as well expresses her own love and appreciation of Him; and therefore she takes what is costly and valuable to her, and anoints His body for the burying; and by this action she, as it were, declares that if He dies everything in this world has lost its charm for her. She is in His secret; she knows He is about to die; consequently, everything she has is as nothing to her; she buries her world with Him; all must go into His tomb.

How much have our hearts laid hold of the glory of His Person, of the blessedness of that Christ, the eternal Son, ever in the Father's bosom? Has He such a place in our hearts that everything is esteemed and valued in relation to Him? Is He the simple measure of the value we set on all, even to the best below? Here is a poor weak woman ready to face the enmity of the people because she enters into God's thoughts about His Son, when the thoughts of nearly all were very distant from His mind. There are hardly any who are independent enough to act simply, in reference to Christ; if you do, you must stand alone. If you are merely a benefactor of man, your labors will be noted. If Christ is simply before you, filling the vision of your soul, if all you do is in reference to Him, if you are ministering to the pleasure of Christ, all the world will consider it "waste"; and, alas! many of God's own children. What was it, when she was blamed, kept her heart? Three things. First, the blessed Lord understood her. How comforting to know that Christ understands me! It is wonderful comfort. Second, He vindicated her. Third, He appreciated her. This kept her in the midst of the non-recognition of those who were halfhearted. There was no heart there to enter into

what she was doing but Himself - no tongue to vindicate her but His. But He was enough! We want more of that holy boldness that is satisfied with Christ's vindication, more of that holy satisfaction which Christ's pleasure imparts, to take our stand on that platform of holy elevation - the Lord knows. His smile is enough, His vindication sufficient, for me. Thus we find Him communicating to Mary in Luke 10; His fullness waiting on her need in John 11; and in chapter 12 she was in sympathy with Him as to what was then before His soul.

We find in Luke 24, He ascends out of the world from Bethany, the spot with which He was most linked in all its varied memories; it was to Him, as it were, the brightest spot on earth, an oasis in a howling wilderness; there and there alone this blessed perfect Man had turned and found solace; but this is the spot from whence He departed when He left the earth. Think of the character this fixes upon the earth; if He left it from the place that was to Him the brightest spot upon it, if any place could be called bright, it marks this earth at once. Its best had become but the platform of His departure out of it. What a sight this- the risen, glorious Man who has triumphed over everything, going down under the ocean of judgment, forsaken of His God on the cross, now risen out of those depths into which His undying love had led Him. What a sight for faith! Himself leading His disciples to the place that was familiar to His heart, the only spot where He had ever found refreshment as the weary stranger on earth, and to gaze at Him as He ascends from thence and is carried up into heaven. But first, how blessed to hear Himself pronounce their peace, thus quieting their fears, answering their troubled hearts (vv. 3640); then the very hands that were pierced and nailed to the cross were lifted up in blessing; and from those uplifted hands, what showers dropped upon them!

Blessed it is to think that His very last act was blessing. The last they saw of Him was commanding the shower to flow from Himself. Have we hearts free enough to follow the departing One through such scenes? And as we follow, do we find ourselves carried up and away to heaven with Him who has gone from this earth? Thank God, though He is not here, we know Him in heaven. Are our hearts familiar with Him there? Can we say, I have gained Him in heaven if I have lost Him on earth - I am one with Him there? Thus it is you miss Him here; thus alone His absence makes the earth a desert to you. There are two ways of looking at this poor earth. First, because of what is in it - sorrow, difficulty, and trouble of every kind. Second, and mostly, because of His absence. This makes it a far more real desert scene to the heart that knows and loves Him. If He is our object, we must miss Him as we move on through time; but if we know Him in heaven, the world is a dreary, desolate spot to us, because He is gone out of it. If He has left it from the very place where He alone found any response to His heart and affections, what sort of a world must it be with this appraising of it?

May the Lord by His spirit give us to hear Him speaking "peace" through His risen lips, and likewise to know the blessing that drops from His outstretched hands, so that we may know what it is to be in the secret of His heart, by having every affection of ours centered in Him.

In Storm and Calm: Mark 4:35-41

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes among us, and no doubt we fully believe it; but yet when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God's opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm; and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance - "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever" - the same grand reality for faith to lean upon, cling to, and draw upon, at all times, and under all circumstances.

But, alas! alas! we are unbelieving. Here lies the source of 'the weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about when we ought to be counting on God; we are "beckoning to our partners" when we ought to be "looking unto Jesus." Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonor the Lord in our ways. Doubtless, there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord, when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart.

Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Gen. 50 "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." vv. 15-17. It was a sad return to make for all the grace and love and tender care which the injured Joseph had exercised toward them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were utterly in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." vv. 19-21.

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion of Mark 4:36-38. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves

beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

Here, then, we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm - the ship full of water-the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed; and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it, and seek to learn the lesson which it reads Out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief, when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us this absurdity is very apparent, for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared. It may be said, they did not just think of the Son of God at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel; and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God-in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory - in the multiplying of empty vessels, in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all their circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted.

He was found as a man in every respect, and as such He slept on a pillow and was rocked by the ocean's wave. The storm beat upon the vessel, and the billows rolled over it, although the Creator was on board in the Person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary-He slept, and He was tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. Oh, reader, pause and meditate on this wondrous sight! Look closely, think deeply. No tongue, no pen, can do justice to such a scene. We cannot expatiate, we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What a question! "Carest Thou not?" How it must have wounded the heart of the Lord Jesus! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say "Carest Thou not?"

And yet, Christian reader, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often in moments of pressure and trial do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest Thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills belong to God, yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand; and yet day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters, in some way or another; the storm rages, wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel, we are brought to our extremity, we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Carest Thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion, should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us—who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery, and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath - how can such a One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink, and under which we so wince, is far more precious than gold; for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines; and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honor and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way; they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Alas! what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel, and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass by that voice which, of old, had called worlds into existence. "And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest Thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust Thee? Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and un-upbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied from His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God and very man; and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by

day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion of doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that not a hair of our head can ever be touched.

Well may He say to us, as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" It would indeed seem, at times, as though we had no faith. But oh, His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succor us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt and suspect. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy ocean homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very center of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus; and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" It is impossible for us to perish with the Master on board, nor can we ever think so with Christ in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ. We really need this, just now, and shall need it more and more. It must be Christ Himself laid hold of and enjoyed, in the heart, by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

Jacob at Peniel

There are some beautiful truths contained in the mystery of Jacob at Peniel. It is clear, I judge, that his faith had failed. Instead of remembering the promise, and passing on in the quietness of faith, his soul, through unbelief, gets into great exercise. Instead of looking at God's host, he looks at Esau's host; he fears, and prays, and calculates, and settles all according to man's best device. Here was exercise when all should have been stillness. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." And often it is unbelief that raises exercise of spirit. There is such a thing as religious unbelief, praying unbelief. We have an instance of it here. Jacob was in exercise of heart; he was praying when he should have been still as a stone, asleep in the promise; for so God gives His beloved sleep. With all this, of course, the Lord is at issue. He has a controversy with all this.

Accordingly, He comes out to wrestle with Jacob. But this wrestling and all that accompanies it has deep meaning for the soul. I might look at this in a few particulars.

The first thing learned is that which I have already noticed, that the Lord has a quarrel with Jacob. So has He with us all. His truth or word addresses us in the very first instance, as those who have departed from Him, and with whom He has a very serious question to settle. In His Word, He withstands us to our face; He convicts us; He tells us that all is far indeed from being peace between Him and us.

But in the wondrous management of this quarrel, the Lord allows Jacob to prevail; and He has to sue for, and even purchase deliverance from, his grasp. So with us.

If the Lord pleased, He could consume us. He could let out His righteous anger and destroy us. The mere touch of His hand withered Jacob's thigh, so one charge of ten thousand would undo us, and leave us in hopeless condemnation. But He did not deal according to His strength with Jacob; neither does He deal with us sinners according to His righteousness. He allows Himself to be prevailed over. It is all His grace, all His own counsel and doing; but so it is. He allows Himself to be prevailed over, He has committed Himself to a promise which ties up His strength. He has revealed a gospel in the blood of His dear Son which decides His way toward us in peace. He cannot deny Himself. He has put Himself in such an attitude before us, that faith must prevail and get the blessing. No victory is so sure as when a willingly emptied and unresisting enemy is against us.

If I were to fight with a Goliath, knowing that he meant to lay aside his arrows and his strength, my victory would be surer than if I were to meet the weakest boy in the camp. For in the latter conflict, I should still have to measure the strength and to think of the chances, though they might be never so much on my side; but in the former conflict, I need not count on chances at all - the victory was already and altogether sure. So here with Jacob; so in the gospels with us sinners. We have to do with One who has laid aside His strength and His weapons of war, who says, "My terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall My hand be heavy upon thee." Job 33:7. He has provided a way whereby He may fold up all His instruments of death, lay aside His righteousness and fiery

vengeance of law, which He might so justly have drawn out against us; and He has given the sinner, like Jacob, to prevail for a blessing through that promise by which He has put Himself before us in an attitude of gracious or voluntary impotency.

The gospel, when He has taken up His position, hides all that would destroy us. And such is the way of this divine Stranger with Jacob here.

3) We then see the nature of the blessing. His name is now Israel, for he has power with God; and this secures him power over man, and all beside. And so it is with the believer. He can say all is his; he has got, through grace, the key to divine fullness; all that God is and has is for him. And he can, in the sense of this, say (as Jacob, after he became Israel, might have said of Esau), "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He is conscious of this. The sense of it is attached to him. In spirit he has power with God and with man, and has prevailed. Faith prevails. It hushes Sinai, it answers the accuser, it pleads Christ to the demands of the law, and thus satisfies them; it meets the Father in the Beloved, and delights Him; it shouts a triumph over death, because of Christ's resurrection; it assures itself of all glory, because of Christ's oneness with His poor people. The believer thus prevails.

We see the natural slowness in understanding this-in apprehending God in the gospel of His grace. "Tell me... Thy name," says Israel to God. This is to be rebuked. "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" But in no other way will God be known, save in the blessing of the gospel, in the revelation of His grace in Christ. As the Lord here blesses Jacob in answer to the inquiry, What is Thy name? we are now to turn from other witnesses, and to learn "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). We may be slow, like Jacob, but God is sure.

After this we see the happy issue of it all. Jacob now learns that he has been with God, and yet, a wonder to himself, his life is preserved. His thigh may halt, but his life is preserved. And all this gives us a striking view of the issue of a poor sinner's faith in the gospel, now simple, full, and established. He knows that he has the face of God bright upon him, not to consume, but to cheer and bless him. That glory that would have been intolerable to man or to flesh is welcome to the believer. He knows God's righteousness remains unmitigated; but he knows that he has it in Him, and thus no glory is too bright for him. He can see God and live. He can stand in His presence, and rejoice instead of tremble. He bears in his spirit, it is true, the pledge of being but a saved sinner-one whom God might righteously and easily have consumed, but one whom grace has put in a place, not of defeat, but of victory - not of death, but of life. He is a halting conqueror. Such was Jacob. Such is every believer. And such will he be forever. Life and victory will be his, but he will never forget that he is debtor to grace for it all.

Jesus: the Author and Finisher of Faith

Heb. 12:2

All the witnesses for God spoken of in Hebrews 11 are for our encouragement in the path of faith; but then there is a difference between them and Jesus. Accordingly, the Apostle here singles Him out of all.

If I see Abraham, who by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, or Isaac, who blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, or Jacob on his dying bed of blessing and worship, they have all run their race before; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. Besides, in Him there is the grace to sustain us on the race. Therefore, in looking unto Jesus we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Jesus the love which led Him to take this place for us, who, "when He putteth forth His own sheep,... goeth before them." For, if a race is to be run, we need a forerunner. And in Jesus we have got One who did run before us, and has become the Captain and Completer of faith, in looking to whom we draw strength into our souls. While Abraham and the rest filled up in their little measure their several places, Christ has filled up the whole course of faith. There is no position that I can be in, no trial whatever that I can endure, but Christ has passed through all and overcome. Thus I have got One who presents Himself in that character which I need; and I find in Him One who knows what grace is wanted, and will supply it; for He has overcome, and says to me, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" - not, you shall overcome, but, I have overcome. It was so in the case of the blind man (John 9:31) who was chased out of the synagogue; and why? Because Jesus had been cast out before him. And now we learn that, however rough the storm may be, it does but throw us the more thoroughly on Christ; and thus that which would have been a sore trial does but chase us closer to Him.

Whatever turns the eye away from Christ is but a hindrance to our running the race that is set before us. If Christ has become the object of the soul, let us lay aside every weight. If I am running a race, a cloak, however comfortable, would only hinder and must be got rid of; it is a weight, and would prevent my running. I do not want anything to entangle my feet. If I am looking to Jesus in the appointed race, I must throw the cloak aside; otherwise, it would seem strange to throw away so useful a garment. Nay, more; however much encouragement the history of antecedent faithful witnesses in Hebrews 11 may give, our eye must be fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful One. There is not a trial or difficulty that He has not passed through before me, and found His resources in God the Father. He will supply the needed grace to my heart.

There were these two features in the life of Christ down here. First, He exercised constant dependence on His Father; as He said, "I live by the Father." The new man is ever a dependent man. The moment we get out of dependence, we get into the flesh. It is not through our own life (for, indeed, we have but death) that we really live, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. In the highest possible sense, He walked in dependence on the Father; and for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Second, His affections were undivided. You never find Christ having any new object revealed to Him, so as to induce Him to go on in His path

of faithfulness. Paul and Stephen, on the other hand, had the glory revealed to them, which enabled them to endure. For when heaven was opened to Stephen, the Lord appeared in glory to him, as afterward to Saul of Tarsus. But when the heavens were opened on Jesus, there was no object presented to Him; but, on the contrary, He was the Object of heaven; the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the voice of the Father declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus, the divine Person of the Lord is always being witnessed to. The Apostle here lays hold of the preciousness of Christ in the lowliness into which He has come; but he never loses sight of the glory of Him who has come there. So when I get Christ at the baptism of John, I see Him at the lowest point (save in another way on the cross); and finding Him there, I find all the divine compassion of His heart.

Thoughts on John 10, 11, and 12

In the tenth chapter of John the Lord is presented to us as the Shepherd, leading out of the Jewish things and, by dying, bringing His people into the new place, obtaining the flock, the sheep, for Himself-securing them where they are characterized as going in and out and finding pasture. He is seen, of course, as laying down His life that He might have these sheep.

In the eleventh chapter, He is represented as "the resurrection," not only as laying down His life and obtaining the sheep, but as "the resurrection, and the life" Himself, with power in Him to raise His own from the dead.

In the twelfth chapter, (I just mention these leading points in the chapters), we find something far more blessed. He is there represented as the "corn of wheat" that "falls into the ground and dies," that it may bear much fruit. His own are really there associated with Him, seen as the very fruit of this precious grain that has fallen into the ground. It has borne fruit, the corn of wheat itself; and they are seen as part of that very corn-part of its preciousness and beauty. It falls into the ground and dies alone, but it does not come up to be alone; it comes up bearing fruit.

Some Thoughts on John 17

This is a most wonderful chapter, inasmuch as we are admitted to hear what the Lord says, not to His disciples, but to His Father. It does not properly contain instructions; it is the heart of the Lord which is expressed openly to the Father.

The great truth that it contains is, that it placed his disciples in His own position, as well toward the Father as toward the world; and then, at the end of the chapter, He wishes us to be along with Him. In the first verses it lays the foundation of this new position. We can observe here too that in this Gospel His death is only spoken of as a departure from this world (chap. 13:1, 2).

The Lord had received all power over all men to give eternal life to those whom the Father had given Him; and this expression, That they are those whom the Father had given Him, we find frequently. His disciples are a precious present that the Father had made Him; and Jesus is charged with guarding them, saving them, and making them fit to present them to the Father in His house. Jesus always thinks of the glory of the Father, and never abandons the position of servant, which He had taken.

Christ is the eternal life (1 John 1). When one receives the Word, one receives Christ who is the life which is communicated to us by Christ, when the Word works in us through faith. Here the character of the life is the knowledge of the Father and of the Son. At verse 4, Christ has finished the necessary work, notwithstanding all the difficulties He had encountered on earth. In virtue of this work He demands of the Father to be glorified with that glory which He had as God; and now He will possess that same eternal glory likewise as man. He will return into His former glory as man, in virtue of the work which He has done for us, with the view of having us likewise in the same glory along with Himself.

It is a wonderful thing that there should be a Man in heaven, in the presence of God, glorified - and this Man perfected in everything! This Man has been down here to pass through our trials, to know our difficulties, and to manifest to men all divine goodness. Such was one of His designs in coming on the earth, and this fact inspires us with full confidence in His presence. He now demands to be glorified, because on earth He has no more to do. If He had not finished the work, He would not have been able to depart, to go into the glory.

At verse 6, Jesus says that He has manifested the Father's name to His own; and this is what He has done during all His ministry, as we see in the gospels - for example, in the Lord's sermon. According to this revelation we are introduced into the position of sons with the Father, as is expressed still more clearly to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father."

It is beautiful to see that, notwithstanding the great feebleness, the incredulity, and the unbelief of His disciples, Jesus, in speaking to the Father, gives them the honor, as if they had kept His word, and elsewhere as if they had persevered in all His afflictions. They had, no doubt, done so, but with what weakness and infirmity, which should have made them blush to hear these praises! But

Jesus presents them to the Father according to His love, which was perfect, and acts so as not to see the defects in the loved objects. The Jews were fully expecting that Jehovah would give some things to the Messiah, but the disciples had known that the Father had given "all things" to the Son.

John Baptist's Head in a Charger

How solemnly in the Word of God is the world exposed, and its true character set forth! Not with all the revolting details of a newspaper, which defile the mind, but in all its terrible principles. Such an exposure is before us in the story of King Herod and John the Baptist.

In a man of great worldly position the principles of the world come out more fully, because he has scope for carrying them out, being able to act so largely according to his own will without restraint of others. In this incident are clearly exhibited "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). And the manifestation is the more striking because of being in one who had heard John gladly, and had done many things (Mark 6:20). Yet, whatever his reformation may have been, he was under the power of a sinful connection; and when John reproved him on account of this, he cast him into prison. However he might delight in hearing John, he would brook no interference in this matter. Indeed, so enraged was he that he would have killed him, only that he feared the people by whom John was accounted a prophet. It is probable that, when the heat of his anger died down, he fostered no such intention. Yet he detained him in prison, and this doubtless in consideration of his guilty partner, who retained her anger against John. This then is the starting point of the narrative. There is a guilty intimacy carried on in spite of the faithful reproof of the messenger of God; and, under the influence of that intimacy, an acting weakly and wrongly in persecuting the reprover, though unwilling to carry the persecution so far as death. Now we shall see how Satan takes advantage of all this to work through the lusts of the poor victim he ensnares, and thus carry out his own foul intention. The flesh ever seeks gratification. Satan ever seeks to frustrate the purpose, and overthrow the testimony of God. To this end he works through the flesh, ensnaring and leading men to an end which they had no thought of reaching.

It was Herod's birthday, a day which naturally fastens a man's thoughts upon himself and gives desire for self-gratification. Herod "made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee." It was a royal entertainment of which he himself was the center. What could the flesh desire more? It was gratified to the full. And now the eyes were also gratified by the exhibition before them of the beauty of Herodias's daughter, the grace of her movements, the elegance of her dancing; she pleased Herod and them that sat with him. What a circle of delight! Then Herod must be equal to the occasion. If all this is for his gratification, he must not act meanly; he must act as a king. So he swore to her, saying, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." Here is the pride of life - the assumption of power to give sovereignly whatever is asked.

For a moment we may pause to consider the precious contrast to all this in the life and ways of the Lord Jesus. Though Lord of all, He took the place of a subject-obedient, dependent man upon earth. Instead of making Himself the center of earth's ministry, He came to minister, finding the scope of that ministry in man's need, and the rule of it in His Father's will.

Satan displayed before Him all the glory of the world, only to be indignantly rejected. His poor disciples besought Him, "Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall

desire.... Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory." How affecting was His reply after questioning them: "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." (Mark 10:35-40.) He assumes no power to give in the kingdom which He will take obediently to His Father's will, but in grace He will associate those whom He loves with Himself in His path of suffering and rejection.

Let us now note the character of the one who had pleased Herod to the extent of gaining such a promise confirmed by an oath. It is fair to assume that such pleasure was produced by her beauty and the gracefulness of her movements. Who could have thought that behind all this was a heart taking positive delight in corruption and violence! Oh! world! world! here is the character of those who seduce thee by their charms!

The immoral mother, with a heart thirsting for revenge upon God's servant, was the instigator; but evidently the daughter entered eagerly into the plan. Matthew informs us that all was designed beforehand, and that the daughter was instructed of her mother. Yet it would appear that she again referred it to Herodias (see Mark's account) on receiving the king's promise, and the plan was confirmed. Then with haste she went to the king and said, "I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist." What but a heart perfectly accustomed to wickedness could have led her with haste to express before the king and his assembled guests the desire to have in her own hands the severed head of God's honored servant? In a dish would she have it, as if to make manifest that it was alone the food that would appease their hunger for revenge.

The king was sorry. He had been ensnared and brought to a point which he had not thought to reach. Even yet there was an opportunity to escape, for that which was asked belonged not to him. On the contrary, he was placed in authority to do justice and judgment; and he should protect the life of the guiltless. But he had already committed himself to a course of injustice by imprisoning John and retaining him in prison; and the issue was decided by his pride. Before all his noble guests he had sworn to give, and rather than forfeit his assumed place of sovereign power he would give that which belonged to God.

Such then is the exposure of the world and its principles in one of its chiefs. It is the place where man makes himself an object and a center, seeking his pleasure, gratifying his lust, and exalting himself in pride-the place where seductions abound which have natural beauty and gracefulness, but are inwardly full of corruption and violence, deceit and blood - the place where Satan acts by these means to carry out his vile purpose to obliterate so far as he can every trace of divine testimony.

From it all the Lord retires into a desert place, and this shows the character of the path of those who follow Him.

Our separation from the world has been rendered more definite by the crucifixion of the Son of God, and the coming to us of the Holy Spirit in testimony for Christ against the world. We have nothing in common with it; our place is morally outside it all.

Are we then losers? No, but infinite gainers. We are placed in company with our blessed Lord from whom we have both food and power. The two following incidents in Matthew 14 show this in

principle. The Lord feeds the poor with bread. Peter is sustained in divine power outside all that is human. And how perfect a contrast is this to the world! There, as we have seen, is lust and its miserable gratification. Here, in company with Christ, is divine satisfaction; as He said, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6:35. He brings to us in His own Person as the bread of life the full and complete expression of all that God is in love and grace; and as we feed on Him we are not only supported in our circumstances, but we are also brought into the circle of divine joy and eternal delight.

Again, the world assumes power which belongs not to it, and in wielding it it is unconsciously under the awful power of Satan, contravening the ways and testimony of God. As our souls are placed in company with the Son of the living God, we are in divine power against all the power of the enemy, and are thus in testimony for God and His precious truth.

Never was the world more seductive than at the present time, and never greater the manifestation of its hatred of the truth and its adherents. May our spirits be guarded from its withering atmosphere by being kept in His company, where are both food and power, satisfaction and rest!

John of the Book of Revelation

In the progress of this Book we see John moved by different affections. He trembles in chapter 1:17; he weeps in chapter 5:4; he wonders with great astonishment in chapter 17:6; he loses himself in worshiping delight in chapters 19:10 and 22:8.

That is, he trembles in the presence of the judicial glory of the Son of man; he weeps at the sight of a sealed book, which, had it been unsealed, would have told secrets about Jesus; he marvels at the sight of Christendom's apostasy; he loses himself in joy when he hears of the marriage of the Lamb, and when he sees the bride of the Lamb.

What suited affections! what creations of the Holy Ghost in the soul of a saint! He never trembles after the One who was alive tells him not to fear. He that had the keys of death and hades encourages him; and that, surely, is enough for us.

Some Thoughts on John's Gospel

Jesus Himself did not baptize (see chap. 4), because He was presented as the Messiah to the Jews; and knowing that He was rejected, and that He must take His true character as Savior-God, He did not baptize for a thing that should pass away. His disciples baptized, but with the baptism of John. As a prophet, Jesus followed the same preaching as John. He preached that the kingdom was near. The Evangelist John has given us the ministry of Jesus, exercised in Jerusalem, while the others give us that which He fulfilled in Galilee.

Jesus leaves Judea because the Jews would not receive Him - His heart aggrieved at seeing their rejection of Him. He leaves, therefore, in pure righteousness, this place of religious pride, to betake Himself among the "poor of the flock," and passes through Samaria, where He presents Himself simply as the Savior of sinners. It is there He commences His public ministry, as we have said. Remark now, it is observed, that Sychar was near the possession of Jacob, which shows that the Samaritans were in the territory of Israel, though they had a false worship in opposition to that which was offered at Jerusalem. The Jews were right in keeping aloof from them, not wishing to mix with the Samaritans, because it was according to the mind of God to testify against the false worship, and in favor of the truth that God had committed to their trust. But Jesus could visit Samaria, because He was on the ground of grace toward all men indiscriminately.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

What is the effect upon Paul of the thought of the judgment seat? He says, "We persuade men." He does not think of himself at all. He is full of confidence, and pleased to think of being present with the Lord (v. 8). He has no time to think of self, but he persuades others.

How shall we appear at the judgment seat of Christ? Why, we shall be there in bodies of glory, like the Judge Himself.

The One before whom we are manifested is the One who has put away all our sin. He is our righteousness. How can we be afraid to come before Him?

He will show us how we have performed our duties. Duties flow from the place He gave us. Being a child of God, I must behave like a child of God. What did God do to me when I was an enemy? Did He not forgive me? Then, I ought to go and forgive my enemies. At the judgment seat I shall see just what I did and why I did it.

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

Expository Jotting on Laodicea

Two things have to be carefully borne in mind in the attempt to ascertain the true character of Laodicea. The first is, that there was an actual assembly in Laodicea to which, or to the angel of which, this letter was addressed; and the second is, that this actual existent assembly was taken up by the Lord as a type of a state of things which would obtain at the close of the history of the Church on earth. In other words, there are the historical and prophetic Laodiceas -to say nothing now of the lessons contained in this letter for the Church in every age, continuously from the time of the assembly at Laodicea which this prophetically foreshadowed. This being conceded, another thing follows; namely, that the character of Laodicea actually is the character of Laodicea prophetic. Were there then any Christians, those who were really saints of God in this assembly, in the apostolic days? It is quite true that John's ministry extended beyond that of Paul, but this fact does not forbid our gleaning the answer to our question from the writings of the latter. Turning then to the epistle to the Colossians, we find Paul saying, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea," etc. Chap. 2:1. He also tells us that Epaphras had great zeal, or "labored much" for the Colossians and for "them that are in Laodicea" (chap. 4:13); and he directed that the epistle itself should be read to "the church of the Laodiceans." It is therefore impossible to doubt that God had saints at that time in this assembly; and this goes a long way to determine the question as to the state of things in John's day, seeing that only about 30 years elapsed between Paul's epistle and the letter sent through John.

But it is said that the language in the epistle itself forbids the supposition. Let us briefly examine it. Take first, the warning that the Lord was about utterly to reject it because of its lukewarm condition. Can the Lord, it is asked, cast away His own people? Such a question, we submit, is altogether to lose sight of the nature of the epistle, and of the character in which the angel of this assembly is addressed. This assembly-as all the seven- is viewed as a light-bearer on earth, and is thus dealt with in its responsibility as the vessel of testimony. To be rejected in this way therefore has nothing whatever to say (for it is spoken of Laodicea collectively, or in its corporate character) as to the state of the individuals that composed the assembly. No one denies that the assembly as such was in a frightful condition from its self-complacent pride and boastfulness, and that as such it was loathsome to the Lord; but to apply this to the state of every individual in it is scarcely sober exposition.

Remark, in the next place, that down to the end of verse 18 the address is to the angel, the moral representative of the assembly. Bearing this in mind, in addition to what has been said, there will be little difficulty in the interpretation of the well-known symbols of "gold" and "white raiment." One distinction should, however, be carefully noted. While the Lord counsels the angel to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, the angel is exhorted himself to anoint his eyes with eye salve (not to buy it), a distinction that has a most significant bearing upon the subject in hand.

Verse 19 contains the enunciation of a principle of divine importance. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Is this principle applicable to unconverted professors? We turn to the Proverbs, and

there we read, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of His correction: for whom the LORD loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Chap. 3:11, 12. Here, undoubtedly, the words are spoken to one in a known relationship, as the term "my son" plainly shows. So also in Hebrews 12, where this scripture is cited, applied, and expanded (see vv. 5-11); and so also we unhesitatingly assert in the passage before us. Indeed, all possible doubt is removed by the words, "As many as I love"-as many, a distinct class, and, "as I love," marking out a special relationship to that class; that is, the Lord's own people. And it is on this basis that the exhortation is given to "be zealous therefore, and repent." Is this the way God speaks to the unconverted? No; it is the method in which the Lord addresses those who have been brought into relationship with Himself, and here, therefore, applies to those who were mixed up with all this frightful formality, self-complacency, and indifference. It is the warning which He sounds out from the depths of His heart, in order that His people might heed it before the final rejection of the assembly, and judge themselves ere He might be compelled in His love to lift up His rod and deal with them in chastening in order to effect their restoration.

Verses 20 and 21 are spoken to individuals. "If any man hear My voice." "To him that overcometh." First then we have the Lord's attitude: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The Lord is here, without doubt, outside when He ought to have been enjoyed within. But is it that He is seeking admittance here for the first time - into the heart of an unconverted one? In other words, Is this the presentation of the gospel? The whole drift of the letter contradicts the thought, as well as the connection in which it stands. That the gospel might be preached from it to any who claimed to be Christians and yet were not is quite true; but the question now is, Is this the attitude in which Christ presents Himself as a Savior to the unconverted? If so, it is without a parallel in the Scriptures. But it is said to answer to Luke 14. There is an important difference. The supper there, in its typical import, is God's supper; and, besides, it is for all who will accept the invitation; whereas here it is the Lord who knocks for admittance, and promises that, if the door is opened, He will come in and sup with the one that opens, and that the opener will also sup with Himself. It is the contrast to Luke 14 in every particular. To maintain this, moreover, is to suppose power on the part of the unconverted; for to open the door goes a long way beyond simple faith in the gospel message. No; what the Lord promises here is a secret and individual enjoyment. He will in His tender grace come in to any who may open the door and sup with them, and then they shall sup with Him - have fellowship with Him in His things - the expression on His part of His greatest grace, and on the part of those supping with Him, of the most exalted enjoyment.

Thereon follows the promise to the overcomer; and if no saints of God are found in Laodicea, whence are to come the victors? To assert that there will be none is possible, but surely it is to forget the character both of the Lord's heart and of His ways. The overcomers indeed are especially those who hear the Lord's voice, and having opened the door - in contrast with the worldliness, pride, and self-sufficiency of the assembly as such - enter upon the enjoyment of the Lord's fellowship and of fellowship with Him. Thenceforward He dwells in their hearts by faith, and they are cheered by the promise of association with the Lord on His throne. This is surely a much lower blessing than that promised to a Philadelphian overcomer; but when estimated in the light of the past indifference and unfaithfulness of those to whom it is pledged, its grace and power to cheer and sustain are at once perceived.

The letter closes with, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." On the above supposition, this proclamation would be made in vain as far as Laodicea is concerned. We can only repeat that such is not the way of the Spirit of God; and we add that the contention will in the end beget that spirit of Laodiceanism which already is asserting itself on every hand. For if the warnings in this letter only concern an empty profession, we may delude ourselves with the thought that we are in no danger from the evils here indicated.

The Lord's Supper

We should, on divine authority and in spiritual scriptural intelligence, hold to it, that the Lord's supper is the due characteristic expression of the Lord's day-that which should then be made principal.

If we read Luke 22:7-20, we shall learn that the passover of the Jews and the supper of the Lord being then exhibited successively - the one after the other - the latter thenceforth was to displace the former, and that forever. The former, with other meanings attached to it, was the foreshadowing of the great Sacrifice which was in due time to put away sin. The latter is now the celebration of the great fact that that sacrifice has been offered, and, that for faith, sin is put away.

After the Lord's supper therefore is instituted, it is impossible to return to the passover. It would be apostasy - a giving up of God's Lamb and of the atonement.

But if the supper has thus displaced the passover, we may then inquire, Is anything to displace it? We may read our answer in 1 Cor. 11:26, and there learn that the Lord's supper is set as a standing institution in the house of God till the Lord's return. The Holy Ghost, through the Apostle, gives it an abiding place all through this age of the Lord's absence.

I conclude accordingly that we are not to allow anything to displace the supper. It is of our faithfulness to our stewardship of the mysteries of God, to assert the right of that supper to be principal in the assembly of the saints. It has displaced the passover by the authority of the Lord Himself; but we, on the authority of the Holy Ghost, are not to allow anything to displace it. It is the proper service of the house of God. The Lord's supper is the principal thing for the Lord's day.

This comes out naturally in the progress of the story of Christianity in the New Testament. We read in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." And again, in 1 Cor. 11:33, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

If we abandon the supper for a sermon, or for a large congregation, or for any other religious scene or service, we have given up the house of God in its due characteristic and divinely appointed business and worship. So far we are guilty of apostasy. We have not returned, it is true, to the displaced or superseded passover; but we have allowed something or another to displace or supersede what the Holy Ghost has set as principal in the house of God. And were we right-hearted, we would say, What sermon would be more profitable to us? What singing of a full congregation more sweet in our ears than the voice of that ordinance which tells us so clearly and with such rich harmony of all kinds of music, of the forgiveness of our sins, of the acceptance of our persons, and of our waiting for the Lord from heaven, and all this in blessed and wondrous fellowship with the brightest display of the name and glory of God?

Yea, the table at which we sit is a family table. In spirit we are in the Father's house. We are made by the table to know ourselves in relationship, and that lies just outside the realm of glory; for "if

children, then heirs." If we be in the kingdom of God's dear Son, we are next door to the inheritance (Col. 1). And there the table is maintained until Christ comes again.

A Merciful and Faithful High Priest: Hebrews 2

I wish to bring before you what Scripture tells us of the priesthood of Christ, and still more, the way He is in the presence of God for us.

The first four verses of this chapter refer to the previous one. The apostleship of Christ as sent into the world - the Word of God spoken by the Son - the High Priest of our profession. It impresses upon us the importance of taking heed to the word spoken by Him; to neglect it is eternal ruin.

But He is the Priest as gone up on high. He came down to manifest God to man. He is gone up to represent man before God - believers of course - "them... that come unto God by Him." He is a Man on high, taking part with all that we are - sinlessly of course - in all that God has produced in us. When we speak of taking part, it shows that He had no part naturally. He took up the seed of Abraham.

Here Scripture speaks at once of (what is never lost sight of in the gospel) "the world to come" - that new state of things under Christ. As Adam had all put under his dominion - (Gen. 1:28), he lost this headship too - so all is to be put in subjection under man's feet; that is, Christ's feet as man. As yet, "we see not... all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." God has set Him in the highest place, when He had been in humiliation in the lowest. The very fact of His having been humbled and obedient in it, is His title to exaltation. "Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and... became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Phil. 2:6-9. There I get the Man of God's purpose. Adam was the man of God's creation in responsibility - Christ is the Man of God's purpose. All promises were to Him as the Seed of the woman; there were none to Adam. Christ was to destroy all the power of the enemy, and to bring man by redemption into God's purpose when he had entirely failed. Thus we are brought in by grace as sharers in what He inherits as the Man of God's counsel.

We do not see our place with Him until we see how He is raised above all creation. The first reason is because He was the Creator of it all; the second, because He was the Son; the third, because He was the Man of the counsel and purpose of God.

He took not up angels (v. 16) - most glorious of beings who are kept of God - witnesses of God's preserving grace and mercy - ministers to do His pleasure - holy angels. They are not named at the creation, but as spectators. "The sons of God shouted for joy." But they were not the vessels of God's purpose - man was to be that. Man has sunk down into the lowest state of wretchedness, and misery, and sin. Christ comes down to take him up in that kind of love which had no motive but what is in God, and the misery of its object. He gave His Son, in whom He delighted, for those who were children of wrath. He took not up angels, but the seed of Abraham (v. 16). It makes nothing of us, because it is the very character of God's love to take up the sinner.

A holy being, delighting in God, is a thing we can understand; but there is nothing more extraordinary, when we come to look at men even Christians - degraded in sin (for flesh is no better in the Christian if he allows it to act), and in all the weakness and degradation of a brute, than to find such a being put into all the blessedness of the Son of God. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. 15:49. The heart sinks down with shame when we think of what we are, and what we have been, and when we contemplate the grace that has so dealt for and with us! Yet God would display all His ways, nay, Himself! and this blessed One takes us up in our failure, weakness, temptation, and sin too, as a merciful and faithful High Priest - the One who will be before us in everything, leader even in our praises. "In the midst of the church [assembly] will I sing praise unto Thee." He leads up all our praises to His Father; and in the ages to come He is going to show "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus."

I get to learn the manifold wisdom of God when I find myself connected with fallen man on one side, and with the Son of God on the other. I must get an absolute and complete redemption, entirely and totally taken out of the condition in which man was under judgment, and an introduction into another in Christ, so that God loves me as He loves His Son! And then my greatest blessedness is to find out every instant of my life my absolute dependence on His grace. If I forget it for a moment, I sink back practically into all that I was - I was an independent sinner; now I am a dependent saint! With flesh still in me while here, and every sort of temptation, and all that gives me those necessary exercises of heart in passing through things here, I am forced to lean upon this grace. I learn all I am, and at the same time, through mercy, I learn all the blessed grace of Christ Himself, when I am thoroughly exercised and humbled, so that God can let the flood of His goodness flow in on my heart. I find that I have got Christ before God instead of my sins - that He is there an Advocate with the Father, who has been the propitiation for me. He is my righteousness. Then comes all I have got to pass through.

If the condition of my heart is such that I know Christ as my righteousness in the presence of God, I have nothing to think about on that matter - the question of sin is a settled one, and I have nothing to have experience about then (I have joy, to be sure, in the thought of this, and I have to bless God for it); but I know that I am introduced into a totally new thing. It makes my heart be exercised as to how far I am daily living in this new condition, and how far I am living in the old. One may do both (though not at the same moment) if not watchful; but one walking in the new, is walking in the Spirit; and it is of all importance to see that I am not only walking rightly, but in the Spirit.

If you are doing so, He is showing you what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. You realize yourself as united by the Holy Ghost to the Head of this new creation; you are conscious that you belong to it, to the very center and Head of it, "of His flesh and of His bones." The Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us - reveals Him to us. It is the Spirit, not of bondage, but of adoption, and I, a child, and an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, get into all the scene of glory which is His in the heavens, and in the earth; and I know "the things that are freely given to us of God." I live in them, set my heart upon them, them alone, because that is where Christ is!

I belong to all this scene consciously thus, but as a poor earthen vessel; and God's plan has always been to make us find our place in those things, by leading us through the wilderness, where we are thoroughly tried and tested. We are no longer in Egypt; we have crossed the Red Sea on our way to Canaan (we are there now as to title and privileges too), but not actually come to it yet. We are running the race - present in body, absent from the Lord. We have not got to the rest yet, and we have to labor to enter into it; and in our own strength to seek to do this were to labor into misfortune and wretchedness.

When God visited Israel in Egypt, He said not a word about the wilderness. His purpose was to bring them to Canaan. His plan was to teach them in the wilderness. So with us. His purpose was to bring us to heaven when He placed His Son there; His plan is that we should pass through all the exercises of heart down here that we may discern good and evil; and yet more, to learn that God "withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous" (Job 36:7); and we ought not to withdraw our eyes from Him!

This takes many shapes in the soul. Discipline working by the power of the Spirit of God in us, produces the energy of heart which says, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14. This is in an epistle where sin is not mentioned, and flesh, only to say that we have no confidence in it. The intents and purposes of the heart are all right, the eye is single, and the whole body full of light.

Who had such energy and singleness of eye as Paul? One sinks with shame to think of him in contrast to ourselves, and he has to get a thorn in the flesh - something to oppose and thwart him in his energy. Why? That the power of Christ might rest upon him! He must be brought into a furnace, and he glories in infirmities. Then, My grace, My strength, is sufficient, Paul, for you! You must be a dependent man, a weak man. Ah, says Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Human energy was a striking quality in Paul, but he must have a dependent heart on Christ. Do I not find in Philippians a dependent heart? In Corinthians, "without were fightings, within were fears." No comfort, no rest of spirit. You must get cast down, Paul, and then I will come and comfort you.

It is the plan of God to bring us into the wilderness, where everything in our hearts is tried, where He suffers us to hunger and feeds us with manna that we knew not, etc., that we may know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. That was the way the Lord Jesus Christ lived.

Do you walk as practically living by every word of God, beloved friends? or, do you walk in the counsels of your own hearts? Do you not live a greater part of your lives in your own thoughts? Can you say, the Word of God bids me do this and nothing more? What blessed grace it is to us that we should have every moment of our lives, our inward ways, all governed by the Word of God. That is divine wisdom.

Living by the Word of God, my flesh gets thwarted. If I listen to flesh, I sin and lose my communion with God. My heart condemns me, and my confidence is gone. My heart gets away from Him, and unless instantly restored there is a disinclination to return to communion with God. The flesh has got possession. What are you to do now? There I get an advocate with the Father. He recalls my

soul. But this is not the special subject of Hebrews. Here it is that there is grace to help in time of need, that failure may not come.

When I am near God, I judge myself; I can say, It is not I - it was I, but it is not so now. And I condemn it and judge it. But I must first know that I am with God, and God for and with me, for this. I must be living in proper Christian life in order to have Christ sustaining me - helping me in my praises, in my infirmities and failures too, but helping me out of them. A poor feeble creature, with a treasure in an earthen vessel. Christ has seen to the righteousness which I needed there, and now He ministers the grace I want down here. My eyes then look "straight on" in the energy of the Spirit of God. This is one part of the Christian's life.

But besides this, I find opposition from Satan too. The land belongs to God, but the Canaanite is there still. This is Joshua work, and I must know that I have passed the Jordan - dead and risen with Christ - that I have put off the old man and put on the new, and thus that Christ's death has been applied practically to all in myself. I have to reckon myself dead - to bear about in my body the dying of Jesus. All the movements of flesh have been brought under the power of the cross and crushed and broken. There is no real entrance into the land, no real looking back at Christ's death, until the heart is thus really circumcised. We have been put into heavenly places that we may walk accordingly. Heaven is thus in our hearts while we are going through the wilderness. You do not want the armor for the wilderness; you want it for your conflict with Satan's power. You are with Satan in heavenly places - with God in the wilderness. Wonderful paradox! But Christ is there on high, a High Priest, close to God, so that I am always conscious of a throne of grace, and help in time of need. He thus brings down grace - brings down heaven.

O what blessing! The very things that I have to dread in myself, and rightly too, as those which separate me from God - these things bring God to me! He is a High Priest that can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He has passed through the difficulties and trials Himself, and is now a Man in the presence of God - not in them now, but He knows all that I am in. He can understand and enter into them not only as God, but as man. He can understand what your heart goes through.

The Lord give us to be faithful in the exercise of our hearts - to learn to be soldiers, each with an exercised, sifted heart - one that knows itself - the spirit of self broken - the remains of self detected from day to day. With that grace working in us thus, we shall find Christ the portion of our hearts yet more and more.

A Misnomer - Festival of Faith: the Editor's Column

The approaching time of the end with its deadly apostasy is coming on apace. We may well wonder how God in His grace bears with the devitalized Christianity of the day. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that His severe judgments will certainly fall on that which once professed the name of Christ.

The "All-Faith Convocation For Peace" on June 27 at the Cow Palace in San Francisco is a precursor of a greater apostasy, but the judgment of a holy and righteous God who will not brook an affront to the holy name of Jesus will surely fall. "My glory will I not give to another," nor will He suffer His name to be linked with the false gods of the heathen (Isa. 42:8).

This great convocation at San Francisco is in commemoration of the founding 20 years ago of the United Nations, at which time and place the nations of Christendom acquiesced in the atheistic refusal of prayer to God for guidance, in the guise of seeking world peace. How could peace be secured by rejecting even the name of the "Prince of Peace"? Have the 20 intervening years produced real peace? The answer, as is well known, is an unequivocal, NO. The world has been filled with uneasiness and tensions of gigantic proportions. Well did God say to Israel, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 57:21. The present time is fraught with forebodings, strife, and carnage. Certainly peace was not procured by godlessness, nor by giving up the foundations of the faith among those who once professed it.

On the tenth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, a so-called Festival of Faith was held in the same city. It was a gross mockery, as Protestants, Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, and others joined in the travesty.

Now another ten years have elapsed, and peace seems farther away than either ten or twenty years ago; and still another united gathering is being enacted ostensibly "to give support and prominence to the world peace objective of the United Nations." As the Catholic Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken said, "We hope the total effect will be to add to the United Nations something some of us feel it may have lacked -the strong motivation of religion." Shall the uniting of professors of Christianity produce that needed ingredient by bowing down with pagans? Has God not asked, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. 6:14-16. One thing is certain, no good will come out of such overt wickedness.

More than 17,000 persons are to be in attendance, while 2,000 voices rise to sing together. It will indeed be a medley of mixed voices, with the name of the Lord Jesus sedulously eliminated. The One in whom God found His true delight in a world ravaged by sin, will be excluded by common consent. O world! how soon art thou rushing on to perdition!

A letter of invitation to this occasion is signed by Joseph G. Kennedy as President of the San Francisco Council of Churches, in which he said, "As you can see, long-standing precedents are

being broken. World conditions call for bold actions. We invite you to join us in building a significant and unprecedented occasion." This reminds us of the great building once perpetrated by men of another day, when they said, "Let us build us... a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven," but God there confounded the languages of the people and brought their whole scheme to confusion. It was unprecedented in its day, and yet stands as the display of God's signal disfavor and judgment.

There was also a time when King Nebuchadnezzar demanded on the pain of death that all of his people should join in bowing down and worshiping his false god. All the accoutrements of religious and sensual worship were on hand to bring about frenzied excitement for the occasion. This came to naught in the bold faithfulness of three children of Israel who would rather court death than join in the then "Festival of Faith," as it might easily have been called. It might have been written over the proud monarch's attempt to enforce a one-world religion, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7. And may the present apostate church be aroused before His dictum, "God is not mocked."

On the previous occasion, the first hymn on the program was "God of our fathers." What an awe-inspiring spectacle with so many voices joining to sing, "God of our fathers." And, may we ask, What God was that? To the Moslem, this god was none other than Allah; to the Buddhist, his god is "the supreme Buddha." Thus the modernist and inclusive ecumenical profession can unite with pagan gods to seek guidance for peace. But "the way of peace have they not known."

When we think of 2,000 voices blended in singing, it makes us think of the time that King Saul sent for the Ark of Jehovah, when the camp was threatened. They brought it forward that "it might save us," but alas! their folly was soon manifested, and the Philistines carried it away. But before it was captured, the Israelites shouted "until the earth rang." What a hollow pretension! Their empty boast reminds us of the latest occasion. Even the Philistine could understand the shout of all Israel when the Ark was brought into the camp. They said, "Woe unto us." They thought that the shout indicated God was on the side of the faithless Israelites; but the great pretension should not have impressed them. Soon God made manifest that He had left them to their own devices, and Israel was decisively defeated, and the Ark carried away to the house of Dagon, their pagan god.

We may well wonder if God will not bring all the wishes for peace into the dust. God has decreed, "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about.... Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision." (Joel 3:9-14.)

It is significant that Secretary General U. Thant will be a convocation speaker. It will be remembered that he pays homage to Buddha, and devotes time for meditation each day. A pagan who was once healed of leprosy (Naaman by name) had a conscience about bowing down in the "house of Rimmon" when his master leaned on his hand. Evidently there would be less compunction today in lukewarm, nauseating Christendom about joining the name of God and heathen deities together. Oh, that true believers in the Lord Jesus may keep themselves aloof from all the pageantry and vain show of the world over which the severe judgments of God are about to break. The time is at hand when, instead of peace, men's hearts will fail them for fear,

"and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Luke 21:26.

We have previously written editorial comment about Life magazine's attack on the Bible as the holy and inspired and unfailing Word of God-the Word of Him "who cannot lie." We have also reprinted our review in pamphlet form under the caption "Refutation of an ATTACK on the Bible." It is now available from the publishers.

Our reason for recurring to this subject is that Life recently published a Spanish edition of their same English attack. It was sent out as Life En Espanol under the date of April 12, 1965, with a prologue entitled, "El Eterno Dialogo del Hombre con Dios." It was circulated in Latin America and Spain, and contains the same clever and deceptive attacks on the trustworthiness of the Bible.

We trust that many Christians will warn the Spanish speaking peoples against this heretical hoax, so that many of them may be preserved from this snare of the enemy. These are the days of which Jude warned, when we need to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v. 3).

Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman

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 methods with Nicodemus and the Samaritan in John 3 and 4. There is this common purpose in 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 of 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 a 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, removes her on the ground of a convicted sinner, and then reveals Himself to her.

She had assumed the 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 Night Watches in Scripture

Nighttime in Scripture is divided into four three-hour periods called "watches." In Mark 13:35 they are all four mentioned; namely, "even," "midnight," "cockcrowing," and "morning." According to our way of reckoning time, "even," or the evening watch, is from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; the midnight watch, from 9 p.m. to midnight; cockcrowing, from 12 M to 3 a.m., and morning watch, from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.

In Exod. 14:24 we read concerning the Egyptians, that "in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians." In Judg. 7:19 Gideon and his company came to the camp of Midian "in the beginning of the middle watch," or at midnight. See note, J.N.D. Translation. Psalm 63:6 and Psalm 119:148 speak of the night watches. In Psalm 90:4 the Psalmist says, "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

Again, in the New Testament, the Lord in Mark 13 outlines to some of His disciples what was to befall His faithful remnant from the destruction of the temple by Titus in A.D. 70 till they should see "the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." That whole period of time was covered symbolically by the four watches of verse 35. He said, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning." The Lord came, the light of the world, but was rejected from the very beginning of His ministry. In these four watches of Mark 13, Jesus scanned the long night of His absence, looking forward to the bright morn when "The Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2.

We find a most significant word of the Lord in Luke 12:38. "If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." He mentions neither the first watch nor the fourth, but refers His coming to the second or the third watch. This we know is spoken to those who are to be with loins girded about and lights burning, and who shall be blessed when their Lord shall return from the wedding and shall find them watching. This indeed should be true of the Church, as well as each one of us individually, till He comes for us.

In Revelation 2 and 3 there is, we believe, the prophetic outline of the Church on earth; and it has become for us in its closing days here largely a historical one. It has often been pointed out that in the first three periods of this outline; namely, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos, there is no mention whatever of the Lord's coming for the Church. These three marked the early days of the Church from the apostles' time down through the reign of Constantine, when the persecution of the Christians by the world ceased, and the world professedly accepted Christianity. During this time we have the first watch, or "even," of Mark 13:35. In Luke 12:38, as mentioned above, the Lord does not speak of this first watch.

However, beginning with the fourth church, Thyatira, and including the three following, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, He specifically calls the attention of each one to His coming. So it appears evident that these four churches must all continue simultaneously on earth till the Lord

comes and takes His own to glory.

With the rise of Thyatira, Rev. 2:18-29, we see the development of Catholicism during the so-called dark ages. Then later, in these middle ages, the testimony of Protestantism began, represented by Sardis. But Sardis soon grew cold and formal, so that the Lord said to her in Rev. 3:1, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Thus Catholicism and Protestantism, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were aptly signified by the darkness of the second, or midnight, watch of Mark 13:35.

During this dark period, the hope of the Lord's coming for His bride was lost sight of almost entirely by the Church. That blessed hope again began to stir deeply the hearts of believers in various places early in the nineteenth century, or about 135 years ago. In Matt. 25:6 our Lord Himself foretold how the Holy Spirit would bring about this revival: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." It would be. He said, "at midnight." The result of this awakening was Philadelphia, of whom the Lord said, "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." Rev. 3:8.

Finally, along with Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, has appeared Laodicea, the last of the seven churches of Rev. 1:11. The Lord, who is the faithful and true witness, says that Laodicea is neither cold nor hot; and because she is "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16). He does not even exhort her to repent, as He had exhorted Sardis, though He does solemnly warn her.

In Luke 12:38 the Lord had said He would come for His Church either in the second watch, which represented Thyatira and Sardis as they were during the dark ages before the revival of the blessed hope of His coming, or else He would come in the third watch when their responsibility to Him has become so much greater because of that revival, and when Philadelphia and Laodicea are now included with them to make up the whole professing church during that watch. In other words, it would appear that the present condition of Thyatira and Sardis after the second watch or midnight of the middle ages, along with Philadelphia and Laodicea, mark all four of them—the third watch, or cockcrowing, of Mark 13:35. They bear the dim light of testimony committed to the Church just before the dawn of the fourth, or morning watch. They immediately precede the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Sun of righteousness.

In Mark 6:35-56 there is a striking typical view of the whole time from the Lord's first coming as Israel's Messiah till His return in the fourth watch, which the passage particularly mentions. Concerning this, another has said, "It was one of the great signs of the Messiah that He would satisfy His poor with bread, as you may remember in Psalm 132. The Lord ought to have been thus recognized; but He was not. Accordingly... the people, instead of being gathered to the Lord, as to their King, have been for a season, at least, put aside.... He has departed from Israel for a time, and gone on high to take the place of intercession. And while the Lord is there, the disciples are exposed to all the storms and fluctuations of this lower scene.... He has left the Jews for the time. He is also away from His disciples. But in the midst of the contrariety of all things around them, He comes again. 'About the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them.' v. 48." And verses 54-56 are "a little picture of what will be the consequence of the Lord's return to the earth.... Whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness in the world will all flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God." W. K.

May we never forget that in order to sustain and encourage the weary watcher, the Lord graciously promises the overcomer in each of the last four churches that He will come with His blessing before the morning, or fourth watch.

"The gloomy night will soon be past,

The morning will appear;

The harbinger of day at last

Each waiting eye will cheer.

"Thou Bright and Morning Star, Thy light

Will to our joy be seen;

Thou, Lord, wilt meet our longing sight,

Without a cloud between."

At the very beginning of the second watch the blessed Lord said to the individual overcomer then, "I will give him the morning star." Rev. 2:28. Now we are at the other end of the "gloomy night." How very near His coming must be! At the close of that third watch He says. "Behold, I come quickly." Rev. 3:11. When He comes, may He find us truly watching. "We have the prophetic word made surer, to which ye do well taking heed, (as to a lamp shining in an obscure place) until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. 1:19;

Songs of Degrees

Recovery, or The Return Journey

As typified by the "Songs of Degrees," Psalm 120-134

No doubt the Spirit of God has something special in the grouping of these Psalms under this heading; they were evidently written at different times and by different authors.

The word "degrees" means a "going up" or "ascent," and is used elsewhere in the sense of steps, as to Solomon's throne and as to the future temple, in Eze. 40 These Psalms then may be taken in a moral sense of going up.

If we take a glance at the last one of these Psalms, we find it speaking of those in the house of the Lord-in the sanctuary blessing the Lord, or as worshipers in His presence. We might say then that it is the path that leads to becoming a true worshiper. We find the Lord uses this very term in speaking to the poor outcast woman in John 4:23. He is speaking of the interval that was to take place between the casting off of Israel on account of His rejection, as we learn elsewhere, and their being received again (Rom. 11:15, 25).

In John 4:23 the Father is seeking worshipers, and we learn that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." v. 24. In verse 23, two places of worship are spoken of-that of the Samaritans and that of the Jews. The first was not the truth, and the second was no longer of the Spirit.

These Psalms are evidently historical in their origin, or in some past application, and also prophetic as to a future application. No doubt there is a typical application for us; for "Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; J.N.D. Trans.

We have found where the path ends: a true worshiper in His presence. But from whence does it start? From John 4 we see that it can start from a very low beginning; this should be an encouragement to us, since none need be left out.

It is quite instructive to see that this series of Psalms begins just after the 119th, which, as we know, is the longest and is occupied in the setting forth of the Word of God. There are evidences in this long Psalm that the Word had been let slip, and it had lost its influence on the soul.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." v. 59.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word." v. 67.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes." v. 71.

Then the last verse: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments."

Some have thought that the Spirit of God used Ezra to group these Psalms as suitable to their state in journeying from Babylon to Jerusalem, and thus are prophetic of the remnant in the latter days.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Psalm 119:9.

If the Word of God has been let slip in our lives, we find ourselves in circumstances not in accordance with it; the realization of this would cause distress and exercise similar to that we have in Psalm 120:1.

In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and He heard me."

His feet are in the wrong place, and he is surrounded by those whom he thought were his friends, but finds deceit on every hand. Such, no doubt, will be the case of the remnant in the day of apostasy that is to come when the Spirit of God first begins to work in their hearts. But could it not be true of everyone in all dispensations in similar circumstances?

"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech." v. 5.

No doubt this refers to their being in captivity to the Gentiles.

"That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"- that is; among those who would take that which God has set up as an approach to Himself and make it a mere thing of nature. All those who do this would come under this heading.

The term "Kedar" is applied to the Ishmaelites and to the Arabs generally. It was with the Arabs that Nehemiah had to contend; they sought in every way to gain an entrance among the Jews and did in Nehemiah's absence-into the very house of God! (The Arabs are now contending with the Jews for the land of Palestine.)

In Babylon there were Jews who had no exercise as to the return of the remnant in Ezra and Nehemiah's time; they were satisfied to remain where they were. It was a mere handful that came back, and verses 2-4 and 6, 7 could well be applied to those who had given up the true hope of Israel in that day, as it will be of those in the future who have allied themselves with the beast and the false prophet. It is also the attitude of those of all times, since the Church has been established, whose hope is in this world only; they see no reason for the deep exercise the Spirit of God has laid upon the hearts of the remnant.

"Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue." v. 2.

"Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." v. 4.

"My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace."

"I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war."

From their earliest history there had always been some among the children of Israel who had never gotten beyond looking at their place in this world as that which was by the way of nature, or a national relationship. They had not considered the longing of the Lord for them when in Deuteronomy 5 they had told Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say;... and we will hear it, and do it." v. 27. The response of the Lord was, "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" v. 29. There is a longing over them also in Deut. 32:28, 29. Trace this similar sighing after them as voiced in Psalm 81:11-16, about five hundred years afterward. Then at a later period, in Isa. 48:16-19, but especially verse 18: "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." But it was too late; captivity was at hand. This prophecy was about three hundred years later than Psalm 81.

In Isaiah 48 they were given instructions to flee from Babylon with a voice of singing. In Psalm 126, the time had come; and their mouth was indeed filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing.

In the past they were never able to rise up to the fact that being a child of Abraham called for a life of faith; but in the future, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalm 110:3). "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people." Jer. 31:33.

In our Psalm, after being aroused, they learn that those with whom they had formerly been content to dwell, were really not true friends, but just the opposite. They can only count upon the Lord for deliverance from among them.

Would not the application of "I dwell in the tents of Kedar" be analogous with Eph. 5:14? "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (or, "Christ shall shine upon thee"; J.N.D. Trans.). The shining upon him discovers to him where he is-sunken down to the level of the world-and the result is, such a one is in deep distress!

In Psalm 121 there is a realization of the fact, that to get to the place of blessing, a long journey lies ahead-a journey beset with dangers, for the enemy of our souls does not give up easily.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." v. 1.

The one who has these deep exercises, in looking around seems to see no direct pathway out; the way looks all closed in on every side. Then there comes the realization that his help comes from the Lord.

"My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." v. 2

He then has the assurance of care all along the journey from the One who has made the heavens and the earth.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber." v. 3.

"Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." v. 4.

"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." v. 6.

"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve... thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." vv. 7, 8.

The remnant in the future day will be under the special protection of the Lord (Rev. 7). Though for the most part they are unconscious of it, they are protected from the judgment falling upon the earth. They do however suffer from the persecutions of the beast and the antichrist. There is at this present time an angelic care exercised over those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:14). Both classes would seem to be covered by Psalm 91:1. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." It does not say, he that hath the knowledge of the secret place, but he that dwelleth there. We may have the knowledge, but are we really dwelling there? One has thought that the abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, might be said to be exercised in an especial way when His own are gathered together waiting upon Him.

Another care is exercised, according to Phil. 1:6; but it is followed by exhortations in Phil. 1:10 as to our responsibility. See also 2 Cor. 1:14. The sense of the Lord's care over us and the exhortations as to our responsibility should strengthen the awakened desire to follow on in the path of faith, whatever the obstacles may be (Eph. 3:16-21).

When in the place of blessing, there is a going "in" (communion) and "out" (for service) that is of Him. John 10:9: "in and out, and find pasture."

In Psalm 122 we find the end of the journey set before us. It is the house of the Lord in Jerusalem - the city that the Lord had chosen to place His name there, where was His sanctuary (Psalm 78:67-69).

There is companionship too in this journey. When we were led in true exercise by the Spirit of God, we found others exercised by the Spirit desirous also to go on in the same path of faith.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." V. 1.

Then faith looks off to the time when one's feet will stand in Jerusalem.

"Our feet shall stand within Thy gates, O Jerusalem." v. 2.

This is followed by meditation as to what is to be found there. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together." v. 3.

"Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD." V. 4.

"For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David." v. 5.

When building the wall, Nehemiah said, "The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall." Chap. 4:19. Those were remnant days-the beginning of a recovery from what carelessness and disobedience had brought in. See 2 Chron. 36:14.

Faith sees Jerusalem "compact together," when in reality it lay in ruins at the time when the journey began; but the energy of faith could change all this. "Compact together" makes one think of what we have in the New Testament, "gathered together" and "fitly joined together and

compacted" (Eph. 4:16), the result of the unity and operation of the Spirit of God in producing the unity (Eph. 4:3), which is far beyond anything that man can bring about.

Another thing: it is not simply where the feeble remnant was going, but "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord"! Faith takes in the whole of Israel, though the greater part were long since lost among the nations. Faith embraces the whole, and so now the Lord would not have us stop short of the whole body of Christ, the Church. Our faith must realize that anything short of this is sectarian and stops short of what is outlined for us in the path of faith according to the scripture (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13).

"Unto the testimony of Israel." This brings before us the Ark of God which contained the tables of the law, which was spoken of as the dwelling place of the Lord God. It was also the true gathering center for all Israel (1 Chron. 13:6; 23:25). This should bring before us the One who is now the true Center of the Church-the One of whom it could truly be said, "Thy law have I hid in my heart." In such a place one is in the position where thanks can be given unto the Lord-"To give thanks unto the name of the LORD." This is what He desires, as we shall see as we proceed with these Songs of Degrees.

"For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David"-the place where justice was administered. Absalom sought craftily to usurp the throne on the plea that justice was not being done. He declared that failure had come in; but, though there was failure present, yet it was not as extensive as he sought to make out. This world has yet to wait for the "King" to "reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1). He was here once, but was rejected (Luke 19:41-44). The setting aside of David was not allowed, and Absalom lost his life in attempting to do so.

Is it not striking that the Lord, when speaking of the Church which was yet to be established, gives it this character-the place of justice, because He is in the midst (Matt. 18:15-20)? How many times the enemy has sought to set this truth aside on some such plea as Absalom's!

The true effect of the unity that is of the Spirit is the exercise that peace might be there. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Should not the need of collective peace exercise our hearts now? How often has individual responsibility been unduly pressed with sad results. The same one that could speak of conferring "not with flesh and blood," afterward speaks of going to see Peter and abiding with him fifteen days, and again going up and communicating privately to them of reputation, lest by any means he had run or should run in vain (Gal. 1 and 2).

"For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." v. 8.

The one who has been voicing these godly exercises has now learned to speak of those whom he has found to have like precious faith as himself, as his brethren. A relationship has been formed by the Spirit of God with these and God's chosen center, and its peace is their one consuming thought and objective.

Songs of Degrees

Recovery, or The Return Journey As typified by the "Songs of Degrees," Psalm 120-134

Part 2

Psalm 123. Having set the end of the journey before us, there is a going back to other aspects of the journey. I believe in this series of Psalms we have the end set before us three times, and a going back and making a new start twice to prepare the heart for the journey. It reminds us of what is said to Elijah-"The journey is too great for thee"-and so it would be for us if we attempted it in our own strength. This 123rd Psalm reminds us of the pause in the journey of the returned captives under Ezra (Ezra 8:15-31). He proclaimed a fast by the river Ahava, "That we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

When Ezra's company journeyed back across the deserts, they had no Shechinah cloud to guide them, and no manna by the way; but they had guidance and watchful care. The heavens were not closed to them now (Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:23). Years before, Solomon in his prayers had besought the Lord for those who would be in this very circumstance (1 Kings 8:33). So they have guidance from the One who "dwellest in the heavens."

"Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens." (Is it not the guidance by the eye spoken of in Psalm 32:8, "I will guide thee with Mine eye"?)

"Our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us." Psalm 123:1, 2.

They will abide His time. Nevertheless, they feel the contempt of those that are at ease in Babylon, or satisfied to remain where they were.

"Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt." v. 3. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." v. 4.

They are characterized as "proud"-those who scorn the path of faith-and is it not ever thus? "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." Psalm 10:4. The "pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:16. Undetected and unjudged pride has wrought havoc among the people of God.

In Psalm 124 there is an answer to the faith mentioned in the previous Psalm. The dangers that have been passed bring the realization of the deliverance of the Lord-that He is on the side of His people.

"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

"Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us." vv. 1-3.

They had escaped the overflowing scourge of waters sent out by their enemies which the Lord held back (vv. 4, 5). This should bring before us the Lord Jesus Christ whom the waters overflowed for our sakes. There were two different sources from which the waters came that overflowed Him. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me" (Psalm 42:7)-the wrath of God's judgment as to the sins He bore that we might never come into or under them. In Psalm 69 it is the waters of hatred against Him from the heart of man as led on by Satan (Rev. 12:15, 16). We can feel something of the latter in fellowship with His sufferings, or it may be in His

government He may allow us to taste of this hatred on account of our ways in order to bring us back to the point of our departure.

"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." v. 7. How came they to be in this snare? We learn elsewhere that it was on account of their failure to heed the Word of God, and their disobedience; He allowed them to go into captivity. In 1 Timothy we read of those who fall into snares; one is a religious snare, and the other is a worldly snare. In 2 Tim. 2:24-26 we have instructions for recovery out of the snare of the devil-those who are taken captive by him at his will; when out of communion a path is pursued in self-will, and we come under the power of the enemy.

"Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8.

There is no looking for worldly help now. The world has its organizations of various kinds for the help of its own. The more simple and dependent we are, the less we know of these. But we taste of that grace and mercy ministered to us from on high, and we also learn of the practical side of those bonds of Christ which unite us together in Him.

Psalm 125. "They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever." v. 1. Their confidence in the Lord's care over His own is based upon the position that Zion has in His thoughts and purposes.

He chose mount Zion when all had failed. "And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He had founded forever." Psalm 78:69; J.N.D. Trans. His care over them is based on His purposes concerning them collectively. It seems that the tendency of the heart is to give up collective testimony when discouraged, and to feel that the promises concerning the individual path alone abides. But the Scriptures do mark out a collective path for faith (2 Tim. 2:22).

"For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous." v. 3.

This is encouraging; as another has said, "It is of measured duration as well as measured severity." And those days are to be shortened for the sake of the elect of Israel in the future (Matt. 24:22). Those of this dispensation have similar promises (1 Cor. 10:13).

"As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." v. 5.

The "crooked ways" are really apostasy. In the future it will mean following the antichrist.

"But peace shall be upon Israel." v. 5.

Oh, how the collective portion is here emphasized! They realize that Jehovah will restore and bless them as a nation. From the very beginning, after bringing them through the Red Sea, the desire of Jehovah was expressed to plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, "in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in" (Exod. 15:17). In this present dispensation, it is not a geographical center; but

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." John 4:21. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." vv. 23, 24.

Psalms 126.

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." v. 1.

Jehovah turning again the captivity was like a dream; humanly speaking, there was no hope; but now that their feet were turned in the right direction, there was rejoicing and singing.

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." v. 2.

When they were in Babylon, they had no song; they could not sing Zion's songs of victory while they were captives of their enemies. Is it not ever so? When in the wrong path, the joy is gone; there is no rejoicing or singing. When such is the case, the tendency of the heart is to blame circumstances or persons for the lack of joy. The joy can only return when the heart is poured out to the Lord in self-judgment and not in self-vindication. We miss the path first in spirit; later the feet carry us in a wrong course.

In this Psalm the joy is such that even the heathen discern it and say, "The LORD hath done great things for them." v. 2. "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." v. 3.

"Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south." v. 4.

There seems to be a realization in these last two verses of the Lord's care over them when it was not appreciated. In Isa. 63:9 it is said, "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." There is the assuring comfort to the mourning ones in their trials and persecutions, as is brought out in the following verse:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." v. 5.

The last verse of this Psalm is very beautiful in that it describes what the Lord passed through as He went about endeavoring to reach their hearts and consciences. It is very noticeable how it changes from the plural "they," of the previous verse, 5, to the singular in verse 6:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

He was here as the Sower and wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41); but He is coming again, bringing His sheaves with Him. The Psalmist no doubt was thinking of His gathering back all Israel. But Isa. 49:5 shows that there would be a time in which Israel would not be gathered, due to their rejection of Him; and the light would go forth to the Gentiles, and His salvation to the end of the earth. So when He comes to Israel in the coming day of the Lord, He will have the heavenly sheaves with Him—those He has previously caught up to be with Himself (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Then, later, He will be revealed from heaven, and will come to be glorified in His saints (2 Thess. 1:7-10); after that, Israel shall be gathered back (Isa. 49:5-23).

Psalm 127. The instruction given in this Psalm, entitled, "A Song of Degrees of or for Solomon," are most striking. "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." v. 1.

What house had more divine instructions as to it, and more preparations for its building, than the temple which Solomon built? We read of David's plan which he had received by the Spirit (1 Chron. 28:11, 12), which he gave to Solomon, and of the material which he had prepared for it, of which he says,

"The LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me." It reminds us of what was said to Moses as to the tabernacle, "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

Do not we learn from this that the pattern and all the material were prepared under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and that though Solomon was a chosen vessel to build the house, yet it was possible for self to enter in and the building not be acceptable to the Lord? In the chapter mentioned in 1 Chronicles, he is told to serve the God of his father with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searched all the hearts and understood all thoughts. This should be a warning for those who would attempt to overturn existing companies and make them over. All such attempts will be in vain if there is no subjection to His Word as a whole-not merely taking up some part of it. It is well to bear in mind the Lord's answer to Satan in Matt. 4:7, "It is written again." What bearing does some other portion of His Word have on the proposition which has been broached? "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Pro. 19:21.

Solomon in his later years departed from the Lord, as we learn in 1 Kings 11, and had to learn from the Lord that the kingdom was to be divided; his wives turned his heart away after other gods. He introduced afresh into Israel that which ended in the judgment of God in the removing of Israel from the land of promise and scattering them among the nations. This brought about the destruction of this very house. In prayer at its dedication, Solomon referred to Deuteronomy 12, and claimed the promise, "My name shall be there." We learn from 2 Chron. 36:19 that the Chaldeans "burnt the house of God" to fulfill the word of the Lord at the mouth of Jeremiah, which was the sad result of departure from the Lord.

One can understand how important it would be to have this Psalm inserted here for the returning captives with visions and thoughts of the house and the city that should be built for the Lord.

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep." v. 2.

"For so He giveth His beloved sleep" is in contrast to the worry of man over his projects when things are not going to suit him.

Doubtless, too, this Psalm will have its place with the awakened remnant in a future day when they realize that the house that was built by the nation in unbelief was not of Him and was destroyed (Psalm 74:5-8). The temple which Psalm 74 mentions as being destroyed, seems to have been accomplished by the treachery of some of those within working with the enemy from without. There is a temple yet to be built which will be in accordance with the instruction of His Word (Eze.

40:44).

If the principles of Psalm 127 had been heeded by the builders in Christendom, both great and small, there would not be the confusion that exists today. Has there not been much use of the "untempered mortar" (Eze. 13:10-16)?

The Apostle Paul in Acts 20:29, 30 says, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." There are two characters of builders here. The "wolves" have just a mere profession; they really have no part or lot in the matter. Then there are those who are really children of God, but the Lord is not their true Object-they are not true shepherds. Their own interests come first, and their desire is to build up a following. Jude 12 and 13 tells us something of some of these builders.

In 1 Corinthians 3 we learn of the material that some of these builders introduced into the house; material which, while it makes a great showing here, would not stand the test of that day when all is reviewed by the Lord.

Songs of Degrees

Recovery, or The Return Journey As typified by the "Songs of Degrees," Psalm 120-134

Part 3

In 2 Timothy 2 we learn something of the results of these builders. A "great house" has been built. It is no doubt much larger than the foundation which the "wise master builder had laid." The great house contains vessels of various materials-some to honor and some to dishonor. That which is called the house of God in 1 Tim. 3:15, is now likened to a "great house" (2 Tim. 2:20). A man is told to purge himself from the vessels of dishonor and he "shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." He is told to "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." v. 22.

In 1 Corinthians 3 we have the "wise master builder" who has laid the foundation. Then we have the exhortations to the builders; every man is to take heed how he builds. The good builder will take heed to the foundation that has been laid and also to the material that he uses. The bad workman will have his own interests before him and will introduce false materials, evidently to make a great showing in the eyes of man; but these materials will not stand the test of the fire in that day (1 Cor. 3:12-15). The Lord has given us how every man's work shall be tested in that day in order that it might search and exercise our hearts now; and it is very searching to realize that in that day all of that which we may have thought commendable will be burned up, though we ourselves may be saved, yet so as by fire. There may be a mixture in our lives-some things done for Him which will be of the nature of gold, silver, and precious stones, which will stand the test, and some things in which self has entered in and will not stand the test. The Lord alone will be the Judge of what the proportions really are in our lives.

Then there is a "corrupt" workman whose sole interest is to corrupt or defile the temple of God. Such will be destroyed; no doubt such answer to the "wolves" of Acts 20:29 and Jude 10, 11.

In 1 Cor. 10:21 we read of the "Lord's Table" and the "table of demons." Here we have the Apostle contrasting that which the Spirit of God set up, with the false worship of the heathen - that which man, led on by Satan, set up before Christianity appeared. This brings before us something which is almost entirely overlooked in Christendom; i.e., the identification of the worshiper with the table at which he partakes. The Apostle shows this principle had been true of Israel of old by their being partakers of the altar at which they ate. But the Apostle is not here speaking of the tables set up by the man speaking perverse things, or the bad workman of 1 Corinthians 3. Neither is he referring to those he mentions in 1 Tim. 1:19, 20, who have overthrown faith and a good conscience. In the days of the apostles the bad workmen were not permitted to go this far in their mixture of good and bad workmanship. This was spoken of as that which was to come afterward.

Could anyone dare to say that this mixture of bad and good which could not be classed as the table of demons must be the table of the Lord? Why then the call to purge oneself from the vessels of dishonor? Do we not have here that which the bad workman introduces to make the great house which ends in Babylon? In Revelation 18, Babylon is announced as becoming the habitation of devils. God's people are exhorted to come out of her and not be partaker of her sins. Historically, the fall of Babylon takes place after the true Church has been translated, so it would seem that none of His people of this dispensation would be in her at that time. It may possibly be that in the time of the tribulation, some of the remnant may have been attracted by her false pretensions and gone in only to find out her true character later. The exhortation then would be to God's people throughout the ages, so that whenever the Babylonish traits were discerned, there should be a coming out of her. This would be for us when the state has assumed the great house character of 2 Tim. 2:20, but for the remnant of the future day in Israel, it will be whenever those Babylonish traits are manifested and especially when she publicly endorses the antichrist and his idolatry (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

In Laodicea the church is filled with pride at its human institutions, but is characterized as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It has lost the sense of what the Lord values. It is not called upon as a body to repent; but His own who are there, whom He loves, He rebukes and chastens. Why? Is it not that they may hear the voice of the One who is outside but who is knocking at the door of the heart of the individual? What an appeal: "If any man hear My voice." His desire is to have communion with every one of His own. What would be the result of individuals hearing His voice and supping with Him? Would not this very fact unite all together around Himself?

From the above, we see that the Lord expects His own to have discernment as to being in a false position. Perhaps He may have to rebuke or chasten us in order for us to see it, especially so when our eyes are upon self, man, or some other object than Himself.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, often called the book of contrasts, we have the new position of those who are the Lord's, contrasted with what had formerly been their portion before Christ came. Now, owing to His rejection, such ground is set aside by Him, as Shiloh of old had been. These contrasts lead up to the last chapter, where the Lord is seen as gone forth outside the camp. Evidently this is an allusion to what was done in Exodus 33 when Moses caused the tabernacle to be set up outside the camp on account of idolatry being introduced there. Here in Hebrews the Jews are looked at as having introduced human traditions which ended in rejecting the Lord when

He came to His own (John 1:11). He is looked upon as gone outside (Heb. 13:12, 13). Are we not to learn from this that that which man introduces, corrupts that which had been set up originally by the Lord, so that when there is no power within to deal with it, it finally becomes necessary to leave it and go forth unto Him outside the camp where He is?

At Corinth the Apostle has to tell them that they are carnal-that they were unable to discern the deceitful workers and the false apostles from the true. In 2 Cor. 10:3-5 we have the secret of discernment; namely, the casting down of reasonings and then bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. How careful it should make one in what he may feel led to put forth, that it may not be simply something of the restless spirit of man within-using untempered mortar. Long ago one wrote, "Every Christian, however simple, can watch the spirit in which friends hold and set out their views" (G.V.W.).

The latter part of Psalm 127 speaks of millennial blessing, and the Scriptures abound in the promised blessings for that day. They flow out freely when the Lord has been given His rightful place in the midst of His people-when His house has been built in dependence upon Himself.

"They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." v. 5.

This reminds us of Rev. 21:24 (J.N.D. Trans.): "And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it."

Also of the promise to Philadelphia: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Rev. 3:9.

The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, after the return of the remnant, had to stir up the people when their interest lagged. They showed them that they could not expect blessing in seeking their own personal things while the Lord's house stood idle. Our blessings are not earthly, but spiritual; but they flow out from the same One whose desire has ever been to dwell in the midst of His redeemed people (Exod. 15:17; Matt. 18:20).

Psalm 128 goes on to full millennial blessing. "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD." v. 4.

"The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." v. 5.

Is it not striking here, the expression "shall bless thee out of Zion"? He has once more taken up His place in the midst of His people and can bless them out of Zion. Zion speaks of grace in His choosing a place where He could go on with His people when all else had failed (Psalm 78:56-72). The priesthood had failed and also the king of His choice, David (2 Sam. 24:14-25).

Does not the Lord's gracious provision of Matt. 18:20 provide a rallying point at this present time when much failure has come in, as was prophetically foretold in Revelation 2 and 3? There are those who are called upon to be overcomers, such as are brought before us in 2 Tim. 2:22-26 and Heb. 13:11-16.

We have now reached another climax; we have now the house, the city, and millennial blessing. Perhaps it might be asked, What more could be added? But the Lord would prepare the heart more as to Himself personally. So far, we have heard more about the outward things; we have still the Person of the Lord to be brought before us, so we go back and take another beginning.

Psalm 129. This Psalm brings before us the persecutions endured by the godly remnant of a future day. We read much of this time in the Psalms, and the Lord also speaks of it in Matthew 24. The godly remnant of all times will have persecutions (2 Tim. 3:12). Also Phil. 1:29, where we read: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

The natural man can glory in the outward work of the Lord even from a humanitarian or sentimental standpoint; but we learn from the parable of the Sower that though there may be a certain outward joy in the beauty of the Word, unless there is a work within the heart, the profession will be given up when difficulties or persecutions arise. When "buying of the truth" comes in, the natural man will consider the cost too great and give it up.

Psalm 130. Though sufferings for His sake are necessary to prove and make good the work in the soul, yet the Lord would not have us dwell on those things. Our hearts are prone to do this-dwell on what we have endured or given up for Him-but this brings in pride, so He cannot leave us there. He takes us aside here in this Psalm and shows us something of the wretchedness of our own hearts. He does this by allowing the light of His Word to shine upon us. This shining forth of the light of His Word was that which had aroused them no doubt in Psalm 120, but it is more intensified to them here. It reminds us of the brightness of light above the noonday sun which broke forth upon Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3-9), and the voice that came with it revealing to him that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he despised, was now in glory. All this made him see the utter vanity and worthlessness of his former life and also of the traditions which he was blindly following.

The Lord does not allow the newly aroused soul of the 129th Psalm to remain where he could take credit to himself, but by the light of His Word leads him to self-judgment that he might not go on in his own strength, but that he might in his weakness receive strength from above which the Lord alone can supply. Psalm 130 shows the great depths of exercise through which they had been led.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD." V. 1.

This reminds us somewhat of that which Jonah passed through when he said, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about... I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever." It was not, however, until he could say, "Salvation is of the LORD," that deliverance came. See Jonah 2:5, 6, 9.

In our Psalm he is brought to say,

"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" v. 3.

But he receives the answer which gives him peace:

"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." v. 4.

And this brings in the desire to wait upon the Lord.

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." v. 6.

David no doubt had many experiences in watching for the morning when hunted by king Saul, longing for the morning light to dispel the dangers of the night. So it is beautiful to see his deep exercises for the Lord spoken of as surpassing anything else through which he had passed.

The true hope of Israel can now be rejoiced in on account of His loving-kindness and plenteous redemption (v. 7), and is the leading on of the soul in becoming a true worshiper. This is begun here on earth and continues beyond this scene, as is seen in Revelation 5 for the heavenly people, and in Revelation 14 for the earthly people.

Psalms 131. We have here one more experience through which David, though the anointed of the Lord, had to pass before being enabled to carry out the great desire of his heart --one more experience in his training depicted by this Psalm which lasted over a period of several years.

It has been suggested that this little Psalm was the exercise of David's soul when criticized by his elder brother on the occasion of his being sent by his father to the army camp too see how his brethren fared-the very occasion of David's meeting Goliath. He was accused of "pride" and "naughtiness of heart" resulting in the neglect of his duty as that which brought him there. But it was really the father's care over them which sent him there. (1 Sam. 17:17, 18.)

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." v. 1.

What an exercise for the Lord's anointed to pass through, and has not many a saint endured these same trials from those content with formal things, when exercised about his place or seeking the pathway marked out for faith in this world?

The result of this exercise we get in the next verse: "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." v. 2.

What does weaning speak of? The freeing from the world's influences, and perhaps more, the things of nature. We eventually have to learn as to our individual path and joy in the Lord, that it must not depend upon anyone else-nature's ties or gifted servants. There must be the going on in quietness in one's soul apart from all this. One remembers a remark heard some years ago that the trees planted by the rivers of water are not dependent upon the showers, though they welcome them. One can never take the stand that all one has to do is to follow a certain gifted individual, and all will be right. This is not behaving and quieting oneself as a weaned child. The pathway of the child of God must often be individually between himself and the Lord, such as worship and some decisions which have to be made individually before Him. There are other times, however, in service and in the interpreting of the Scriptures, when it is well to seek godly counsel with others, so as to have a check upon ourselves (Gal. 2:2).

The results of the exercise produced here would be anything but an affected spirit of piety. The experiences passed through have been such that that which is merely on the surface would either be driven inward and so the work deepened in the soul, or else be given up.

The closing expression of this Psalm is very significant: "Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and forever." v. 3.

Who could not but say that when Israel shall arrive at the state produced here, they will be ready for the fullest blessing? And can we not say it would be so of us too? These exercises through which David passed made him realize it was only through dependence upon the Lord that the Philistine could be overcome.

Politico - Religious Controversy in Italy: the Editor's Column

A thorny question has arisen in Italian politics concerning the payment of taxes by the Roman Catholic Church on returns from their vast properties in the nation. A law was passed in 1963 which requires that taxes be paid by individuals, corporations, and others; but the Vatican has made no statement of her earnings. She feels that she is exempt from all taxation, and she has certain opinions on her side; but this could pose a religious-political controversy of some magnitude. Deputy Premier Pietro Nenni, who is himself an agnostic, feels that the Church must pay taxes. There is an anti-clerical element in the political structure of the nation, while at the same time clericalism is well entrenched.

To understand some of the problems, it would be necessary to go back to the year 1870, when Garibaldi Giuseppe seized the Papal states, and confiscated considerable Church property. At that time the nation assumed pre-eminence over the Church and confined the Pope to the Vatican area. The Vatican wealth began to wane, and by the year 1922 the Church found itself hard pressed financially and had to borrow money to conduct the election of a new Pope.

By 1929 a new approachment was instituted between the Church and the government. A concordant was ratified between Pope Pius XI and the Kingdom of Italy on June 8 of that year. In this new document, called the "Lateran Treaty," the government agreed to pay the Church the sum of 91 million dollars for Church property seized in 1870, and also agreed that henceforth Church property would not be taxed. Thus the Lateran Treaty is the basis of the Vatican's contention that their earnings are not taxable.

From 1929, Vatican funds began to accumulate, until now it is one of the wealthiest organizations in Italy, and perhaps in the world. The rising tide of the Roman Church, as an instrument of international financial power, is furnishing ammunition for criticism. No one knows how great their power of wealth is, and it is said that only six persons in the Vatican know its worth or methods of operation. As the costs of government continue to mount, many officials are looking for more taxable income; and with socialist and communist strength in politics, there is an eyeing of the Vatican wealth as a likely source from which it can be drawn.

The Vatican has important financial connections in London, New York, and Switzerland; and it is in itself a banking syndicate of international scope. Its portfolio of investments is immense, and includes banks, utility companies, streetcar and bus lines, an air line, a shipping line, construction and insurance companies, steel, chemicals, ceramics, and many other factories. It is financing a mammoth hotel in the heart of Rome, which is to be managed by the Hilton chain. It is also involved in the financing of a luxury apartment building, containing a hotel, offices, and shops, in Washington, D.C.

It would be impossible to estimate the other vast holdings of the Church, which are found in cathedrals and palaces, besides enormous treasures of works of art - such as paintings and tapestries - Byzantine articles of gold, silver, and precious stones, ivories, and many old and

priceless articles.

This treasure-trove beyond calculation causes the atheistic and materialistic elements in the world to envy the great Church structure, and to cast covetous eyes upon it. Just recently we had our attention called to a report in The Detroit News to the effect that the purchasing power of the Catholic Church is being placed behind the struggle of racial groups to obtain equal job opportunities. One statement focuses on the greatness of this Church, which it is said is "Next to the federal government... as America's largest purchaser of goods and services through its dioceses and religious orders."

The Roman Catholic Church is perhaps stronger and more vibrant today than ever before in its history, but there is also a strong and growing strength in Italian communism. These seem to be contradictory trends, and in the end they are destined to come into conflict.

In the 1963 elections in Italy, the communists gained 18% in voter strength, and socialism is a growing power. This goes together with an increase in agnosticism, infidelity, and atheism. We have lived to witness the great upheaval in Russia, when the Russian Orthodox Church was almost demolished, and her treasures scattered and broken. At that time atheism took over, and efforts were made to blot out the name of God from their land. The same thing is at work in this and other lands, and men are looking forward to the day when God will be openly cast off; and they will boast in their freedom, only to be more the slaves of sin and of Satan.

There are two chapters in Revelation - 17 and 18 - which bring before us the latter end of religion. In the former chapter we are introduced to a woman who is to sit upon "a scarlet-colored beast." And this beast is to be full of the names of blasphemy. He is to be the great head of an empire which will soon be revived; its seat is to be the city of Rome - the city known for its "seven hills." The woman is to sit upon these seven hills, and also to sit upon many waters, from which we learn that they are "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." It is a vast religious organization which will help to direct and control the beast. In this chapter she is called a "harlot," which means that she will not be faithful to Christ who was rejected on earth; for she will have all the marks that will attract man. She is to be arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with "gold and precious stones and pearls." The earth will be dazzled by her splendid array. The word "harlot" marks her carrying on of illicit commerce with the kings of the earth who will enrich her and be enriched by her; but, after a time, the great head of this conglomerate empire, together with his subservient kings, will hate her and destroy her. God will put it into their hearts to turn their kingdoms over to the beast until His words will be fulfilled.

The latter chapter gives a description of this same body as an organized city, rather than as the woman. It is called "that great city Babylon." It will be noted as a city of confusion- Babel. It is to be a cage filled with unclean and hateful birds; but it will be no mean city, for it will be very great and wealthy. The merchants will acquire wealth by the "abundance of her delicacies." But suddenly that which is called a city will be brought to desolation. The kings and rulers who have benefited by her "shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all

manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men."

This is often referred to as Babylon's general store; enumerated are the things in which she traffics. The last named should more correctly read, "bodies and souls of men." Are they her least valued merchandise? Her activities remind us of the earthly and not heavenly character of that which claims to be Christ's Church here. The very name (Babylon) given by the Spirit of God to this representative city indicates that which takes the place of exceeding loftiness and grandeur on earth. "For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." But all the loftiness and presumed greatness of man and his religion will be brought down. It will then be said, "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught."

The next chapter, the 19th, describes another scene altogether, for heaven will rejoice when the false church is destroyed and when "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (v. 7). She will be one of purity and absolute holiness when the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

"We wait for Thee, O Son of God,

And long for Thine appearing."

Pope's Visit to Bombay - Eucharistic Con.: the Editor's Column

As the Roman Pontiff left Rome and made his historic flight to Bombay, India, last December, the Church of Rome gained prominence and stature. Never before had a Pope of Rome set forth on such a mission which took him into the heart of a great non-Christian nation. Perhaps more than one million persons saw the reigning head of the greatest religious body on earth. They were impressed by the so-called "holy man" of the West, and they pressed forward if perhaps they might touch him. Many Hindus thought that such a touch might heal their bodies or bring them luck. How different was all this to the meek and lowly Jesus who was despised and rejected of men.

It was indeed a gala day when Christians, Hindus, Parsis, Moslems, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Sikhs shouted "hail, hail" to the Pope; he replied with lavish greetings, lauding the ancient cultures of India. The Pontiff said that "Rarely has this longing for God been expressed with words so full of the spirit of advent as in your sacred books many centuries before Christ."

What vain words! Did Hinduism know Christ? or point the way to Christ? The whole populace was steeped in heathen darkness, without a ray of hope. They did not seek after God; much less did they seek Him with "relentless desire," as the Pontiff said. Man has not sought after God. "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." Psalm 14:2. The verdict is uniformly the same.

Take the Pope's quotation from the Hindu books called the Upanishads: "From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness to light, from death lead me to immortality." What an empty group of sayings these are! How can man find the real, the light, and immortality? Apart from Christ and His finished work, these are forlorn hopes. We had a display of the futility of Hinduism when the great Nehru recently died. There was no hope, no comfort, no solace. The great statesman died, and the dying embers of the ashes of his funeral pyre soon blew away to settle on the streams. But men forget that "God shall bring every work into judgment," and at the Great White Throne Christ will be the Judge. Not one who dies without repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ will escape the judgment to come. Solemn indeed!

Think of the ancient Greeks who developed the great centers of mythology, and built the renowned temples which the world admires. They had celebrated philosophers, and these highly cultured Greeks turned their minds to work on these problems; but did these eminently civilized people tell us of God who made the worlds? Their genius never produced a thought worthy of God. If they thought of Him, they thought of Him as an unknown God. Him the Apostle Paul preached unto them. But as in that day, so today, many mock when Christ is preached. It is foolishness to them. Man is totally dependent upon the revelation that God has been pleased to give of Himself.

All the blandishments of all the mystics together offer nothing real; it is all a delusion. And all the soothing nostrums of religious doctors will only end in disappointment. And all the panaceas of false religions in the world do but deceive mankind, and even in the great profession of Christianity

there is little of bringing of the soul to God. We are much impressed by the recent pageantry which ostensibly brought men into contact with Christianity. The 38th Eucharistic Congress in Bombay at the time of the Papal visit was a great spectacle where more than 100,000 clergy and laity arrived for the occasion. This set out Christianity as apart from all the pagan idolatry of the masses of the great subcontinent; but this Christianity bears little resemblance to the true faith in Christ as the Savior of sinners, as was found in the early Christians who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." That Christianity bore fruit to His name. It was vital and living faith.

Let us take notice of the Eucharistic Congress. This was started by a Bishop Louis Gaston de Segur in Lille, France, on June 21, 1881. It was for the purpose of calling attention to what Rome calls "the host." It is the exaltation of a wafer which is supposed to present Christ to the people. It is far removed from the simple remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His death on the cross which He instituted in the loaf and the cup as a memorial of His death. The priest now claims to actually change the wafer into the "body, blood, soul and spirit" of Christ, so that it may be held on high for adoration. Is not this but a form of idolatry? Can man, even a priest, change a wafer into God? It is preposterous.

The first Eucharistic Congress was a comparatively small affair, but each time it becomes a larger display, and has been held in various parts of the world. From 1881 to 1964 there have been 38 such commemorative displays. The Eucharist, as it is called, is one of the principle dogmas of Catholicism. But carnal ordinances and ritualistic observances have shut out the Christ of God. We may well quote from a devoted servant of Christ: "The Lord Jesus is kept at a distance; religious observances are brought near; and the people (for they have ever been so minded) like the feelings that come from all that which is acted before them. Their eye and ear are engaged, a certain sacred sense of God is awakened; but the precious immediate confidence of the heart and conscience is refused."

We are reminded how the blessed Lord Himself forgave sins on earth. What peace, what assurance, it gave to the troubled soul who met Christ as the Savior of sinners! Think of the woman who was a sinner, in Luke 7! Think of the poor adulteress of Sychar who found forgiveness and found Him who gave her living water! Think of the blind man whose eyes the Lord opened, in John 9! This dear man did not know about theology, but after his eyes were opened he could speak with assurance: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." We see Christ and the sinner found often in company, precious company! But whether we meet people on the ground of Paganism, or in any other way apart from Christ-the Christ of God -nothing satisfies the hungry soul but having personally to do with Him.

A few more lines from an already-quoted servant of Christ emphasizes the all-importance of the sinner's hope which can alone be found in Him:

"The religious rulers found this way of Jesus to interfere with them. Their interest was to keep God and the people separate, for then they had hopes of being used themselves. Thus they were angry when the Lord said to the man, Thy sins be forgiven thee. It was a great interference with them. It trespassed on their places. 'Who can forgive sins but God only?'- and God was in heaven. The Son of man forgiving sins on earth was a sad disturbance of that by which they lived in credit in the world. But whether they received it or not, this was the way of the Son on earth. He dwelt with our

necessities in such wise as encouraged the happy, near, and confident approach of all needy ones to Him. He did all to show that He was a cheerful giver-nay more-that He gave Himself with His gift. For with His own hand, we have seen, He brought the blessing home to every man's door.

"It was therefore only the happy confidence of faith which fully met and refreshed His Spirit-that faith which knew the title of a needy one to come right up to Him, the faith of a Bartimaeus which was not to be silenced by the mistaken scrupulousness even of disciples. And little children are to be in His arms, though the same mistake would forbid them.

"This was His mind; He came into the world to be used by sick and needy sinners; and the faith that understood and used Him accordingly was its due answer. Such answers we see recorded by the Evangelists here in the action of the faithful little band, who, breaking up the roof, let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay 'into the midst before Jesus.' There was no ceremoniousness in this, nothing of the ancient reserve of the temple, no waiting for introduction. This little company felt their necessity, knew the virtues of the Son of God, and believed that these suited each other-nay, that the Lord carried the one, because necessitous sinners were bearing the other. It was a strong expression of faith, and I believe the strength of it was according to the mind of Jesus; so that, on seeing their faith, as we read, without further to-do or more words, His heart and the grace that it carried uttered itself in an expression as full and strong; 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.'

"Here was sympathy. Jesus was rending all veils between God and sinners, and so was the faith of this happy little company. His blood was soon to rend from top to bottom the veil of the temple, which kept God from poor sinners; and now their faith was rending that which kept them from Jesus. This surely was meeting and entertaining the Son of God in character; and His Spirit deeply owns it: 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' "

Proverbs 3:5

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

There is a positive and a negative action enjoined in this verse: the one, trusting in the Lord with all your affections; and the other, not leaning on your own mind or its suggestions - your heart trusting in the Lord, and your mind not trusting in itself. It is very interesting to note the difference in practice which this counsel produces. When my affections lead me to trust in the Lord, I am gratifying my deepest feelings, for the Lord occupies my heart; in Him every resource and benefit is laid up for me, and He delights to give. When you trust in the Lord with all your heart, mere difficulties or sorrows, instead of causing distress, become opportunities for your knowing better His unequalled power and care for you. The moment a difficulty occurs, the heart turns to its resource as a bird to its wing.

If you lean on your own understanding, when a strait occurs, or when any claim is made on you, you begin to think how you can extricate yourself from it; and you are as one pumping at an empty well for water with which you want immediately to extinguish a fire; and after all your toil you never succeed. When you trust in the Lord, want is your passport to Him - your draft on His heart, which is a bank of treasures of every kind, whereat you are enriched and satisfied whenever you apply, until, from habit, you are never happy or at home anywhere else. You are restful, and never without resource. If, on the other hand, you lean on your own understanding, you will be anxious and devising, watching the effect of your sayings and doings, as a chemist watches the result of his various combinations; and yet, with all your toil, you are never able to produce the thing required. In the one case you can cheerfully answer every claim, because it causes you to apply where unbounded wealth is placed at your disposal; in the other, you are made to feel, the oftener you try, how inadequate and insufficient is anything of your own devising to allay or to repair the moral disturbances ever occurring, where God and man are at a distance, and man and his fellow at variance.

The Proverbs

(Chapter 1:1-19)

Beyond all others, David was the sweet Psalmist of Israel, though not a few worthy companions find a place in the divine collection of holy lyrics. Solomon stands in like pre-eminence for the utterance of the sententious wisdom of which the book of Proverbs is the chief expression, with Ecclesiastes when the sense of his own failure under unique circumstances of creature advantage gave a sad and penitent character to his experience in the power of the inspiring Spirit. It is the more striking when compared with the Song of Songs, which shows us the Jewish spouse restored to the love of the once-despised Messiah, and His adorable excellency and grace, after her long folly, manifold vicissitudes, and sore tribulation.

Every one of these compositions is stamped with the design of inspiration, and instinct with the power of the Holy Spirit in carrying out His design in each. But they are all in view of man on the earth, more especially the chosen people of God, passing through the vista of sin and shame and sorrow in the latter day to the kingdom which the true Son of David, the born Son of God (Psalm 2), will establish as Jehovah's King in His holy hill of Zion, though far larger and higher things also, as we know. Hence these writings have a common governmental character, only that, in the Psalms especially, the rejection and the sufferings of Christ give occasion to glimpses of light above and to hints of brighter associations. But the full and proper manifestation of heavenly things was left for the rejected Christ to announce in the gospels, and for the Holy Spirit sent down from on high to open out practically in the Acts, and doctrinally in the epistles, especially of the Apostle Paul. Any unfolding of a church character, or even of Christian relationship, it would be vain to look for in these constituent books or any others of the Old Testament.

The express aim of Proverbs, for example, is to furnish, from the one better fitted for the purpose than any man who ever lived, the light of wisdom in moral intelligence for the earthly path of man under Jehovah's eye. Being from "the king of Israel," it is also for the people he governed; and therefore with a slight exception (only six times it seems, easily accounted for) in known relationship with Jehovah, whose name pervades from first to last. See chapter 2:5, 17; 3:4; 25:2; 30:5, 9. But being divinely inspired, it is a book for him that reads or hears to profit by at any time, for the Christian in particular as having by grace the mind of Christ. All Scripture is for our good and blessing, though most of it is not addressed to us, nor is it about us.

1 Kings 4:29-34 historically testifies to the unrivaled capacity conferred of God on Solomon, and a wisdom He would not let die. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of

creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." "Three thousand proverbs" cover far more than the inspired collection, as the songs uttered far exceed those meant for permanency. Inspiration selected designedly.

We have remarked how "Jehovah" characterizes the book. In Ecclesiastes, on the contrary, the use of "God" or Elohim is constant, and flows solely and appropriately-one might even say, necessarily-from its subject matter. As the book of Proverbs is for the instruction of "men-brethren" (Israel), so there is the constant tenderness of "my son," or more rarely, "sons." But there is not nor could be, as in the New Testament, the basis of Christ's redemption, or the liberty of adoption in the Spirit; the groundwork there is in the cross, and the character is consistency with Christ glorified in heaven. Morally, too, God is revealed, and the Father's love made known in Christ to be enjoyed in the Spirit's power.

Pro. 1:1-6 is the preface. It remains for its right appreciation to explain briefly terms which many readers fail to distinguish.

"Wisdom" here is derived from a word that means "practiced" or skillful, and applied very widely from arts of varied kinds to powers of mind and philosophy. The verb is used for being "wise" throughout the Hebrew scriptures; the adjective even more extensively and often; the substantive more frequently still. The "wise men" of Babylon are as a class correspondingly described in the Chaldee or Aramean. But the employment of the term is also general. It seems based on experience.

"Instruction," connected with "wisdom," is expressed by a word signifying also discipline, correction, or warning. The moral object is thus remarkably sustained, in contrast with mere exercise or displays of intellect.

Next comes in its place to "discern the words of understanding." For this is of great value for the soul, understanding founded on adequate consideration so as to distinguish things that differ. The verb and noun occur plentifully in the Bible.

Then we have "to receive instruction in intelligence, righteousness, judgment and equity." Here circumspection has a great place in the learning to behave with becoming propriety and tact, as David did when Saul was on the rack through jealousy.

"Prudence" in verse 4 may degenerate into cunning or wily ways, as in Exod. 21:14 and Josh. 9:4; but as in Pro. 8:5 and 12, so here and in kindred forms, it has the fair meaning of practical good sense.

"Discretion" at the end of the verse is the opposite of heedlessness, but capable, like the last, of a bad application. Employed laudably, it means sagacity through reflection.

As the proverb is a compressed parable, or an expanded comparison, so it often borders on the riddle or enigma in order to fix attention. The same Hebrew word appears to mean both "proverb" and "parable," which may in part if not wholly account for the former only in John's Gospel, the latter in the Synoptists. There, too, the parable stands in contrast with speaking plainly (John 16:25, 29; compare also Matt. 13:34, 35).

Solomon then introduces himself in his known relation and position as the channel of these divinely given apothegms, not to glorify man like the seven sages of Greece, still less to magnify himself who bears witness to his own humiliation, but to exalt Jehovah in guarding him that heeds these words from folly and snare. For the declared end is the moral profit of man by what God gave to His glory-to know wisdom and instruction, to discern, and receive. However precious for all, the first aim is to give prudence to the simple, so open to deception in this world, and knowledge and discretion to the young man, apt to be heady and rashly opinionated. But there is another result surely anticipated; "he that is wise will hear, and the intelligent will attain to sound counsel: to understand a proverb and an allegory, the words of the wise and their enigmas [or, dark sayings]." Who more in place to teach these things than the man then inspired of God?

The book begins with the foundation principle of the fear of God, but this in the special relation established with His people Israel. It is therefore "the fear of Jehovah." For as He deigned thus to be made known to them, so were they called to prize that name as their special privilege. Jehovah was God in Israel, though alone the true God, and Lord of all the earth. As Jehovah was God, who spoke through the prophets, and wrought wonders according to His word, so the people at a great crisis with heathenism cried (1 Kings 18), Jehovah, He is God, He is God. The usage of the abstract term, and of the relational name, has nothing in the least to do with imaginary legends or various writers; it is most instructive for the twofold truth that is set out.

In Psalm 111:10 the fear of Jehovah is declared to be the beginning of wisdom, as here of knowledge. Both are equally true, and each important in its place, though wisdom be the higher of the two, as built on the experience of the divine word and ways, which "knowledge" does not necessarily presuppose.

He who wrote for the reader's instruction was pre-eminent in both, though in his case there was extraordinary divine favor in the communication, and the keenest ardor in improving opportunities without parallel. In this general part of the book we have "wisdom" introduced (chap. 9:10), "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding." This gives the moral side its just prominence in both; and so it is in Job 28:28, where that chapter, full of interest throughout, closes with "unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord [Adonai, not Jehovah as such], that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." He is feared as the Sovereign Master, who cannot look on evil with the least allowance.

But even where external knowledge is pursued, what a safeguard is in the fear of God! Assuredly, the Creator would be remembered, not only in the days of youth, but in those of age. Who that had the least real knowledge of God could confound the creature with Him who created it? To him the heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows the work of His hands. If he beheld the light when it shone, or the moon walking in brightness, it was but to own and adore the God who is above, unless a deceived heart had turned him aside, that he could not deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? How, with Him before the mind, deny creation for an eternal matter under Fate or Chance? for a desolating Pantheism, where all men and things are god, and none is really God, where is neither sin nor its judgment, nor grace and truth with its blessedness in Christ for faith to life eternal? where all that appears to our senses in Maya (illusion), and the diabolical substitute, but real death of hope, is Nirvana (extinction)? How true it is that the foolish "despise wisdom and instruction"!

What again were his last words to his judges, of whom Westerners boast? "It is now time to depart-for me to die, for you to live; but which of us is going to a better state is unknown to everyone but God." What a contrast with the Apostle! "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Certainty on divine warrant, and the deepest enjoyment everywhere and always, the beginning of which is the fear of God in Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

This fundamental deliverance is followed up by the usual appeal of affection, "my son." For here the relationships God has made and sanctions are of as great value where His fear reigns, as they perpetuate sin and misery where it is not so. Parents are to be honored and heard, the instruction of the father and the teaching of the mother. This the son first knows to form and direct obedience, if self-will oppose not; and they are his graceful ornament. How early they act on the heart, and how influential on the conduct and even character, many a son can testify. Alas, that men have forgotten the word of the wisest, and proved their folly, parents and children! And to this sad side we are now introduced, in verses 10-19.

Here we have the soul warned against listening to the voice of enticement. For Satan has instruments, not a few, zealous to draw others into evil; and companionship is as natural as dangerous. "For also we were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." Titus 3:3. And in this the least scrupulous lead-their mouth full of cursing and bitterness-their feet swift to shed blood. The word is, Walk not in the way with them, keep back thy foot from their path. Covetousness, and robbery to gratify it, are vividly drawn; violence follows lust, and one's own life the forfeit. The day comes for judgment without mercy, the judgment of the flesh. Listen, for in vain is the net spread in the eyes of any bird. In reality they wait for their own blood, as surely as God knows how to deliver. How many a one that is plotted against escapes, while those greedy of gain lose their own lives, the end in this world of their wicked schemes!

The Proverbs

(Chapter 1:20-33)

It is a characteristic of this book, and exactly in keeping with its contents, that we have "wisdom" personified from the first chapter, rising up (as is well known) to the Person of Christ in chapter 8:22-31. Even in this first introduction, though the form is plural, as in chapter 9:1, and in later occurrences, the cry does not fail as it goes on to assume the solemnity of a divine warning of inevitable judgment, so that it is difficult to sever it from the voice of God Himself, as in verse 24 if not in 23, and in those that follow. Compare in the New Testament Matt. 23:34 with Luke 11:49.

Under the law there was nothing that properly, still less that fully, answered to the grace of the gospel in extending to every land and tongue, to be preached, as the Apostle says, "in all creation that is under heaven." Yet when not only Israel as a whole, but Judah, revolted to the uttermost and was swept away to Babylon, yea, when the rejection of Messiah added incalculably to their older guilt of idolatry, and brought on still worse and wider and longer dispersion, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet to write of the richest mercy which should surely dawn on their ruined estate. After the triple call to "hearken," followed by the triple summons to "awake" (Isa. 51 and 52), we hear the cheering outburst, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth glad tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, saying

to Zion, Thy God reigneth." So in due time will the kingdom be restored to Israel in God's mercy and sovereign grace. But as this is displayed in another and yet profounder way now in the gospel, the Apostle does not hesitate to apply these glowing words to those now sent to preach the gospel of God's indiscriminate goodness, alike to Jew and Greek. For now there is no difference, and the same Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon Him. But if Israel be yet deaf to the report of those that believe, the gospel goes out like the voice of those heavenly orbs whose sound cannot be confined to one people or country, but went out unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the habitable earth, as Psalm 19 suggests.

Still here where Jehovah's law ruled, wisdom was not confined to parental discipline, still less was it shut up in philosophic schools, but "cries without." She "raiseth her voice in the broadways" instead of seeking only the refined and exalted; she "calleth at the head of the noisy places of concourse, at the entry of the gates." The moral profit was sought assiduously of those that had most need, if culture despises the vulgar. Not in the calm and quiet of the country is she said to utter her words, but "in the city" where is far more to attract and distract the mass of mankind. "How long, simple ones," says she, "will ye love simpleness, and scorers delight them in scorning, and fools hate wisdom?" There is thus a climax in these classes of careless, ungodly souls. The simple are the many weak ones who, lacking all moral discernment and object, are exposed to evil on all sides and at each turn; and by this easy indifference they become a prey. The scorers manifest more positive pravity, and reject all appeals to conscience and reference to divine things by unseemly jest and insolent sneer. It is an ever growing moral disease, never so prevalent as in these last days. The fools that hate knowledge may be more godless still, and become openly atheist, as Scripture shows. For the apostasy must come, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who will set himself and be received as God, and this in the temple of God, where the affront is deepest.

But Jehovah gives wisdom's remonstrances, and, if heeded, her gracious encouragement. "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour forth my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." It is an error, which goes beyond the purpose of the verse, to conceive that the gift of the Holy Spirit is here promised. There is undoubtedly an inward blessing promised which is ever by the Spirit, and an intelligence of wisdom's words. This is much, and Jehovah made it true from the time the book was written. But it is dangerous either to exaggerate what God always was to His people, or to undervalue those privileges which awaited redemption through our Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit was not poured out as at Pentecost till Christ was glorified. But whatever of blessing there ever was for man is by the Spirit, and this too is in knowing the words of divine wisdom; and here it is amply assured, where the reproof was heeded.

Here it is not the gospel which is thus shown, but the call of God in the government of man on the earth. Hence it does not pass beyond the judgment which will be executed in the day that is coming here below. This is the more important to heed, because Christendom is as unbelieving about the judgment of the quick that Christ will surely enforce on the habitable world, as the Jews were about the judgment of the dead in the resurrection state. Both were revealed in the written Word, and both are to be in the hands of Him who loved to call Himself "the Son of man." But if He came, the Son of man in grace to the lost, He will assuredly return, the Son of man in judgment of all who despise Him, whether alive or dead. Thus there is the judgment of the wicked living at the beginning of His kingdom and through it, no less than the judgment of the wicked dead at the end,

before He delivers it up to Him who is God and Father. Now it is the former which is treated here, though commentators and preachers are apt to see in it only the judgment at the close.

It is sad when Jews do not rise above Gentile moralizing on the life that now is or the death that terminates it; but how much sadder still when Christians are content with similar platitudes! Christ is the only true Light which on coming into the world casts light on every man. He, and He alone, gives us the truth of everything. The divine judgment of man thus acquires proper definiteness and its full solemnity; and the light of the New Testament is thus thrown back on the Old, besides revealing what belongs to itself pre-eminently if not exclusively.

Take the picture the Lord in Luke 17 draws of the kingdom of God, when it is no longer a hidden matter of faith or of mere profession as now; but the Son of man shall be in His day as the lightning which lightens out of the one part under the heaven and shines unto the other. It will be in truth as in the days of Noah or in those of Lot-unexpected, inevitable, and utter destruction of the ungodly, as they are in the midst of their busy pursuits. When the Son of man thus comes, shall He find faith on the earth? How far is it to be found now?

Take again the view He gives in Luke 21, not only of signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, but of the moral state on the earth when the powers of heaven shall be shaken. It is not the end of the world, but of the age, when the Son of man is seen coming in a cloud, and the kingdom of God will be established manifestly and in power that will put down all opposition.

This "sudden destruction" is here before the inspiring Spirit, who maintains the edge of His sword unblunted by tradition and callous unbelief. The Word of God of old, all His Word, is good, wherein He calls man to hear; but He is refused. He stretched out His hand imploringly, but none regarded; His counsel was rejected, and His reproof no less. What remained possible under the law? Unsparing judgment. How terrible when Jehovah, patient and long-suffering, laughs at the calamity of those that despised Him, mocks the fears, distress, and anguish of those who mocked Him, and has no answer for their call, nor will He be found, though then sought diligently! To fear the judgment, especially when it falls, is not to fear Jehovah.

The warning of Jehovah was solemn, but not more solemn than sure. Impossible that He could lie. If faithful to His own in doing all He says to cheer them now, He is no less righteous in dealing with His enemies; He will recompense them.

Divine compassion is unfailing, for the ignorant where it is not willful. No less severe is the abhorrence of such as hate knowledge in the things of God, which of course is alone considered here. And what can be more sadly plain than to "choose not the fear of Jehovah"? It proves the enmity of the heart. Is He indifferent to man? It was only the vilest of the heathen who laid it down formally; but what was the general state of the Jews of old? What is that of professing Christendom in our own land and every other today?

Christ has shed better and perfect light, and the final revelation of God is fullness of grace and truth through Him. But what is the issue of slighting it and Him? It is more conspicuously true now than in Solomon's time that "they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof." When God came into the world in Christ's Person, they turned Him out of it. They hated Him without a cause. His grace only made Him more despicable in their eyes. His counsel irritated. His reproof was a laughingstock. What will the end be?

Jehovah is not mocked with impunity. "Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their way and be filled with their own devices." Sowing to the flesh must be reaping destruction. He does not execute judgment as yet; but it will come assuredly and soon-tribulation and anguish for man-indignation and wrath on His part who judges. It is easy to turn away from grace and truth, from righteousness at any time; but the backsliding of the simple will slay them, and the prosperity of the foolish shall lure them to perdition.

"Hear, and thy soul shall live." So said the prophet Isaiah, and it is blessedly true under the gospel. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." So declared He who is the Truth, as He is the Way and the Life. Or, as it is written here, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be at rest from fear of evil." Is it not a goodly shelter in a world of evil and danger? Christ is it now to everyone that believes on Him, not only rest from evil but from the fear of it by grace.

The Proverbs

(Chapter 2:1-22)

Here the Holy Spirit turns from the sad end of impious indifference and contempt, to enter on a new part of His design. He shows how the moral wisdom and right understanding is to be obtained, which consists in the fear of Jehovah and the knowledge of God, at least by the submissive and docile heart.

As we are begotten of God's will by the word of truth, so to receive His words, and lay up His commandments with one, is the constant condition of blessing. We see in Luke 10 our Lord deciding for Mary the good part which should not be taken from her. In this Martha complained of her sister's indifference. For she herself was wrong in judging Mary's sitting at His feet and hearing His word. It is really to incline the ear to wisdom, and to apply the heart to understanding. Yet this is not all, for at the beginning of Luke 11 our Lord shows the need and the value of earnest prayer also. So here to cry after discernment, to lift up the voice for understanding, follows according to God the reception of His words. We are called to dependence and to confidence in thus importunately looking up; for every good gift and every perfect giving is from the Father of lights, as Solomon could attest, who thus sought and found wisdom.

Our age can testify the zeal with which men seek silver and gold and other hidden treasures, as Solomon's day of magnificence and noble designs of an earthly sort was famous for its success; for that enterprise was conducted by his skill beyond any other monarch. Now it is the mere vulgar thirst for lucre to spend on vanity and self-indulgence to a degree without parallel in the breadth of its diffusion. But now, as then, the toils are immense, the dangers continual, the sufferings extreme, the experience full of bitter trial and frequent disappointment, the moral atmosphere shameless. But the quest demands in any case constancy and endurance and undaunted resolution; and thence does the Holy Spirit draw the lesson where no disappointment can be. "If thou seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou apprehend the fear of Jehovah and find the knowledge of God." Jehovah is full of goodness and mercy. So here He "giveth wisdom," when the heart is thus in earnest. It is the reversal of man's dream of education. Man is proud of his own acquisitions. "Jehovah giveth wisdom; out of his mouth [not of man's mind or heart] come knowledge and understanding." Where are we to find

what "His mouth" gives out, but in His Word?

Solomon failed to maintain the brightness of his beginning; and old age found him foolish about his wives, and faithless about the glory of Him who had given him all that made him what he was at first. Still less could Solomon guarantee wisdom for the son that succeeded to his throne; none acted less wisely than Rehoboam, and his humiliation was not small. But "Jehovah giveth wisdom," He only and surely, to such as wait on Him with purpose of heart and diligently search into and value the treasures of that Word which He has magnified above all His name

It is plain throughout that not intellectual activity is in question, but what is spiritual and for moral ends practically. Hence in verse 7 it is said, "He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright; a buckler [he is] to those that walk in integrity." There is assured a supply of what is valued most, and guardian care for those whose eye and heart are toward His revealed will in their ways. But it is wholesome to notice that He guards the path of just judgment; that is, His chosen way. And He also preserves the way of His saints or godly ones. He knows the way which pleases Him, and He shows it to His own, who desire nothing more than to see and follow it. Christ it is who brought this out habitually and in manifold forms. See John 1:44; 8:12; 12:26; 14:6. It is as real today as when He presented it in following Himself. Indeed the disciples far better knew its blessedness when He went on high and the Spirit came to be in them, who abides for us to know it now. "Then thou shalt know righteousness and judgment and equity-every good path." We ought to know it even better and in higher ways than a godly Israelite could.

The preservative power of wisdom is next shown in guarding from moral perils, whether of iniquity or of corruption.

How admirable is the wisdom Jehovah gives the heart! and not less on the negative or dark side than on the positive, especially where the knowledge that accompanies it is pleasant to the soul. Discretion and discernment follow with vigilance against an evil world. Violence and greed are not the only dangers, but the way of evil through deceitful speech. Silence is not always golden; but "the tongue of the just is choice silver" (Pro. 10:20); or, as the New Testament exhorts, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." How powerful is the soft and pure answer, not only to turn away wrath, but to check heat and pride and will! It is dangerous to hear froward things; it is wicked to speak them. How soon after this the paths of uprightness are forsaken to walk in the ways of darkness! - evil words allowed lead to a walk which God's light never illumines. How sad the descent in rejoicing to do evil!-delighting in the frowardness, or deceits of evil! It is to glory in the worst shame-how crooked in their paths and perverse in their course! Truly their judgment is just.

But the discretion that flows from wisdom is no less efficacious to guard from "the strange woman" (v. 16) and her flattering words, where lust reigns, not love, and selfish passion, not true affection and tender regard. Debauchery is all that could be expected from her that forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.

We do not hear the glad tidings of grace in this Book. There is no gospel call throughout. It addresses those who are under the law and the covenant, whoever else may profit by it. It is very excellent for any man that has ears; and those who know most of grace and heavenly privilege will most prize it; its voice direct is to the ancient people of God, to Israel. For them all flows simply and

easily. There is no strain of a single sentence or word, no need of accommodation, no lending it a sense which it does not truly contain or convey.

In it therefore, "Jehovah" appears regularly, and "Elohim" rarely used has its exceptional force.

By the way, remark how the notion of various writers here or anywhere indicated by such designations is the shallowest of dreams. It may afford pleasant pastime to men who, not knowing God (or, at least, beguiled and blinded by such), find in its cultivation a field for imagination and ingenuity without truth, conscience, or love, a mere linguistic or intellectual tour de force whetted by the keen will to damage and deface every landmark of divine authority.

It is evident that corruption, especially when it takes the form of the violation of a holy relationship, is as hateful to God as it is destructive to man. See how Babylon and its counterpart is spoken of and dealt with in the Revelation. So here it is said that "her house inclineth unto death, and her path unto the dead." This, Israel as a people had to prove before Christendom existed to follow the fatal wake. It is no less true of individuals. "None that go unto her [the corrupting woman] return again, nor attain unto the paths of life."

Wisdom then from Jehovah it is that insures discretion to walk in the way of the good and to keep the paths of the righteous. So were led the faithful of old; but how much brighter is the light of life in following Him whose ways and words here below we know from God as of none else! Yet was Jehovah's word, before He shone in this world of darkness, a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. And the day hastens when it will be made manifest to every eye that "the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." What was plainly attested in the days of David and Solomon is but a witness to the full display of this truth in the coming kingdom, when "the wicked shall be cut off from the land, and the treacherous shall be plucked out of it."

The Proverbs

(Chapter 3:1-8)

The opening chapters set out moral wisdom in the fear of Jehovah as the true and sure preservative in a world of self-will and its evils of violence and corruption. Redemption is not introduced any more than a new nature, but the duty primarily for the Israelite of subjection to divine instruction, with the consequent establishment in the land when the wicked perish out of it.

In verses 1-4 there is still more ample exhortation as well as admonition, that the discipline might issue in the happiest and most fruitful results.

We thus learn how far the Old Testament was from casting the people of God on the sentiments, emotions, or reasonings of their own hearts. It was but an imperfect, or at least partial, revelation. "For the law made nothing perfect." The first man was under process of trial; the Second had not yet appeared. There were dealings of God and testings of man; revelations from God, but not yet God revealed. For the Son of God had not come nor given us an understanding that we might know Him that is True.

Yet even in the days when faith waited for its Object and His work, and the best blessing then lay in promise, the heart was formed by the positive teaching afforded, and trained in the observance of commandments which came from God. They might come through a parent; and such no doubt

was the due order in Israel, as it had been marked from their father Abraham, as Jehovah deigned to express His pleasure in his commanding his children and his household, that they might keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment. But what gave divine value was that it was His teaching, and that the commandments enjoined were His. This alone sanctifies-obeying God, obeying His Word, the effect and proof of love, when any are in relationship with God. Nor do we forget but remember what we love and value.

So the Lord puts it in His matchless way to His disciples. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself unto him." John 14:21. What a contrast with dark superstition, forbidden to have His commandments through fear of making an ill use of them, and shut up to a sinful director, and to its tradition nobody knows whence, both human and precarious at best! What a contrast with the yet darker sin, which denies the authority of God to every scripture, and thereby would deprive His words of spirit and life!

Even a Jew was not so bereft of blessing. He was called not to forget what he had been taught, and his heart to observe commandments which were Jehovah's only through Moses or any other that communicated them. What a blessed picture Luke 2 sets before us of the Lord, thus obedient in the early days of His sojourn, subject to Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, yet conscious of a higher relationship and so occupied with His Father's things! And blessed were the fruits. Even then truly, as He said afterward, He kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love. So here it is written for the obedient Israelites, "length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee."

But this is far from all. As we know that "grace and truth, came by Jesus Christ," the Israelite was exhorted to cherish confidence in mercy, or loving-kindness, and truth. Let them "not forsake thee," is the word. He was entitled to believe and count on them habitually and evermore. "Bind them about thy neck, write them upon the tablet of thy heart." What ornament can compare with them? What inward lesson so cheering and invigorating! "And thou shalt find favor and good understanding [if this last be the shade of sense here meant] in the sight of God and man."

So we see in our perfect pattern. Our Lord assuredly found in His unequalled path of subjection "favor" with God and man, as we are told. Whether the word often rendered "good understanding" is not modified here, as sometimes elsewhere, may be questioned. But as it stands, it was a good and welcome stamp of divine approval through devotedness to God's will, without either self-seeking or men-pleasing. Happy, when as here, it comes as the answer without as well as on high, to grace and truth written on the heart! Now too one word, Christ, expresses all; and the Spirit of the living God is given to us who believe, that He may be written truly and deeply on those tablets of flesh, our hearts. How rich the grace wherein we stand! For we all, contemplating with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit.

Confidence in God, and in the relationship He forms for us with Him, is the fruit of faith. It is the next call here, and it is found ever the sure answer of His grace. It ought to be still more easy for the Christian, seeing that how many so ever be the promises of God, in Christ is the Yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen unto the glory of God through us. This is just as it should be for the saints passing through a wilderness world. If all were fulfilled in us, the changed state of glorification would be incompatible with the needed trial. But that they are fulfilled in Him, that in

Him is the Yea, is the ground of peace and joy and comfort; and victory for us is exactly what the God of all grace meant that we should have in the fullest measure by the Holy Ghost given to us. For we have in Christ's redemption the remission of our sins, and only await His coming for adoption, the redemption of our bodies, having already the Spirit of the Son sent into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. What a power of deliverance from leaning upon our own understanding!

Worthily does the chapter open with the call to trust in Jehovah. As He, He only, is God, so was He the God of the fathers, the God of Israel. How blessed for the Israelite that he had Him to trust in! that He even demanded his trust! He was in no way exhorted to trust himself. He was but a creature whose breath is in his nostrils; what is he to be accounted of? It was wise to have done with man to lean on, wiser still to trust in Jehovah. Yes, He was and is the eternal God, merciful, gracious, slow to wrath, great in goodness and truth, keeping His goodness to thousands of generations, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet holding no guilty one as innocent, but visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the sons and on the sons of sons, on the third and on the fourth generation. Not that this is His language to the Christian or the Church, but just His declaration of Himself to Moses the mediator for Israel, that they should know His governing character and principles.

Yes, it was good and right to trust in Jehovah with all the heart, and to lean not on one's own discernment, as the tempter always advises to ruin, sorrow, and shame. This is the divine counsel for the heart. But the Israelite needed also to "acknowledge Him" in all his ways. And the heart if loyal would prompt to honor Him thus. For practical inconsistency is a burden to the upright; and it is due to Jehovah to own Him where He is apt to be ignored or forgotten in each detail of walk, and in them all. Nor was it even without present fruit, for He could not be unmindful, who never slumbers or sleeps. "And He shall make straight thy paths." He is Lord of all, no less than He is the Eternal, and concerns Himself with every obstacle and difficulty for such as would walk unswervingly according to His will.

The great danger for all, though for some of thought and experience more than others, is to seek counsel from within. Yet experience should have taught the reflecting a less flattering tale. All Scripture re-echoes what is here written, "Be not wise in thine own eyes." The bait of Satan was to become so, and man has ever coveted it. How blessed when we learn our folly and find an incomparably better wisdom open to us! Certainly to the Christian, to them that are called both Jews and Greeks, the crucified Christ preached to us is God's power and God's wisdom. What they counted foolishness is wiser than men; and what looked the extremity of weakness is stronger than men. Of God are we in Christ Jesus, who from God was made to us wisdom and all things. Well may we glory in Him.

But there is a word for conscience as well as heart, and none the less now, but more when, having been purged once for all, we have no more conscience of sins. "Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil." Was there ever true fear of Him without pardon? Certainly Psalm 130:4 makes clear that there is pardon with Him that He may be feared. Without it, what can the fear be but servile and tainted? This nerves the soul to "depart from evil." We hate it, because He hates it; and such doubtless it is in itself, intrinsically evil. We turn away from what the serpent commands, trembling at His word. A son honors his father, a servant his master. His honor, His fear, are no longer light things to us. And the effect is wholesome and blessed. "It shall be health for thy navel, and

moisture for thy bones." The boast of altruism might perhaps in a way suit an angel, not a sinner nor a saint. We need to be blessed that we may be a blessing to others; we need and have God in Christ the Lord and Savior. We love Him because He first loved us. Is it a wonder that all then goes on well? How sad when it is not so!

Read Job 1:1-8; 2:3 and think what pleasure God takes in him that fears Himself and abstains from evil. He knew all the while the weak point and danger for Job; but Satan failed to reach it by his hostile measures. Jehovah did through Job's friends, though they were beyond comparison more faulty than Job, and indebted to his intercession to shield them from His dealing according to their folly, wise as they had thought themselves.

The Proverbs

Chapter 3:9-20

Prosperity and chastening are treated, each in the next pair of verses respectively. Let us hear the wise king, inspired now with the best wisdom for man on earth, and first in view of earthly blessing on the due recognition of the living God.

"Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine." vv. 9-10.

Jehovah is precisely that designation of God which He gave to Israel that they might learn His ways and bear witness to Him in His earthly government. Things are sadly changed now; for His people played Him false, went after strange gods, and rejected His Anointed. But He abides the same, and will arise and have mercy on Zion; and when He does, the nations shall fear His name, and all the kings of the earth His glory. But when things looked fair, and Judah and Israel were many, and the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as sycamores for abundance, this was the word: "Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thine increase." It is always morally true, though then when the reality of direct divine judgment was being shown, the result was unfailing: "so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine." The rejection of Christ brought in the revelation of heavenly hopes for believers, and sufferings, persecutions, etc., with better spiritual blessings even while they were here. The text speaks of normal results for the earth, and Israel on it.

But, man being as he is, there is another side, which brings out divine goodness yet more strikingly. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men." Still more closely bearing on us, we read that "the eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous, and his ears are toward their cry. The face of Jehovah is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth"; as on the other hand, "Jehovah is nigh to those that are of a broken heart and saveth those that be of a contrite spirit." Hence the need and the blessing of His ways with our ways.

"My son, despise not the instruction of Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement; for whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." vv. 11, 12.

There is, as always, another and more intimate kind of divine government, and this wholly independent of the public state of things. It was true when Solomon reigned and wrote; it is only more fully disclosed and deeply known under the gospel. There is ever a government of souls, and here it is stated with all simplicity. How affectionate the call! "My son, despise not the instruction of

Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement." For these are the snares of the enemy - either to make light of His training on the one hand, or on the other to sink under His reproof, as if He dealt hardly with us.

The epistle to the Hebrews (12:5, 6) appropriates this ancient order, and applies it to the Christian now, pointing out the love which acts unfailingly when we fail, as we too often do. Nor is the blessed object less which the Father of spirits has toward us; for it yields peaceable fruit in those thus exercised, though for the present it seems not joyous but grievous. There is therefore no ground in it for despondency, but the best reason for the lame that they be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

The first epistle of Peter (1:15-17) is no less plain. "As he who called you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to the work of each, pass the time of your sojourn in fear." It is now that the Father judges His children in the love that will make us hate our every inconsistency; for His grace has through Christ and His work exempted us from that future judgment which is appointed for all that believe not, and walk in evil and darkness (John 5:23-28).

Even more explicit is the word in 1 Cor. 11:29-32. The Apostle explains that in the sickness and death that fell on not a few saints at Corinth, the Lord was judging those who did not discern or discriminate themselves, but walked carelessly, even as to the Lord's supper. But when thus judged now, "we are chastened [or, disciplined] of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." It is a present moral dealing which might go as far as cutting off; but even so, it was His chastisement in love, that the saints should not share the world's condemnation, as all unbelievers must.

The reason given in our text and cited in the New Testament bears out fully the love from which present chastening flows. "For whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." It is not always however because of evil done; His chastening may be to guard us from evil. It may be preventive, as well as corrective. Shall we not, as children confiding in Him, accept it with thanksgiving? We have the distinct proof of His love. Let us never doubt, but believe and bow.

But chastening or discipline is far from all, proof though it be of Jehovah's love. There is positive blessing to reap, and of a high order.

It is God, we are told in a later revelation, that gives liberally to all, and without reproach. Yet He will be asked for it; not that anyone adds to Him, or that He is beholden to man's hand. But He cannot deny Himself; and this it would be, if one found wisdom or got understanding elsewhere. The blessing comes through dependence on Him. Who of mankind knew this better than Solomon himself? Did not God say to him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy word." Nor is there another means; and "blessed" indeed is he that proves afresh that God is true and faithful, as He ever is. Even the beloved Son, when He in grace deigned to become man, even Jesus, so walked here below from tender years, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. He received all as man from His Father.

If it was so with the Jew before Jehovah, is the blessedness less now that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding to know Him that is true? Is He less accessible, or less gracious, now that He is revealed as Christ's Father and our Father, His God and our God? Has He not abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, and this of the highest character and largest hope, in accordance with our calling and inheritance? And if for the greatest things, does this kind of blessing fail for the least things day by day? How true that the gain thereof is better than the gain of silver, and the revenue than fine gold. Surely we can say that the wisdom that comes down from above is more precious than rubies, and that all the things one can desire are not equal to the rich boon of divine favor.

Willingly do we bow to Jehovah's promise of wisdom to the Israelite, of "length of days" to be in her right hand, and of "riches and honor" in her left hand. He that died and rose again has brought us deeper grace and shown us a yet more excellent way; so that what things were gain, one has in one's measure counted loss for Christ, and it may be, as it surely ought to be, to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord - to count them dung that one may win Him and be found in Him in that heavenly glory where He is, renouncing all righteousness save what is through the faith of Him, the righteousness which is of God by faith. This is indeed Christian privilege - that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death, if by any means, no matter how trying the way, one might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, as Paul knew pre-eminently.

Not only is such experimental wisdom as the Apostle expresses in Philippians alien to all that flesh and blood values, but it rises unspeakably higher than all that was or could be revealed of old, as for instance in the Proverbs, or even the Psalms. It awaited the presence of the Son of God, the work of redemption, and the sending down of the Holy Spirit from the glorified Head. The wisdom and the understanding, of which this book treats, remain ever for man on the earth; and Jehovah will doubtless thus bless His people looking to Him for these good gifts in the day of power and glory; for the word He has spoken cannot fail, but shall stand everlastingly. But man's evil, and the Jews' in particular, has given occasion for God to bring "some better thing" in every way. Of this we see the basis and substance and exemplar in Christ crucified, risen, and set in the highest glory, quite above all Old Testament expectations. And we know that "the wisdom of God in a mystery" is not confined to His heavenly and universal exaltation, but in God's sovereign purpose embraces us too who have believed in Him since the cross. It is the hidden wisdom, as the Apostle adds (1 Cor. 2:7), which God ordained before the world unto our glory; but a glory which now calls for, not length of days on earth, or riches or honor, but fellowship with Christ's sufferings, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." It is just Christianity in contrast with all before, and its hope for the heavens in the day when the earth also shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

Still, whether the wisdom be of the general kind for the earth, or of that higher and heavenly kind which we now know in Christ, we can truly say that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." When our Lord tasted rejection, and sufferings, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief beyond all, nonetheless was it His to say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"! It is ours thus to follow Him, living on account of Him, as He on account of the Father; but it can only be by making Him our constant food (John

6:57). So here wisdom is said to be "a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and blessed is he that retaineth her." How much more can we boast of what He is to our souls by faith! The oracle before us can add, "Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew" - blessed witness of His multifarious wisdom and unlimited understanding, as His knowledge directed the devastation of the deluge, and orders the kindly refreshings of a peaceful night. The one word, Christ, recalls to us heights and depths more wondrous far.

The Proverbs

Chapter 3:21-4:19

If Jehovah manifested wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in creation, and in its least things as well as the greatest, how vain in all to forego the quest, or the means open to them from on high!

Change is a snare to the young especially; hence Jehovah's wise ways were no more to depart from their eyes than they were to be wise in their own eyes; life inwardly, honor outwardly, would follow; the walk would be r mire, the foot stumble not. Nor would the night bring fear, but sweet sleep. Nor would alarm surprise when the storm falls on the wicked, for Jehovah is the confidence against all snares and terrors.

The heart is deceitful as well as suspicious in a world of evil. Hence the importance of the simple hearted integrity which confiding in Him gives. He that gives (exhorted the Apostle) in simplicity, which is liberality. The lack of looking to Jehovah brings crookedness in dealing with man; the bowels of compassion are closed. The same lack may be even mischievous, and quarrelsome, instead of, if possible, as far as depends on us, living peaceably with all. And why envy the violent man, or choose any of his short-cuts? All these ways are turned aside from God's will, which alone is good, acceptable, perfect, and which alone makes happy him who learns it in Christ. The perverse is an abomination to Jehovah, as His secret is with the upright. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" So His curse is not only on the person, but on the house of the wicked, as He blesses the habitation of the righteous. Neither wealth can avert the one, nor poverty prevent the other.

Yet there is an evil even lower, and never did it abound so much as now in these closing days. Scorn or mocking is prevalent, and self reigns unblushingly in contempt of all that is good and noble and generous, as well as holy and true. But "He indeed scorneth the scorers," as surely as "He giveth grace to the lowly." The wise shall understand, as Daniel assures; but, further, "the wise shall inherit glory," whereas "shame shall be the promotion of the foolish," whatever the deception of present appearances or of such as trust them. "Judge not according to sight [said the Lord], but judge righteous judgment."

Much depends on the way in which instruction is given. We see its perfection in the great Teacher as depicted opening His mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22). There He had been brought up, and there He read a prophecy which beyond doubt applied to Him alone, as soon appeared; and all bore Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth. Alas! they clashed with the will of man, and roused implacable anger, which showed itself even then murderously. But wisdom is justified of her children, whatever self-will may do or

say. Let us then pursue the scripture before us.

The form chosen is that of a father, not of a legislator. It is not therefore even a catechism of the "ten words," but parental instruction; and attention is called in order to intelligence or discernment. The same Spirit who took His part in creation, who gave skill for the glory of Jehovah, who wrought in all that was good and great and holy, would here engage the young heart to hear. For He assuredly has good doctrine to give, and would guard against forsaking His law or teaching. The instrument employed can speak of the loving care bestowed on his own early days, when he was "a son to his father, tender and only beloved in the sight of his mother." The affections are thus recalled to awaken the new duties. It was not only that the teacher had himself been taught, but that he did so appealed touchingly. "Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live."

It is not language or letters or science, but that education of which the fear of Jehovah is the foundation. It supposes neither a state of innocence, such as once was, nor a prohibitory test when fallen man thought himself quite able to do all that Jehovah spoke against the evil he was prone to.

Mercy, divine mercy, deigned to supply what neither the individual nor the race possessed. It is true that man has a conscience; he knows good and evil, but only as a sinful creature, not doing the good that he would, but doing the evil that he would not - a truly miserable state, from which redemption alone furnishes an adequate deliverance in the power of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

This deliverance, we all recognize, is not the subject handled here, but the instruction that is addressed to subject hearts, like the rest of the Old Testament, within the ancient people of God. But now it is for the Christian to profit by it to the uttermost, for "all things are ours." The Book does not give the exalted Head nor the heavenly glory we are to share with Him as members of His body, nor the duties which flow from that relationship; but it does reveal divine wisdom for a saint here below, first in general moral principles (chapters 1-9), then in the greatest affluence of details to chapter 29, with a fitting close in chapters 30 and 31.

Thus the exhortation is, "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth." Obedience, heart obedience, is sought. Could Jehovah be content with anything short of it? Could one of His people desire otherwise? Undoubtedly self-will is the great and constant hindrance; and the enemy would excite it, and shut out God by the objects without and the passions within. All the deeper is the need of instruction, and in the varied way just indicated, which divine goodness here supplies. Here we have a father's authority urged, and the responsibility of sons claimed. This was always true for man here below, as the law long after recognized; and it holds good now that we are no longer under guidance as children.

They were not to forsake wisdom, which has preservative power to "love her, and she shall keep thee." The beginning of wisdom, as we are forcibly told, is to "get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." Those who are of God pass through a world of evil and need wisdom from above to keep them; for it is a wilderness where is no way, save that which grace provides for faith. Suffering there will be for Christ's sake as well as for righteousness; but "exalt her [not self], and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her, and she

shall give to thy head a garland of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee." How sure will all this be in due time! David in his earlier days was a fine example. He went at his father's bidding in no pride or naughtiness of heart; and as he exalted wisdom in the fear of Jehovah, so was he promoted, and, embracing her, was brought to honor. He behaved himself wisely, so that his enemy was compelled to own him blessed - that he should both do great things and still prevail. Yet was he tried beyond most.

The way of wisdom is next contrasted with that of the wicked; and here the exhortation is individualized (vv. 10-19).

It is not by the sight of the eyes nor by the activity of the mind, nor even by the cultivation of the affections, that the wisdom here commended comes. "Hear, and thy soul shall live," said Isaiah; and so the Apostle, "Faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." No doubt the coming of the Son of God brought this truth and every other into an evidence before unknown. But the principle ever applied. Whoever obtained a good report, obtained it by faith; and faith rests on God's Word, as Christ is the main Object of it all, however much be corrective or disciplinary. Hence the word here is, "Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be multiplied." Nor is there uncertainty when Jehovah furnishes the means. "I will teach thee in the way of wisdom, I will lead thee in the paths of uprightness." The happy result is assured to such as believe that it is from Him, and doubt not His interest in His people and their blessing. "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble." Nevertheless, earnestness of purpose is called for, and fidelity of heart. "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life."

Only we have to add that now the door of mercy is opened to those who have weighed money for that which is not bread, and earnings for that which satisfieth not - yea, have been children of folly, and have wallowed in sin. Grace can meet the deepest need, and Christ brings to God the most dark and distant. See wisdom in Luke 7, justified of all her children, eminently in one who might have been deemed hopelessly corrupt. But is anything too hard for the Lord? He assuredly and openly vindicated the persistent soul who hid herself behind His love that owned hers coming by faith. Indeed it was faith which produced that love, and saved her, as He bade her go in peace, which His blood would make unfailing and unbreakable, all in due time.

But we have the opposite way not less clearly for warning - the way where one turns off from God and wanders anywhere else. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil [men]; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." How urgent and importunate the voice of divine goodness and love! And it is none too loud, but most requisite; for the calls, and ties, and snares are many and manifold. But the word is unmistakably plain and pointed. And what a picture follows, of the zeal on the side of evil! "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause [some] to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence." It is their life, nourishment, and joy, if joy it can be called, to mislead, injure, and destroy. But on the other hand, "the path of the righteous is as the shining light going on and brightening to the perfect day." How we can bless God that Christ is this way; and there is but One in, but not of, this world; for He is the true light. "But the way of the wicked is as darkness," and this so profound, and they so blind, that "they know not at what they stumble." Grace alone calls and keeps by faith.

The Proverbs

Chapter 4:20-5:23

The 4th chapter concludes with a renewed call to heed a father's words clothed with the authority of Jehovah.

As parental affection in the fear of Him who deigns to teach young no less than old would bring lessons of wisdom before the child, the listening ear, the attentive mind, cannot be dispensed with. Personal respect, however due, is not enough; the ears, the eyes, and above all, the heart, have their part to do. Such training is to be kept "in the midst" of the heart. What else is to be compared with what has Christ for its source, character, object, and aim? "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." No wonder then that it can be added, "for they are life to those that find them and health to all their flesh"; or, as the Apostle says to his genuine son Timothy, "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance." No doubt too Christianity has given immense accession to the truth by the coming of the Son of God. For "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: he who was manifested in flesh, was justified in spirit, was seen of angels, was preached among Gentiles, was believed on in the world, was received up in glory." Yes, the secret of piety is in Him thus known as He is; and all else is but a fair show in the flesh, which flickers for a moment before it is extinguished forever.

Hence the call to "keep thy heart more than all thou guardest." The utmost vigilance is needed and due; "for out of it are the issues of life." Scripture ever and truly views the heart as the moral center on which all outward conduct and walk depend. Hence the Lord in Luke 8 speaks of those who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience; as in John 15 He said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you." This indeed is piety: to abide in Him who is life and salvation and peace, to have His words, yea not only obeyed but constantly cherished, with prayers going up and answers coming down accordingly. No wonder then that His Father is glorified, much fruit borne, and the Lord Jesus not ashamed to own such as His disciples.

But there is meanwhile evil still allowed to go on around; and what is so trying, it is in our nature, the old man. That it was crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be annulled, so that we might no longer be slaves to sin, is our blessed knowledge by faith. This is no real reason that we should deny the existence of that evil thing in us, but the best and most powerful ground why sin should not "reign" in our mortal body. For we are not under law but under grace. Hence, though this knowledge could not then be possessed, yet then as now the word is, "Put away from thee perverseness of mouth, and corruption of lips put far from thee." The Epistle of James is the plain proof of the importance attached to this, and yet more pressed, if possible, than of old; but how deplorable the unbelief that stood in doubt of its inspired authority and exceeding value in its own sphere! Nor did the Lord Himself slight the same need and danger when He taught - nor the great Apostle of the uncircumcision any more than those of the circumcision.

There is another call quite as urgent. "Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee." Christ ever was the object of faith, and He is now revealed as the way, no less than the truth and the life. But, morally speaking, the eye is of great moment, the state of our spiritual

vision. As Christ gives us eyes who were born blind, so only He makes and keeps our vision clear. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (Luke 11:34, 35). Let us not forget the searching word. Christ guides safely but by the single eye.

Nor are we left without direction in detail. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be well-ordered." Negligence is no more of faith than haste; and we slip in both ways through lack of dependence and attention to the Word of God.

The path of Christ is narrow, but direct through this world to Himself in glory. The saints were ever called to walk with God before their eyes; and His will is now declared thus to honor the Son. Hence, "Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." For evil lies on both sides.

The call of the son is to attend to "my wisdom," before "a strange woman" is depicted vividly. Corruption demands and receives a yet deeper guard than violence.

Evil men were bad, a strange woman worse still. A higher wisdom is used, and an exercised understanding, that there may be discretion and knowledge so to apply the principle on the largest scale. The beast is lawless and shall perish utterly; but Babylon is even more loathsome, as to the Lord, so to all who seek His mind. There is nothing in nature so lovely as affection; but how ruinous and defiling, where the fear of God does not guide it! He it is that puts and keeps us in our relationships which are the ground of our duties. But a strange woman is such because she ignores and forsakes them, and seeks to entice others. Fair words of flattery may be the beginning, sweet to the flesh; but her end is bitterness extreme, and frequently deep wounds. Nor is it loss of present happiness only but the end of those things is death; and after death comes the judgment. Satan employs her to hinder all reflection, and to shut out all light from above. The strange woman abuses the quick perception of her sex to baffle moral discernment by such changes as none else can know. Thus will works without check, and conscience is more and more numbed by self-indulgence.

And what is the counsel here given? Prompt and thorough steering clear. "And now, children, hearken to me, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." So must every one act who would preserve moral purity. The path of life is far from her and her house. Christ alone gives life eternal and guides it; His word is for one in such a world as this, Follow Me. Is the warning not heeded? More follows to lay bare the paths of death. For there is a righteous government, whatever the complication in this life. Selfishness reaps its sad recompense. None can yield to it with impunity. Beware then of self-indulgence, "lest thou give thine honor to others, and thy years to the cruel; lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors go to the house of an alien; and thou mourn in thine end, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and thou say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to those that instructed me! I was well nigh in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Bitter self-reproach is the end of the honey and oil which captivated at the beginning; and no wonder, after a career of sin and shame. It is a retrospect of guilty self-pleasing, the headiness that valued no authority, yielding neither respect nor obedience. "What fruit had ye then in those

things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Nor is it the least painful reflection that all the evil committed was "in the midst of the congregation and assembly." This was no doubt that of Israel wherein all then revealed was by Jehovah. There was hypocrisy therefore covering the sins. How much more is the similar wickedness, when and where the fullest light of God is enjoyed!

In contrast with the fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and even here have no result but shame, Jehovah set up the holy relations of marriage in the sinless paradise of Eden. What a safeguard for man when an outcast through his own sin! What folly and ungodliness the dream of a Plato, which would dispense with the reality of one's own wife, one's own husband, one's own children in his ideal republic! Certainly there was no wisdom, nor understanding, in such a scheme. It is vagrancy of the most debasing kind. How gracious of Him to warn and guard weak passionate man from his own ruinous will!

Two things become man that fears God. There is the outgoing of heart that loves his neighbor, or, as we Christians add, that loves our enemies in the spirit of the gospel. There is also the centering of the affections within the family. This last the father here would impress on his son. Here therefore the due place of the wife comes before us. It is the human relationship that survives from the beginning when sin was not; it is quite as essential now that the offense abounds. Wandering affections are selfish, carry their own shame, and have a permanent sting. As Jehovah instituted the sacred enclosure of the family round the parents, so He sanctions and enjoins warm affections in the head toward his counterpart. It is the most intimate bond of society at large as of the home circle. Heathenism, as we know, conceived its deities jealous of human happiness; it is easily understood; for as the Apostle tells us, they were but demons, fallen spiritual creatures that sought to drag the human race into their sin and misery, and to keep their victims from the love that delights in reconciling and saving them. There is but one that is good, even God; and He has now fully shown His best good, His grace, in His only-begotten Son for eternity as well as the life that now is. But even before divine love thus shone out, the unmistakable goodness of Jehovah appears in these home precepts. "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well"; and all that follows is in keeping.

If verse 16 be rendered rightly in the Vatican Septuagint, it means, "Let not waters out of thy fountain be spilled by thee, but let thy waters go into the broadways." The Alexandrian text goes with the Vulgate and the Authorized English Bible in omitting the negatives, yielding the sense that the children will reflect the parents according to the atmosphere they all breathed. The R.V. prefers the form of query, rather confirming the concentration of the verse preceding, and not adding the dispersion abroad intimated in the ordinary versions. It may not be easy to decide, but the R.V. has the effect of greater homogeneity, and more naturally falls in with verse 17, "Let them be only thine own, and not for strangers with thee."

Then the passage becomes more narrowed to the partners of life. And very impressive it is that he who erred publicly in adding so many wives and concubines should be the one inspired to commend a single object of wedded love. "Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice in the wife of thy youth." The words supplied by translators to introduce verse 19 are not only uncalled for, but enfeebling to the sense. To be cheerful abroad and morose at home, is to be thankless and unholy. "Let marriage," exhorts the Apostle, "be honorable in all things." As the A.V. stands, the

words read as a stamp of warrant. It is really a call to hold the tie in honor, and this in every respect; and the warning follows there in accordance with verse 20 here.

Nor are the verses that succeed (21-23) to be disconnected. It is wholesome to remember that Jehovah not only honors His own institution for man, but watches over every transgression against it. Very grave is the admonition on His part in verse 21; too surely descriptive is the sketch in 22, 23 of the sinful folly that goes astray in this. It has been pointed out that the word "shall go astray" is the same word translated "ravished" in a good sense in verse 19 and in a bad sense in verse 20. This last prepares for what verse 23 requires, especially when we compare it with chapter 26:11, "a fool repeateth his folly." It is a departure, ever going on from bad to worse.

The Proverbs

Chapter 6:1-26

From these grave moral dangers we are next directed to matters of a very different complexion. But if on the surface they seem much less serious, their consequences are often ruinous. How gracious of Jehovah to take notice of things which might seem beneath Him! Is it not due to His deep interest in His people?

It was the more notable that Jehovah should counsel His own, who might feel embarrassed by His command to love the neighbor as oneself. Instead of leaving it to human judgment or its conflict with amiable sentiment, He warns of the dangerous consequence in yielding to impulse. If the unwise step has been taken, it is right to acknowledge it, and wrong to break the words which have passed though to hurt. What then is becoming? "Go, humble thyself, and importune thy neighbor." This is painful, but wholesome. Jehovah will not fail to bless subjection to His word, and make a way of escape for both, though each may have to suffer for his own measure of fault in the transaction.

Does this word then absolutely prohibit such an act of kindness? It assuredly admonishes against the inconsiderate rashness which enters into such an engagement too often. If you are prepared before God to lose all that is at stake, and believe it His will, you are free. But apart even from the claims of nearer relationship, are you not a steward? Are you sure that the undertaking will bear the light? Is it for speculation? But supposing that your words have been spoken, and you wake up to see your folly, do not yield to pride or obstinacy, "deliver thyself"; and this, not by scolding your neighbor, but by confessing the simple truth of your own heedlessness. "Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids" till this is done; He who thus directs can give efficacy to His word, which is as wise as ours may be foolish.

In full contrast with the earnestness enjoined here is the indolent folly which is next portrayed vividly. The sluggard is sunk so low, that Jehovah bids him learn of the tiny "ant" as his sufficient monitor; so the lilies of the field are made in the New Testament to rebuke anxiety for raiment. Not a word is said of hoarding store for winter, as in fact like many animals they are then torpid for the most part. But their unceasing industry and good order and even care for others in the summer and harvest while activity is open to them, may well put to shame the self-indulgent slumberer. If moral weakness in its easygoing has exposed its prey to the hunter and the fowler, so on the listless and lazy, poverty comes like a tramp or an armed man that will not be denied. What goodness on Jehovah's part to guard His people from both snares along their earthly pathway!

How salutary for such as are called to higher things!

The Septuagint adds without warrant a lesson from the bee in verse 8, and gives a quite different turn to verse 11, making it a promise rather than a threat. One need not say that, however such words got into this Greek version, they are without warrant in the Hebrew. The Latin Vulgate follows the latter, not the former.

Unworthy as slothfulness is, bad and unwise for one to be idle, it is far worse to be active in evil, for this works mischief to others without end. The Holy Spirit first draws a portrait of the dangerous man in verses 12 to 15, and then presents the evils impersonally, save at the close, which are emphatically hateful to Jehovah in verses 16 to 19.

"A man of Belial, a wicked person, walketh with a perverse mouth. He winketh with his eyes; he speaketh with his feet; he teacheth with his fingers. Deceits [are] in his heart; he deviseth mischief at all times; he sendeth out discords. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; in a moment shall he be broken, and without remedy. Six [things] Jehovah hateth, yea, seven [are] an abomination of his soul; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness breathing out lies, and he that sendeth out discords among brethren." vv. 12-19.

The first term reveals the evil source, the second characterizes him humanly and in general, whatever his position. The tongue, given to praise God and to help our fellows, too surely indicates what he is; he walks with a froward and perverse mouth. It is not merely that he feels no affection, but he has only things awry to say. He likes to differ and to insinuate what is painful. Nor is there candor even in his perverse expression, "he winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers." He plies his pertinacious and evil activity with the utmost skill. Not only practicing ill, but having pleasure in those that do it, he in an underhand way loves to make others his instruments; a wink of his eyes suffices for one; a shuffle with his feet influences another; and even his restless fingers give a signal to the third. The evil has a root deeper than his perverse mouth; "deceits are in his heart." Other bad men may seek money, pleasure, ambition. His heart has it in frowardness; and to gratify this perverse spirit is his business and life; "he deviseth mischief at all times." His pleasure is to set people by the ears; "he sendeth out, or soweth, discords." He that bows to the written Word cannot doubt what will be the issue of a course so ungodly and malicious; but even now how often a blow falls on evil in this world! "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; in a moment shall he be broken, and without remedy." The day of the Lord will display this judicial dealing publicly, and far and wide; but from time to time there may be a witness that God is not mocked.

To impress the abhorrence with which Jehovah regards malignant iniquity, we have special evil qualities. They are set forth in a more abstract style, which might not be in the same person, that in the mouth of these two divine testimonies every word should be the more established. "These six Jehovah hateth, yea, seven [are] an abomination to him." Haughty eyes are first, or a proud look; what a contrast with Him who made heaven and earth, and all that in them is, when He deigned to become man here below! The dependent and obedient man, meek and lowly in heart, who ever looked up and did only what pleased His Father, full of compassion toward suffering man, ready to forgive the sinful. "A lying tongue" comes next; Jesus was not true only but the truth; He alone. Far from Him "hands that shed innocent blood," Himself the holy sufferer to the utmost. But in man

there may be worse still, "a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations," in hateful and unmistakable resemblance to the evil one. What can be more opposed to Jehovah and His Anointed? "The counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Do we read of men's "feet swift and running to mischief"? The Son tells us of the father running to meet the prodigal. But man under Satan's power, if he cannot kill or injure physically, may inflict a worse wrong as "a false witness breathing out lies." The goodness of God who discovers to us the truth about ourselves, leads to repentance; and He is the God of peace, in the fullest contrast with him "that sendeth out discords among brethren." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" How hateful to Jehovah is he that soweth discords among brethren!

Chapter 6:20-26 turns to another snare of more than usual danger, especially though by no means exclusively for the young. Hence the tenderness of the appeal to influence; hence memories, which did not fail to warn of so insidious a snare in the lusts of the flesh.

When men bearing the Lord's name are characteristically self-lovers, and disobedient to parents, it is the more urgent for the young and inexperienced to beware of the spirit of the age, and to recognize the place that Jehovah gave to a father's command and a mother's teaching. For those who fail in natural affection soon become implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce; instead of love for good, they are traitors, headstrong, and puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. If they hold a form of piety, they deny its power, and are to be promptly turned from.

Here the Son is exhorted to lay to heart those precepts to purity from early years, from the mother no less than the father. Indeed it falls to the mother most of all to form the bent of the young. Bind these words therefore "continually on thy heart, tie them about thy neck." They are both shield and ornament in a world as evil as is the fallen nature. When one walks, do we not need direction? When one sleeps, do we not need to be guarded? And when one awakes alone, is it not good and pleasant to have such a word shining and talking with us?

"For the commandment is a lamp, and the law (or teaching) a light." "A lamp" is excellent in a squalid place, as we are told of the prophetic word, which came when things went wrong, tells of even worse at hand, but assures of divine judgment when least expected. There we are also told of a still better light in the truth fully revealed and crowned by the blessed hope of Christ's coming for scenes more glorious. Here, if it rise not high, the teaching appears to exceed the commandment in breadth, positiveness, and intimacy too; how well then called a "light"! And we are reminded of "reproofs of instruction" as the way of life. How much do we not owe to that which, humbling as it is to our good opinion of ourselves, takes pains with us in love, and turns even our faults to profitable account!

At length comes the main point here—"to keep thee from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of a strange woman." How many a one trusting himself has been decoyed! A little license rapidly betrays into shameful sin. "Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, nor let her take thee with her eye-lids." If the Jews were God's people, much closer is our relationship as His children, and bought with a price, which they in their blindness despised. We are not our own, and are called to beware of a whorish woman, and yet more of another's wife, an adulteress; for here

the evil is still more heinous, ruin both of soul and body, object too of God's especial judgment.

The Proverbs: Chapter 6:27-7:23

Still more emphatic is the warning here given, which deals with a more aggravated and destructive evil. It is not only the evil woman, or a strange woman, or a whorish woman. It is the wife of another, as in the last clause; and the language rises in severity, for marriage is a divine tie; and God hates its breach and judges those who break it.

"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his garments not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. They do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; and [if] he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. Whoso committeth adultery with a woman is void of understanding; he [that] doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and contempt shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy [is] the rage of a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance; he will not regard any ransom, neither will he rest content though thou multiplieth gifts." vv. 27-35.

There is a baseness peculiar to itself, even among the dissolute, for a man to tamper with the wife of another. But lust is insidious on either side; and little beginnings, where that relationship subsists, are apt to go on to great evils. For Satan acts on the flesh, and leads souls which forget God's presence to venture in the vain hope of escape. But can a man take fire to his bosom, and his garments not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched? That corruption will not escape the fire of human vengeance, how much less of divine judgment? Any approach, however small or passing, is dangerous and evil.

The inspired writer contrasts it with stealing even, though men are extremely sensitive of any loss in their property. If dire need were evident, men extenuate a thief when he steals a little rather than perish of starvation. But what is so senseless, no less than abominably sinful, as adulterous iniquity? Pity mingles with blame in the one case, but nothing can excuse the other. It is the foulest dishonor of the husband; it is the lifelong ruin of the entrapped wife; it is the shame of the house and of its connections; it is the abhorrence of God who judges it. And what must be his resentment who is chiefly wronged? No wonder that the evildoer is said to lack understanding or heart, and to destroy his own soul. The law laid down fines fourfold, fivefold, and sevenfold, for rising guilt in stealing; but death Moses commanded in Jehovah's name for adultery. If Christendom, pretending to judge the world, betrays its wicked levity by a lenient sentence, it tells its own tale of corruption, which will draw down the strong hand of the Lord God in judgment.

Even in this world, a wound and dishonor will the adulterer get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away, spite of the heathenism which dared to consecrate this enormity and every other-spite of Christendom which did once adopt heathen ways and seems now returning to them, even where Protestant zeal once chased them out in a large measure, though never up to the true Christian standard. Here it regards man's feelings. "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." The overture of any ransom is vain; to give many gifts, contents not him who cannot rest without wrong's condign punishment.

Chapter 7 opens with a fresh paternal appeal to his "son" individually (vv. 1-5). Then is drawn the graphic picture of a young man void of understanding drawn into the worst corruption by an adulterous woman (vv. 6-23). The close is a call to the "sons" generally-a terse, earnest, and solemn warning (vv. 24-27) of similar character, but deeper still.

In this individual appeal, the value of the word is urged as the great preservative means. "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee." There is not only the need of dependence on God when trial comes, but the positive value of the truth and the divine will infusing one beforehand. This is the soul inwardly strengthened within against the snares without, which find the father's precepts in possession of the field. The words are therefore to be kept, and the commandments laid up.

Therein is the path of life; for it is not by bread alone that man lives, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Hence here we read, "keep my commandments and live." Yet the teaching that comes from God, though alone nourishing, is easily injured by self-will, and needs to be vigilantly guarded from a world of evil where defilements abound. Therefore must the teaching be kept as the apple of one's eye. What more jealously prized as invaluable and irreparable? What more exposed to sudden damage?

Other figures are employed to impress the all-importance of heeding the words which express Jehovah's will. "Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the tables of thy heart." Old and New Testaments indicate that rings were worn for weighty use and high authority, not mere show or ornaments. Besides, the precepts here were to be written on the heart.

Nor does this suffice the care with which grace forearms those exposed to temptations suited to a fallen nature. In Old Testament times little was known of a new life from God. Still it was there, and implied if not clearly taught. Hence the new call: "Say to wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call intelligence kinswoman." For the reception of God's word made this true. In contrast with one born of the flesh, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." We are begotten by the word of truth, and thus become a sort of first fruits of His creatures. Our new relationship is with wisdom and understanding, as near of kin, suited, beloved, and necessary.

Thus does God work in His goodness to keep one "from the strange woman, from the stranger that flattereth with her words." That she was a "stranger" who sought familiarity is enough for any soul with the fear of God. So is man constituted that it should ever be a signal of danger. When formed originally, there was no strangership; but out of the man was she built who was meant to be his wife, his counterpart. How much greater the peril when, in a fallen condition, "the strange woman" abandons the propriety of her sex, and appeals with flattering words to the vanity, the pride, or the lusts of man!

In the closeness of the Christian relationship, where all are brought by the grace of Christ into the endearing tie of God's children, the danger is enormously increased. For the "neighborhood" of Israelites mutually was a comparatively distant connection, and a man's "brethren" meant less in every way than "brethren" in a Christian's life - a term that included sisters as well as brothers. Undoubtedly there are the deepest moral principles in the gospel, and the Church; where the law was partial, obscure, and feeble, truth is brought clearly and graciously to view in Christ Himself for those whose it is to walk in the light as God is in the light. But if we are not in the flesh through the

deliverance Christ has wrought and given us, the flesh is still in us, and is ever ready by Satan's wiles and the world's influence to ensnare us into self-gratification. Only each walking in faith as having died and as crucified with Him, in continual self-judgment and lively sense of His loving me and Himself given for me, are we kept by God's power. Where this has been forgotten, what dismal falls have been even to the strong! What sad gaps every now and then, where few know the dark histories which lie at their back!

Next is given a graphic sketch of the evil against which the son is warned earnestly. It is a picture divinely drawn from life.

On the one side is a young man, idle and thoughtless rather than of evil or profligate habits; on the other is a woman given up to shameless immorality; and when a woman abandons all pretension to modesty, who can be so recklessly corrupt or seductive? But the warning impressed is all the more telling because in the youth there is no purpose of lust, any more than of passion in particular, no thought or room for sapping the moral principles generally, no old undermining of the barriers which warded off improper advances. A weak character, hitherto harmless, as men say, vain and self-pleasing, is seen in the way of temptation, and gradually verging near the point of danger, as the twilight grows and the darkness favors shameful deeds. For his youth and inexperience make him the more attractive prey to the woman who is sunk to the lowest depths, as regardless of human order as of God the Judge of all.

The "strange woman" has even the attire of a harlot, with a heart more subtle still, yet clamorous and ungovernable. Her house is no home; her unsatisfied will drives her feet into the streets and the broadways; and at every corner she lies in wait. The heedless youth fixes her choice; and giving him the fullest credit for a vacant heart, for a void of understanding, she scruples not at once to storm one so unarmed and unestablished. She caught and kissed him, and strengthening her face to the utmost effrontery, she tells him of her peace offerings, her vows paid that day. He was the delight of her eyes and soul. Him she came to meet (whom she probably never saw before); his face was diligently sought; and now she had found him. Providence smiled on them, and the feast upon a sacrifice was a happy omen. None could deny that she was a religious woman; she must pay her vows duly when she ventured on a delicate affair of the heart. Yet she, the wanton, did not blush to speak of the utmost lengths without disguise. "I have decked my bed with tapestry coverings, with variegated cloths of yarn from Egypt; I have perfumed my couch with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us revel in love until the morning; let us delight ourselves with loves." How terrible and how true is this picture of ritualism and luxury in league, prostituting the name of love to illicit amours and debauchery more guilty than the most brutal!

Nor does she fail to quiet the fears which might cow even the most thoughtless and audacious. For she declares that the man, the husband, was away from home, gone on a long journey, provided with ample funds, and not to return before full moon. It was not a Joseph that listened, but a match for Potiphar's wife that enticed. Who can wonder that the foolish youth, spite of conscience, surrendered! But oh, what pathos in the language which describes him giving himself to ruin of soul and body! "He goeth after her suddenly." He does not dare to think of Jehovah, or of his own relation to Him. nor yet of father and mother, of brothers or sisters; of the irreparable wrong to the absent husband; of his own sin and crime, to say nothing of yielding to so vile a paramour, or of the affront to society, degraded and godless as it is. It is truly "as an ox goeth to the slaughter, and

as in fetters to his correction the fool; till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for its life."

The Proverbs: Chapter 7:24-8:21

The close of the 7th chapter is a short, touching, and solemn appeal.

Youth is prone to impulse and self-confidence, as we have seen the danger not for the depraved only, but for the idle, because of the corruption in the world through lust. Hence the earnestly affectionate summing up of what has gone before with a fresh warning of uncommon grace. "And now, sons, hearken to me, and attend to the words of my mouth." A father's call to heed his words in the face of inward propensity and outward seduction is entitled to the gravest attention. There is but one such friend in the nearest degree who has passed through like snares. His wise love no son can slight with impunity.

What then are the words of his mouth on that head? "Let not thy heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her path." Joseph had no father near to counsel him when the temptation arose, and persistently, through his master's wife. But he refused utterly her shameless blandishments as one seeing the Unseen. The ten words were not yet spoken; but he feared God, and he was jealous for his master's honor. "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Good reason had a father to counsel sons to steer clear. If the whole world lies in wickedness, or in the wicked one, one needs dependence to pass through the streets safely, and obedience with the worthy object in view. Emptiness exposes the soul for evil to enter and take possession. "Abide in me, and I in you." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall come to pass to you"; so spoke the Holy, the True. Nor is there any other way of fruit agreeable to the Father. In this is He glorified that we bear much fruit, and not merely that we be kept from sin and shame and ruin. Evil begins not with the steps, but the heart declining to such ways; to follow them is to stray.

And who has lived a while here below without the saddest memories and most humbling sights in confirmation? "For she hath cast down many wounded, and all slain by her are strong." Such seems the force of the latter clause, which is illegitimately rendered in the A.V., for "all" in such a sentence at least cannot be reduced to "many," as in the former clause. But it is difficult to understand that "all" her slain should be strong. The R.V. suggests that "all her slain are a mighty host." This, whether or not accepted, is assuredly true, and an advance on the words which preceded, according to the Hebrew style. No wonder that the words recall not only Samson, but even David, who if not slain himself, brought the sword on his house, and caused the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme.

And how energetic the words that follow! "Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death." They are words of truth and sobriety, so they exaggerate in nothing.

In full contrast with evil, which is folly to the utmost, is the description of wisdom's ways as here brought before us.

Here is no courting of the dark, no flattery of the heedless, no fair speech to seduce into foul deeds and illicit indulgence. The wisdom which has its root in the fear of Jehovah is aboveboard and

earnest with man. "Doth not wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice? On the top of high places, where paths meet, she standeth; beside the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors, she crieth aloud." John the Baptist not only bore witness to Jesus, but "cried" (John 1:15). So did our Lord in the temple as He taught (John 7:28), and notably at the close of His rejected testimony (12:44) in importunate love.

How often in the Old Testament as in the New we are reminded of divine favor to mankind! Not with angels but with the human race does God plead, that they may hear and live. "The life was the light of men." So it is here when wisdom cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men"; nay more, it beseeches the weak and the unwise. "O ye simple, understand wisdom, and ye fools, be of understanding heart."

There are objects of desire in men's eager eyes. Oh the ardor, when they learn that there is here a mine of silver, and a place for gold which they refine! Seas are crossed, deserts are penetrated, swamps and mountains drear are crossed, and heat or cold or famine is defied. And man puts an end to the darkness, and the utmost limit is explored. A shaft is opened far from human haunts; they are forgotten of the traveler, they hang afar from men, they swing to and fro. Out of the earth cometh bread, and underneath it is turned up as by fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it hath dust of gold; a path no bird of prey knows, nor vulture's eye hath seen, nor sons of pride have trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed over it. The engineer puts forth his hands on the flints; he overturns mountains by the roots; he cuts out channels in the rocks; and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds the streams that they drip not, and the hidden things he brings forth to light. But wisdom, where shall it be found, and where is the place of understanding? Man knows not its value; neither is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, It is not with me; and the sea says, It is not with me. Neither gold nor silver, nor precious stones as onyx, sapphire, ruby, topaz, with gold most fine, nor jewels can procure or equal it. Whence then comes it, and where is its place? For it is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the heavens. Destruction and death say, We have heard its report with our ears. God understands its way, and He knows its place. And to man He said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28). Christ alone is its fullness.

Our exhortation encourages souls. "Hear, for I will speak excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my palate shall meditate truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips." Where else can this be found? Outside the inspired Word, religion makes men worse than if they had none, and substitutes demons for the true God. Here the writer can say with assurance, All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverse in them. Man's uncertainty and fallen nature expose him to both if he sets up to be an oracle. Whereas God's words are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to him that findeth knowledge. Hence is the call, Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not comparable to her. We can go no farther, now that the Son of God is come and given to us to know Him that is true. For He Himself is the true God, no less than the Father; and He is eternal life. Compare John 17:3.

We are in a world dominated for the present by a subtle spirit of evil that has access to every heart. There is therefore constant need of a wisdom above man's. For the Christian it descends

from above; it is Christ, God's wisdom no less than His power. Here, as being for Israel, the Holy Spirit presents wisdom for the earth. For the heaven and the earth belong to God, who in due time will expel the usurper and put all things under Him in fact and manifestation, as they are now in principle to faith. Meanwhile we have God occupying Himself with what is heavenly for His children, in the New Testament before the day arrives, as for His ancient people renewed to profit ere long by the Old Testament as here.

The Christian, though a heavenly man, walks on earth; and both needs to, and can, avail himself of such words as these, coming under the moral government of God as his Father (1 Pet. 1:17). Wisdom makes prudence its dwelling place, and there finds knowledge, if not of witty inventions, assuredly of reflections, a better thing. Thus are subtle adversaries met by a wisdom and its resources deeper than every snare. Its base is that fear of Jehovah which hates evil, for which intellectual sharpness and craft are no match. For divine wisdom in the Word forms the godly in obedience, not in the cleverness that outwits craft by profounder craft; for this would only dishonor God and sully the soul. Hence pride and arrogance on the one hand, and on the other the evil way and the perverse mouth, are hateful to God and His people. They are the ways and the words of self, far from Him who leads in the path of obedience, and gives counsel and sound wisdom to those who wait on Him and keep His word; and with Him is not only intelligence but strength—all we need in this tangled and shifty scene.

None need wisdom so much as those in authority, the monarch in particular. "By me kings reign, and rulers make just decrees; by me princes rule and nobles, all the judges of the earth." But this very language aptly discriminates the difference between the Old Testament, and the New Testament, that is the entirely new state of things under the gospel as compared with the law. For there is instruction in the New Testament only for subjection to authority, in the Old Testament for those who wield it also. The Christian waits to reign with Christ, content meanwhile to suffer with Him and for Him. No exhortation, no principle, no fact supposes him exercising worldly power where Christ was rejected, till He appears to judge the world. It was quite another condition before the princes of this age crucified the Lord of glory. But it is now a time of great and growing unbelief, and it is a hard trial for most believers to forego present power and honor. Indeed, since the apostles passed away, the true heavenly glory of the Christian and the Church has been well nigh forgotten and ignored.

But wisdom goes out far beyond rulers and the great, even to all that seek and prize it. "I love those that love me; and those that seek me earnestly shall find me." So it ever is in divine pursuits. Those that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. God has no blanks for the real. Wisdom from Him secures riches and honor—not for the Christian of a material sort, but better far, durable wealth, truly, and righteousness. Its fruit is indeed superior to pure gold or choice silver. Wisdom walks in the way of righteousness. Not "leading" but "walking" is the point here. To reason, to common sense, it may seem utterly foolish; for it often entails loss, and sacrifice, and suffering. But "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Christ to us is the way; and Him we follow, whatever the case. Wisdom walks therefore in the midst of the paths of judgment, not outside them. And there only is blessing enjoyed, though it is not for the Christian in the basket and the store, in the bank or in stocks, but higher and unchanging.

The Proverbs: Chapter 8:22-9:6

From verses 22-31 we have the plainest and the brightest testimony of this Book to Christ's glory. Who can fail to discern that He is here viewed as the Wisdom of God. The personality of His Wisdom is as marked here as of the Life in 1 John 1. This suits God if it does not man.

The remarkable truth here signalized is the Wisdom portrayed with Jehovah before creation, and not merely in that display of almighty power guided by wisdom and goodness. More than this attribution of eternal wisdom, as Jehovah's cherished companion before His works of old, a special object of His affection is carefully shown in mankind, even as He Himself was to Jehovah. This and this only explains why the earth should be so near and conspicuous an object to the love of God—often a theme of unbelieving wonder, if not for unworthy and thankless scorn.

"Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way." There was Wisdom, not simply in Him, but with Him, as is said of the Word in John 1:1: "the Word was with God," just as surely as He "is God"; and such too is the account of Him as Life in 1 John 1:2, before He was manifested in flesh. "I was set up [lit. anointed] from everlasting, from the beginning before the earth was." He was no creature of God, but was in being before His works. When depths were not nor fountains abounding with waters, He was brought forth; before mountains or hills were settled; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields or the beginning of the dust of the world. He was there for the making and ordering of all, as He was before any. Nor did He thus precede the lower scene only, but the heavens which contain all. When Jehovah prepared the heavens, Wisdom was there; when He set the circle upon the face the deep; when He established the skies above. When the fountains of the deep became strong, when He imposed on the sea its decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then was Wisdom by Him, a nursling [or artificer], and a delight He was, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in His habitable world; and His delights were with the sons of men. It is a grand, true, and highly poetic description, worthy of Him who was proclaimed in its season the Worthy One.

But whatever wisdom wrought on earth or sea, if the heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows the work of His hands, there was a counsel deeper still, a love far beyond intelligence and power; and this we learn in the marvelous description. It is not the Wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which was ordained before the ages unto our glory (1 Cor. 2:7). Nothing do we find of God's sovereign love in choosing out souls to partake of heavenly relationship. It is His good pleasure in men, to be effectuated another day by His Son becoming man, and in that redemption which secures His glory and opens the way for all His dealings of grace. What we have here is no revelation of the secret that was hid in God till Christ rejected went back to God, and the Holy Spirit was sent to reveal it. But we have the inestimable purpose of God's goodness toward man plainly stated, and distinct from the election of Israel for the earth, or of the saints who compose the Church for the heaven, and indeed for the universal inheritance with Christ.

Hence the force here of Wisdom being by Jehovah, His delight day by day, not only rejoicing always before Jehovah, but rejoicing Himself in the habitable parts of His earth, and His delights were with the sons of men. Though it be not Christ glorified on high, nor therefore our union with Him as His body, yet it is an expression of divine love in and toward man, far beyond what Israel ever realized, as it will be in the days of the kingdom here below when He reigns and all the families of the earth are blessed in Him. For it is divine delight in Him whose delights were and will be with the sons of men. Hence beautiful is the praise of the heavenly hosts at His birth heard by the lowly shepherds by night, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill in men"; beautiful in itself, and in their unjealous delight in His ways who made men, not angels, the especial object of His complacency.

The chapter concludes with a fatherly application to impress the blessedness of wisdom's ways on the young, but from Jehovah.

When He who was afterward to become flesh and dwell among us was brought (so distinctly for the Old Testament) before the hearer of the written Word, we can understand that His grace makes itself deeply felt and calls special heed to communications meant to deal with the inner man. They rise far above ordinary obligation; they are not clothed with the thunder and lightning of Sinai, nor do they consist of typical pictures which illustrated the provision of divine mercy, when men failed and would own their sins suitably, the shadows of the good things to come. A divine personality (the daily delight to Jehovah, whose delights were with the sons of men, who calls Himself, though set up from eternity, Wisdom dwelling with prudence) appeals peculiarly to heart and conscience. For who does not feel the need of such guidance? Sons of men must be welcome to Him; and He, because He is divine, must be able to render Himself acceptable to them.

Doubtless the lack of known forgiveness and of life eternal in the Son of God left much to be desired, which we enjoy through the gospel. But what clearly appears in such a chapter as this was an immense favor; and none need wonder at the exhortation which follows it up, that the "sons" should hearken. But such words, like those of our Lord on the mount, are meant to be done as well as heard. Indeed every one that hears and does them not can only be likened to a foolish man that built his house on the sand--great the fall when it comes --worse than if no house were built.

Here accordingly we are told that "blessed are those that keep my ways." The glory and grace of Him who deigns to point out the ways of wisdom act on living faith and make it energetic through love. Where faith is not, all else fails ere long. "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not." How touchingly wisdom pleads while we only are the gainers! What can we add to divine majesty? The love of God delights in blessing; but blessing cannot be for sinful man, but in hearing instruction from Him who was made to us wisdom from above.

Again we have it applied to the individual. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Here we have the earnestness day by day and perseverance like a beggar in need that will not be denied, and waits in the face of what would discourage others less importunate. We find in the beginning of Luke 11 the value of prayer on His part who prayed as none else did, and led a disciple to seek of Him to teach them to pray. But the Spirit of God at the close of Luke 10 makes us know the need of His word antecedently--that we may not trust our own reasonings or imaginations, instead of all resting on the groundwork of

divine truth received in faith. Of this the blessed sample is Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word, and reaped endless and deep profit in comparison with her sister, Martha, who, loved of Him, and doubtless loving Him, was cumbered with much serving, and hence anxious and troubled about many things. Mary's part is the good one which shall be taken away from none who value it.

"For (on the one hand) whoso findeth me findeth life and obtaineth favor of Jehovah." So the prince of prophets writes: "Wherefore do ye weigh money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently to me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, and your soul shall live." What better was known than "life" above that of nature through the faith of the divine Word, and Jehovah's favor enjoyed also? It was not blessing in the city and in the field, or in the kine and in the flock, in the bucket and in the kneading-trough, nor even in being made the head rather than the tail. Old Testament believers knew and possessed by grace the blessing, though far from that fullness which we have now through and in Christ.

On the other hand, the way of self-will is ruinous for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. It is just the path of sin. "And he that sinneth against me (Wisdom) doeth violence to his own soul: all they that hate me love death." There is not, nor ever was, true living, living to God, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Therefore it is that the just shall live by his faith. For faith comes of hearing, and hearing by the divine Word. Outside the path of faith on either side are the ways of death, and many are those who take them in the pursuit of man's thoughts or present objects, of human religion or human irreligion, apart from the true God and Him in whom He reveals Himself by His Word and Spirit.

In the beginning of chapter 9, it is not wisdom in eternal relations, or in founding and building up the earth, preparing the heavens, and imposing on the sea the decree that the waters pass not the prescribed limits, yet withal delighting in the sons of men. Here the fruit of these delights appears. Wisdom acts among men.

We had wisdom's cry in the preceding chapter-her active testimony that her voice might be heard. Here we have much more; for Jehovah strenuously and elaborately adopted means for the well-being and true enjoyment of man, so ready to turn aside and perish in the ways of the destroyer.

Hence, and in Israel when in possession of the land under Solomon it was above all conspicuous, that Jehovah drew public attention to His commandments as the sole wisdom and condition of blessing on the earth. This is what Moses yearned for, as their entrance there approached, that the surrounding peoples might say, Verily this great nation is a wise and understanding people; for what great nation is there that hath God near to them, as Jehovah our God is in everything we call upon Him for? And what great nation is there that hath righteous statutes and ordinances, as all this law which I set before you this day?

Only more is said in Solomon's day, and by the king in this Book where wisdom is personified so admirably by the Spirit who had the Son of God in view. And who so well could introduce the figure of wisdom's house as he who was given to build the house for Jehovah's name, a settled place for Him to abide in forever? Yet how much the past or the present says to the contrary! as

indeed Jehovah warned was to be because of their apostasy, even to a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

"Wisdom hath built her house." Nowhere on earth was there a suited habitation. She could find no dwelling, but has prepared one for herself; for wisdom had to promote the entire life and the most intimate relations and the habits of every day. Hence the necessity for "her house," to which she liberally invites. "She hath hewn her seven pillars." There is a completeness of support exhibited in no other, and due to the divine aim herein sought.

Then the provision is no less bountiful. "She hath slaughtered her slaughtering, she hath mingled her wine, she hath furnished her table." How could it be otherwise if divine love undertake to entertain worthily of God? There is no more intelligible or common figure of communion than that which is expressed by eating and drinking under the same hospitable roof. So the Lord repeatedly set forth the welcome of grace in the gospel; so He signifies our feeding on Himself by faith to life eternal; so He instituted His supper for our habitual remembrance of Himself till He come. It is presented here that His people might know the pleasure Jehovah took in their enjoyment of wisdom as He revealed it.

But there is more. "She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the summits of the high places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither." Wisdom had her messengers, who are fitly represented as maidens whom she dispatched on the errand of loving-kindness. But she spares no pains personally; for there she stands on the loftiest vantage ground, whence she may invite. And who are the objects of her appeal? Not the rich or great; not the wise or prudent; but "whoso is simple, let him turn in hither." God is ever the giving God when truly known. He may test man for a special purpose; but as God loves a cheerful giver, so is He the most liberal of all Himself; and so wisdom here makes known. "To him that is void of understanding she saith, Come, eat ye of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled." In the world that is, such generous unselfish love is unknown; and hence the need and value of reiterated welcome.

Still in the same world admonition is requisite, and the word follows, "Forsake simplicities [or follies] and live; and go in the way of intelligence." Wisdom does not admit of inconsistency. If received notwithstanding our folly, it is that we may become wise according to a wisdom above our own; and this is truly to "live" where all else is death, and, as living, to walk in the way of intelligence, looking up to Him who is above, and not as the beasts that look down and perish.

How blessed for us that to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom! And how fitting that he who was of old endowed with wisdom beyond all others should be the one to reveal in the Old Testament Him who is that Wisdom in His own eternal Person!

A Refutation of an Attack on the Bible: the Editor's Column

During the month of December, Life magazine came out with a double-size issue in which the topic was "The Bible." It was well illustrated by works of religious art, and pictures of ruins in other lands. The cover carried a picture of Moses 'with the ten commandments, by Rembrandt. It was doubtless calculated to attract the religious element among its readers; but, alas, it is written in such a manner as to undermine the faith. It is a sad commentary on Christianity in this once favored land when a publication with great coverage and almost unlimited means at its disposal can disgorge such patent unbelief. We consider that this elaborate article can only come from a source which the editors little suspect. We may use the language of sacred Scripture, and comment, "an enemy hath done this." It could scarcely be more damaging if it were designed by a sinister power.

At one time this nation was well grounded in the fact that the Bible is the Word of God-not that all people believed the Bible, but by and large it was respected. Its precepts were admired, even when not bowed to; and it served as a great restraint against ungodliness and lawlessness. Now we are witnessing a rapid growth in these unlovely and noxious weeds on every hand. The Word of God said long ago, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Rom. 3:18. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Pro. 1:7. When once the veracity and trustworthiness of God's immutable Word is destroyed in the soul, man has no anchor to hold him steady. He easily becomes the plaything of his lusts, and becomes what Scripture calls, "to every good work reprobate." When confidence in God is displaced, and the fear of God is removed through "philosophy and vain deceit," the restraining influences are gone.

It would be a bold man who would publish a prominent magazine and entitle it, INFIDELITY; but the very essence of the Life article could make more infidels than a brochure entitled as such. Furthermore, this article is buttressed by claims for super intelligence of its many contributors, and by extravagant avowals of later developments which seem to discount all that ever went before. But we aver that present-day claimed superiority of knowledge and research, which boldly sets aside a "thus said the LORD," is certainly lacking in modesty, and has an abundance of self-confidence. But let it be affirmed according to Him who is THE TRUTH, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Let men remember that "the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom. 2:2).

We are greeted in this article (which we have reviewed by request) by the assertion that this Book is composed of "words written by men." The thought that it is the Word of God is categorically refused; the very idea of its being inspired by God is not in their thinking. Now if God dictated not only the thoughts but the words of Scripture, then it has a claim on men's consciences. If God has written words, even though He may use the pen of a man, He is able to make His mind known through that instrumentality. The infidel minds of men deny to God the ability to cause words to be written for us; but infidels claim this ability and this right for themselves, and freely use it to their shame and everlasting ruin. We may well paraphrase the words of the Apostle Paul, and say,

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you" that God can make His mind known? The basic fault lies in this, that men refuse God's Word because it is God's word to them. It speaks to their consciences, and that they will not have. If a man has a sharp knife, one jab with it is sufficient to prove its keen edge. One jab is worth more than a thousand words, and so with the Word of God; it cuts between joints and marrow, and is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Men are very cunning and crafty in seeking to reject the Word of Him who cannot lie, because it contains unpalatable truths which bind their consciences.

But to return to Life's article. The next thrust at the Word of the living God states that "most of its words were written down by others who remain nameless." This is a bold statement for a man "whose breath is in his nostrils" to make. From whence has he that superior wisdom that enables him to pronounce on the penmen whom God in His wisdom chose to use? The fact is, that men today reject it forthwith as the Word of God, and fancy to themselves that if they can discount it by questioning the names of the penmen, they can obviate their bounden duty to Him. We will see more of these daring charges concerning anonymity of the various writers.

A sleight-of-hand cheat is used to set aside all that God recorded, saying that it was only really passed down from father to son, and none of it was recorded. This is base presumption, if not bold effrontery. The article then goes on to claim that nothing was written down until about the year 1000 B.C., when the Hebrews began to record things. But will they please tell us how it was that the Hebrews were so deficient -in such an art when the surrounding nations were adept in it long before? But by this master stroke, they are free to claim that when the Israelites began to keep records, they recorded old stories and poems, which apparently were grossly inaccurate, for "their scrolls required frequent recopying, leaving room for many changes, some on purpose, and some inadvertent." Here is a crucial blow: when they did write, they did not write God's words, but "old stories and poems," which were frequently revised. Thus every claim for inspiration is rejected, and all we have left is a collection of old stories which were handed down inaccurately, then recorded inaccurately, and changed frequently. To believe this is to reject everything, even to God Himself.

This beginning of Hebrew writing is explained to be about the time of Solomon; but whence came all of Solomon's great wisdom? "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.... And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." 1 Kings 4:29-32, 34. He may well have attained to things that some men of letters still lack. But according to these rejecters of the Bible truth, the surrounding peoples were far in advance of the Hebrews. This, we judge, is a state of mind bent on finding fault with the Bible to discredit it.

And where was the "sweet psalmist of Israel" when the poetic gems were penned? Furthermore, David's songs were divine utterances prophetic of the coming of Christ. The Lord Himself often referred to the sayings of David as pointing toward Himself. He also called David a prophet, and said that "He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:31). What a lie this

gives to these men of the cloth who reject the Word of God. Yes, David wrote fluently and frequently, and Solomon his son excelled all the children of his day, to say nothing of Moses five hundred years earlier. But more as to this later.

How glad some people seem to be when they can point out some flaw in the Bible, although if they recognized their insufficiency for these things, they would be very hesitant to perhaps display their ignorance. Take, for instance, this charge: "Another burden of the Bible is its internal contradictions and crudities." What bold presumption! To bolster their boldness they ask, "Was it God or Satan who prompted David to take a census?" A schoolboy who had faith in God and reverence for His Word would be able to answer the quibble. Did not the Lord Jesus say to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"? Was it Satan's desire to sift Peter? Yes, doubtless; but the Lord in His all-perfect wisdom permitted it. Did not Satan desire to thrust Job into the crucible? Yes, surely; but God overruled the trials and brought blessing to Job in the end. Was it not even so in David's case? The Lord permissively gave Satan license to provoke David to count Israel; but divine wisdom was demonstrated in the end, for through this trial David discovered the place where "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." There is no conflict or discrepancy in the two accounts, nor crudity, as alleged. Satan provoked David, but God overruled it and permitted the incident. There is no difficulty where the will is not perverse!

Now note this infidel notion: "But the logic of later Protestantism produced a degree of fundamentalist 'bibliolatry' that maintained every word was divinely and equally inspired." Here then is the crux of their attacks on the Bible. They show their colors when and where a man or a people stand firmly for divine revelation in every part. Any true child of God who has worked with biblical research knows that there are mistakes of copyists and the like, and human errors of transcription have occurred; but careful God-honoring criticism has had its place in clearing up difficulties; but holy reverence is unknown to these modern apostles of free-thinking German-oriented higher criticism. Many of the difficulties disappear as the mist when there is reverence for God. With an anointed eye the difficulties dissolve. But the malevolent charge of "bibliolatry" is as unjust as it is untrue. It is not idolatry to honor God's Word, but it is gross idolatry to worship at the shrine of science "falsely so-called." Life alleges that Darwinian geology challenged the literal truth of Genesis.

If men would listen to science, which they set in contradiction to God and His Word, they might note the words of two eminent philosophers, John S. Mill and Herbert Spencer. These great men who were not noted for belief in God and His Word, said boldly that science can give no account of permanent and primary causes of the universe as it is. Further, that "science begins where creation ends. Science can investigate the effects of creation, but can give no account of the wonderful powers which wrought in creating." Herbert Spencer in particular added, "The only thing science can do is to conduct its students to a blind wall, on the other side of which lies the solution wholly outside science." The believer, on the other hand, can understand what the wise men of the world reject: "By faith we understand"; it is that simple, full, and complete, and is devastating to the wisdom of the world which God will bring to naught.

The gratuitous remark that the Bible "is certainly not myth all the way through" is not commendatory; for on closer examination nearly all things are challenged and weighed in the balances of unbelief. To allow of myth in any degree is offensive to the spiritual mind, for by the

same measurements nearly every basic truth of God is discarded, openly or covertly.

Another false premise is contained in this: "The subject of the story is the continuing encounter and dialog on this earth between man and God." God has no continuing dialog with fallen man, for he is at enmity with God. It is an assumption that man in his wickedness is on speaking terms with the Holy God. This is the basic error of Cain, who presumed to approach God without a sacrifice, without an offering of acceptable worth. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11).

A Refutation of an Attack on the Bible: the Editor's Column

We further learn from God that the reason Cain slew his brother was because his deeds were evil-yes, evil in seeking to approach God as though he were not a guilty sinner. This same evil is inherent in Life's comment on the dialog between men and God. "If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquity, O LORD, who shall stand?" Psalm 130:3. "God... commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). There is no security except by "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Next comes a daring challenge to the God in whom their breath is: "In this continuing story God seems to develop from one kind of deity to another; but from our later standpoint the human generations to whom he disclosed himself are also seen to have been improving their comprehension of the Eternal." This statement is false in every detail. "In the beginning God" is the same God all the way through-the Creator-the One with whom man has to do. He says in another place, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). With Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). It is a libel on God to even suggest that He changes from one kind of deity to another. But this is current infidelity, which sets aside His sure Word, the Word of Him who cannot lie, and suggests that the whole idea of God just grew up according to the vain delusions of men.

Think of calling the divine record in the prophecy of Isaiah a "most dramatic piece of effrontery in religious history." If God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain, what will He do with those who mutilate His Word, which He has magnified above all His name. We can say of these leaders, as was said by the Lord of Judas Iscariot, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Did not God have a right to send for the Assyrians to chastise His guilty people who had given up "their glory" for them that were no gods? He sent them as "the rod of His anger" in just retribution. Who shall challenge God's right to do so? This boldness is rank effrontery, to say the least. The statement is false that God was preparing the Israelites for "another way than David's to be 'a blessing to mankind.'" Verily, "let God be true, but every man a liar." His word will stand, and great David's greater Son will yet wield the scepter, a righteous scepter, not only over Israel in the coming day, but over a cleansed and subdued earth, man's claims and daring notwithstanding.

Then the old infidelity that came out of Germany during the emergence of higher criticism, so-called, has shown its ugly head in the challenge to the Word of God that there were two different Isaiahs. Was it ingenuity or willful unbelief of the Lord's own words that led these false prophets to imagine two (or maybe more) Isaiahs. The Lord Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath and stood up to read; He was given the scroll of Isaiah the prophet and

He read from the 61st chapter, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me," whereupon He details the present and future purposes of His coming. Did the Lord not know that this was written prophetically by Isaiah? or dare infidel reasoners suggest that He either did not know, or else accepted a common error? These modern unbelievers divide the book of Isaiah at the 40th chapter and attribute the latter part to an unknown Isaiah. But in John 12 we read the emphatic statement: "... yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet [not some other man by the same name] might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" vv. 37, 38. Then the Spirit of God-the Spirit of truth-added, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." vv. 39, 40. Let us note it well, that all these verses from Isa. 53:1; 61:1-3; and 6:10, though written according to infidel notions by different Isaiahs, are each and all said to be written not only by Isaiah, but by the same prophet. O the shocking incredulity of men who are predisposed to reject the truth! They would not treat the writings of Mohammed, or of any other writer, religious or otherwise, in like manner.

Previously we commented on a sad statement, that God was preparing Israel for another way of blessing for mankind, rather than through David. But little as it may seem, this is a flat rejection of the Lord Jesus as Savior, for He had to come through Abraham and David; not otherwise could He come. Now this article presupposes that the second "pseudo" Isaiah opened another 'way than the way of faith, referring to a suffering servant who would "atone for the sins of the whole human race." This IS nowhere predicated even of the Messiah, for it is unadulterated universalism, that all the human race will be saved, and that, mark you, not dependent on faith in Christ. Universalism is a lie' of the enemy of souls who makes light of the atoning work of Christ on the one hand, and of the eternal demerit for sin on the other.

To accept the statement that "Jesus' contemporaries felt the end of the world was a real possibility, perhaps very close at hand," is to reject Him as God, and to limit the Son of God who knew all things, to the fashion of those who lived at the time. The editors also remark that "the story" of "Jesus' second coming has continued for 1,900 years without a second coming. Instead, it has given believers a hope that sustains them in this life on earth, where the harvest of human accomplishment in history surpasses all that went before. The hope is not dead and the harvest not fully gathered yet." This is a brash setting aside of the hope of His coming, and a setting up the achievements of men (with the best to come) as the hope on earth. Oh, sad indeed if that is all the hope the believer has. God is not glorying in the accomplishments of men. He is waiting until man's wickedness is fully ripe; then He will cut it all down with His sickle. Man is boasting great things as never before. But God's Word says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. The present reminds us of God's sure word concerning judgment to come. Men are saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet. 3:4.

The statement that "Christ made love the supreme commandment" is not true. Before we read that "God is love," we read that "God is light." In Him is no darkness at all. He was the light that manifested man's guilt, but men hated the light and cast Him out of the world. People would rather live on in their sins than come to repentance. So Life's premise is not on solid ground, but on wishful thinking that supposes God will be indifferent to their sins.

On page 15 the editors go back to Genesis 1 to undermine faith in the God of creation. This sublime statement of the facts of God's creatorial power is cast aside for "tradition and myth upon myth." Think of the unholy and profane vamping of heathens under the influence of demons as a substitute for divine unfoldings of truth. But we read in 2 Timothy, "They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This is verily true today, and "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Think of the audacity which ventures out where angels would not tread, in order to say, "Who this lone writer [of, Genesis 1 and 2] was nobody knows." But we read the unequivocal statement that was made by the Lord of glory: "Have ye not read in the book of Moses...?" Mark 12:26. Of course infidelity does not scruple to reject both Moses and the Lord Himself. In another verse of the same book, Mark, the Lord says that Moses, "For the hardness of your heart... wrote you this precept." If this is not true, then why recognize the Bible at all? Another solid statement regarding Moses and his writings is found in Luke 24: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He [the Lord Himself] expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Here again the book of Moses is used to explain those things that Moses wrote of Him. Also in John 5:46 is found this conclusive statement: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me." Not only is what Moses said confirmed, but also what he wrote. This scripture emphasizes the plain fact that these modern writers neither believed Moses, nor Christ. But their rejection is wrapped up in the all-inclusive word "scholars." That word covers a multitude of sins, for it clothes its statements in the air of respectability and seeming authenticity. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89. As far as God is concerned, it is settled on earth also; and the very Word will judge him who rejects it, to his eternal ruin.

These proud, boasted "scholars" have sought to separate the Scriptures into many parts, fancying a variety of authors in order to conjure up a scheme to discredit them. There is nothing but remarkable unity and beauty in the Scriptures, which is unperceived by the natural mind, which is at enmity with God. The Scripture uses the word "Elohim" in some places, and "Jehovah" in others; but in each several place this is done with a perfection in detail. This is thoughtlessly and categorically rejected by would-be "scholars." These latter-day infidels do not hesitate to pronounce on that which is above them, and to imagine a hodge-podge of manuscripts, in some of which they use "J" for Jehovah. They are even so bold as to say, on page 17, that "the place is clearly marked where 'J' picks up the thread." Be it carefully noted that Elohim is used of God as the Creator; but when it comes to the use of Jehovah, it signifies His relationship and man's moral responsibility. We quote here the words of a man of God regarding the charges of many and varied manuscripts: "the wretched incubus complicated cobweb on cobweb, woven by the brains of Teutonic legend mongers, without a single fact." W. K.

Here is another daring bit of presumption: "His [Adam's] expulsion [from Eden] is called the Fall of Man. Yet in one sense it was also the Rise of Man, for his new-found knowledge exalted him far above the other creatures of God's creation." This is plainly the lie which the devil gave to Eve. He suggested that God was withholding something good from them, and held out the bait that they would be as gods and have the knowledge of good and evil. This is now put forward as a big improvement for men. Think of it, to give up communion with God and the blissful condition of an unfallen state for what is now thought of as an advance. The devil hid his sting from. Eve and did not tell her that the conscience they acquired would be a bad one and cause them to flee God's

presence. Now in these last days the devil's lie is still preferable.

Could the following statement be classified as other than wickedness? "God seems to have acted as much out of anxiety as anger - a strange state of mind for an omnipotent God." God has magnified His Word above all His name, and He will avenge the insults to His Word. We hesitate to even quote the bold and unblushing challenge thrown at God, but we are assured that "God is not mocked."

Surely no man with the fear of God in his consciousness would give utterance to the thought that He began with no ultimate plan for man, and that all the way from creation to the days of Abraham, and then add that God at that point, "abruptly took a new tack." Do we not read that, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"? Acts 15:18. Nothing ever caught God by surprise and forced Him to change His plans. The thought is preposterous, but it seems worthy of its inventors who will reap the due reward of their deeds.

Are the modern tales about Abraham and his family regarding his God supposed to be amusing? After impugning the "J" writer, they refer to the scriptural accounts as "wonderfully human, funny, and even outrageous." God never intended His sacred Word to be amusing or outrageous. "Far be the thought." He has recorded the doings in life of various men for our instruction. Has it not been written that "these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [or ages] are come"? 1 Cor. 10:11. There is a word which modern "scholars" may well heed: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Psalm 2:10-12.

All of the beauty and wisdom of Joseph's dealings with his brothers when they came down into Egypt to buy corn is lost on those of the natural [unsaved] men to whom the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness (1 Cor. 2:14). Joseph, the lovely picture of the Lord Jesus, who was loved by his father and hated by his brothers, is at last exalted; and his brothers have to come before him on bended knee. In this sublime portrait, Joseph is a type of Christ in His future dealings with Israel when they acknowledge their sins. He leads his brothers on step by step into full repentance worthy of Him of whom he is a type.

A Refutation of an Attack on the Bible: the Editor's Column

Another quotation from Life: "The patriarchal narrative in Genesis - the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - has a legendary flavor. But many details of the story are now confirmed and elucidated by outside sources, particularly archeological data relating to the very region of Mesopotamia which the patriarchs called their home." This sounds more circumspect and as though at last there is a good word for Scripture, but it is not so; for men who will not believe except on circumstantial evidence, do not believe God at all. At this point a story of a Hurrian woman is introduced as an original which bears striking similarity to the divine record. Thus the Israelites are supposed to have evolved their own explanations of old Hurrian customs. Such suggestions belittle God and His Word, but they suit the carnal mind of man.

The Book of Job comes in also for slighting disparagement. The sacred Book of Job with its rich fullness for a subject soul is more or less relegated to a story from the "golden age" of Hammurabi where a godly man is unjustly punished. With what horrors must angels behold human

irreverence! Job, one of the oldest books on record, displays God's wisdom and power; it also gives a list of sensible questions which many wise men of today cannot answer. Even the future resurrections, both of the just and the unjust, are pictured there. Nothing short of divine revelation could have compassed such great truth at such an early epoch.

"J," mark you, not Moses, is the author of Abraham's program, because "J" "could not have gotten his material from cuneiform documents for they had been covered up for centuries before he began to write." Infidelity will not allow of Israelitish writing in those days, although Moses did write, and centuries before. The evil is compounded by the claim that this mythical "J" "could only have obtained his material from earlier Israelite traditions." Away with such rubbish! It all boils down to a flat rejection of God and His inspired Word. Men have strained their brains to propound a theory which will get rid of the only true answer-God and His Word. Then to add to man's ingenious false devices, we are told how these things, like the ultimate vision of Abraham, "required a long time to incubate." We prefer to believe God, if every man should be proved a liar. God called Abraham, and he had but to obey. We are told that "Abraham believed God," but belief in God is lacking in all this. We are reminded of the words of Job: "But ye are forgers of lies." Higher criticism, new or old, is utterly false.

Another old and false story is rehearsed in the claim that the Israelites did not cross the Red Sea, but "the Sea of Reeds," which Life suggests was "probably one of the shallow lakes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Suez." In this manner, any possibility of divine intervention is rejected. But it is strange indeed how that Pharaoh and his armies with their chariots were so easily drowned in a shallow lake where is a "causeway" that "is usually safe to cross." One thing seems evident, the writers and editors of Life are bent on removing everything savoring the sign of God's power by which His will was accomplished.

The Lord's giving the Israelites flesh to eat is now regarded as a natural phenomenon by saying that migratory quail "often fall exhausted to the ground" after their flights. But suffice it for the believing child of God that He sent them flesh to eat. Then the miracle of the manna is explained away as the excretion of insects after feeding on the "tamarisk bush." But they ignore the astonishing fact that none fell on the sabbath, but twice as much fell on the previous day. And all through their long journey until they ate the old corn of the land of Canaan, it never failed. Did any army ever have such an abundant store? That manna, food from heaven, was a type of Christ as His peoples' food, as the bread that came down from heaven. Of course the miraculous is rejected for the vain deceits of men.

The divine hand which wrought a victory at Jericho is regarded as Joshua's using "psychological warfare." There is also a question raised about whether there was a providential tremor that helped the walls of Jericho fall down, but they are strangely silent about that part of the wall that remained standing. Why did it not all topple instead of leaving Rahab's house intact?

The laws which God gave to Israel regarding the clean and unclean animals were designed by God, especially to point up the importance of not being defiled. There are still spiritual significances for Christians in this day, for God had then and has now a right to regulate the conduct of His people. He is holy and requires holiness. But the inference that "the core of this material may go back to primitive taboos" is an insult to God and unworthy of soberness.

A remark that "the story [of David's killing Goliath] may not even be accurate; a verse in 2 Samuel credits the slaying of the Philistine giant not to David but to Elhanan." Now one has only to read 2 Sam. 21:19 and the filmy cobweb of scriptural criticism will vanish like the dew on a sunny morning: "And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." Now skeptic, can you not discern between Goliath and his brother? Shall we suggest that perhaps in all the criticisms, the beam is in the eye of the critic? Perhaps the removal of the beam of unbelief would enable people to see the truth of God clearly.

Joab was David's chief captain, but there is evidence in Scripture that while he did mighty acts, he was not a man of faith. He was guided mostly by policy, and at the last he betrayed where his heart was. At the end, Solomon represents Christ when He reigns prosperously and judges righteously, which He will do in a soon coming day. At that time those who, as Joab, were not true to David, will meet their doom. But we quail before Life's remark, "It is difficult to read without anger the passage in which the execution [of Joab] is carried out." Those who reject Christ's word just as surely come into the judgment of God.

Did the one who wrote that if there had been no prophets, there would have been no apostles, and that "Jesus of Nazareth would have remained at his carpenter's bench," weigh those words? There was no such possibility, for He came from God when the fullness of time had come. He came from God for His appointed mission-to save lost sinners-and nothing could thwart that purpose of grace.

And when the prophets came with a "thus saith the LORD," it is a travesty to say that, "Gradually, from the tradition of primitive seers and mystics whose revelations came in the form of dervish-like ecstasies and frenzies, there emerges a strain of sternly moral prophecy." This all savors of the enchantments of the heathen, as for instance those of the false prophet Balsam. Where in the whole of Scripture is there anything resembling the activity of demons suggested by the description? Elijah, prepared by God in private, appeared suddenly on the scene and said, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years" (1 Kings 17:1). He came with a distinct message which was fulfilled in its season. To allow the thought that the prophets used enchantments, as was suggested, is to impugn the "thus said the LORD."

Kind words are spoken for a German "scholar" who wrote about Jesus, when his work brought down the wrath of some men. Even kind words are found for Dr. Albert Schweitzer who was thoroughly heterodox, who boldly rejected the Savior on so-called "insufficient evidence." Many today, as Judas Iscariot, kiss and do obeisance while they betray Him.

Life charges that the "details of the resurrection" hardly match "in any two of the gospels, let alone among all four." This is a grave charge that cannot be substantiated. The Spirit of God indicted each of the gospels and gave each writer to record that which suited the mind of the Spirit. There is no contradiction when the believer is willing to let in the light; but where there is a pre-disposition to find fault, it is comparatively easy to ignore facts and strain on points.

It is absurdly inaccurate and impious in character to say that the Lord had "a profound religious experience - in all likelihood connected with John the Baptist." This is the very essence of apostasy, and every real Christian should shrink from it with shock and revulsion. It is a complete

rejection of Jesus as the Son of God - the One who came from God and went to God - the Word, the Life, the Light, the Truth, by which all things and persons will be judged. To suggest that He did not realize His true identity is a libel upon the Son of God. All His acts, His words, and His ways testified to who He was. He came in all respects as foretold in the prophetic scriptures. There was unmistakable evidence as to who He was. And in the signs and wonders which He performed there were many which were predicated of the Messiah only; He only opened the eyes of one who was born blind (see John 9). To say that the priests and others did the same is to beg the question and will not bear close examination. These challenges all prove one fact, a predisposition to reject the Christ of God.

The Isaiah of Scripture is rejected; Daniel the prophet is disparaged; the writers of the New Testament are belittled; the second coming of Christ is passed off as a phantom; so really there is little of any worth left for a wayfaring man who is seeking peace with God. The true Bible is displaced or discredited, and only covers of the Book are left. When statements made in The Acts are branded as palpable exaggerations, we might say with Mary, "They have taken away my Lord."

To accuse the writers of the gospels of being merely copyists of one another is to reject outright the Holy Spirit of God who indited all the books of the Bible. Furthermore, Mark has been accused of plagiarism. May we make one point unmistakably clear: if the Spirit of God caused all four gospels to record the same incident, it was His prerogative; or if He gave an eyewitness not to record that which does not belong to the line given by the Spirit through the writer, who shall gainsay it? "But the natural man 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. These "scholars" also invented "Q" for certain "unknown" writers. Poor gullible mankind! "deceived and being deceived."

The Apostle John who wrote the Gospel bearing his name is now said to have dropped his stories into the account "at his own convenience." This is a libel on John and on his Master. We will quote another example of these critics' blind unbelief: "A clear example [of the supposed confusion of John] is the 'cleansing of the temple' - that famous scene in which Jesus indignantly scourges the moneychangers and stock dealers who had set up shop in the outer court of the temple complex, upsets their tables and drives them out. In the Synoptics [Matthew, Mark, and Luke] this comes at almost the end of his career; John puts it at almost the beginning." Now we wish to append a few lines from a servant of God with spiritual perception: "Not only is this clearing of the temple distinct from that which the Synoptic Gospels relate on His last visit to Jerusalem, but it is instructive to remark that, as they only give the last, John gives only the first. It is a striking witness but a significant fact, as we have already seen doctrinally in his introduction, that he begins where they end, not in a barely literal way, but in all the depth of what Jesus is, says, and does. The state of the temple, the selfishness which reigned there, the indifference to the true fear and honor and holiness of God while there was the utmost punctiliousness in a ritual show of their invention, were characteristics of the ruined state of a people called to the highest earthly privilege by God's favor."-William Kelly.

In the "scholarly" investigation of John's Gospel, these men of no faith state: "One thing nearly everyone now agrees on is that he [John] was not the Apostle." What a strange bit of information!!

There is no writer who so fits the character and description of John, as John the Apostle. We say in the language of the Lord, "but wisdom is justified of all her children."

Many today are the same as those of other days; "they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," for they see and saw no beauty in Him. God said, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offense." (Rom. 9:32, 33.) Take, for instance, the beauty and perfection of Scripture concerning the genealogies of the Lord Jesus in Matthew and Luke; they are referred to as an "incongruity," which is only such to the unanointed eye of human, fallen nature.

The genealogy of Matthew presents the Lord as the legal heir to the throne of David through Solomon his son. This is in perfect accord with the design of the Spirit of God in Matthew, where He is presented as the Messiah, according to prophecy. All the subject material is therefore arranged accordingly; but in Luke's Gospel, He is portrayed as the Son of man, a man among men; and the design throughout is evident. His genealogy is therefore traced back to Adam, and He is thus seen as the true "Seed of the woman," who is to bruise the serpent's head.

Therefore, a little examination of the differing genealogies will prove perfection rather than "incongruity." In Luke, His lineage is traced down from David through his son Nathan, rather than through Solomon; and consequently the line comes down to Mary. Even the Jewish Talmud admits that "Heli" was the father of Mary. She was also of the seed of David, but not through the royal line of Solomon. This was necessary according to Jeremiah 22:28-30, where "Coniah" (or Jeconiah), a son through Solomon, had a curse pronounced upon him which precluded his having his son become the Messiah or ever reign as king: "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless... for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David." When this is seen, the perfection of the genealogies is marked, rather than any "incongruity." The words in Luke's Gospel, "which was the son of," are more correctly rendered, "which was of." The "son of" is marked as being missing even in the King James Version, where the words are in italics. All is harmony when viewed in God's light.

The same question mark which the article places over Christ's birth is equally placed over the account of His resurrection. But here, again, reverence and humility would alter the perspective. Matthew gives some details of His resurrection, but as far as that Gospel is concerned, He is seen on earth with a remnant of the Jewish people, a figure of His re-appearing at the end to that remnant. Mark tells us of His ascension, and leaves us with Him in heaven, working with the disciples down here (a most remarkable suffix to the account of God's perfect Servant). Then Luke tells the disciples of the coming down of the Holy Spirit not many days later; then the Lord leads them out to Bethany, from which place He ascends to heaven with uplifted hands, blessing them. John's Gospel lets His disciples know that He who had gone from them would come again for them. What beautiful order, and all designed and arranged according to the Spirit of God. Surely only a blind man can fail to see the beauties of Scripture, but there are none so blind as those whom the god of this world has blinded. May God in His grace open the eyes of some who would pervert the Scriptures, and lead them to repentance before their doom is sealed.

As for Mark's and John's not giving a genealogy, this is understandable to faith. It would not have been suitable to give the genealogy of a "servant," as He is portrayed in Mark. John presents Him in His beauty as the Son of God from all eternity. This precluded a genealogy, where His deity is given. What perfection!

Life points out that both Matthew and Luke place the birth of Jesus during the reign of King Herod, but then this magazine says that both gospels indicate that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem because the census had been ordered - "whereas official records indicate this census was not made until years after Herod's death.... There are many similar difficulties - far too many, indeed, to catalog them here." Now there is no difficulty that has not been caused by careless reading and by inattention to the words and design of Scripture. Luke plainly tells us that the census was not made until Cyrenius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). The census had been begun, but then stopped until after the death of Herod. God overruled in the affairs of men to order it so that Mary and Joseph would be in Bethlehem, according to the prophecy of Micah 5:2. These governmental figures little imagined that they were thus instruments in God's hands to have Mary and Joseph there at the right time. We herewith quote the words of the poet Cowper:

"Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan His work in vain."

If Life thinks there are too many discrepancies to catalog, we feel the same way about Life's lists of supposed errors. We weary of them and would gladly turn to profitable and edifying subjects from the barren waste of the stock in trade of unbelieving skeptics.

Lessons From the Life of Samson

In due time the child Samson was born. "And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol" (Judges 13:25). His checkered history follows. "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife." Chap. 14: 1. His father and mother remonstrate in vain. "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" Samson was just as self-willed as he was strong. "And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines."

Now that the occasion calls for it, one may notice, by the way, the transparent boldness of Scripture, as wonderfully instructive as the reserve. If man had the writing of the story, would he have dared to speak out thus plainly? I doubt that any believer, without inspiration, would have felt it desirable to write that verse, and many more, as God has done it. If unveiling the fact at all, he would have apologized for it, denounced its evil to clear himself, spoken much perhaps of God's permitting and overruling. Now I am far from denying that it is right for us to feel the pain and shame of Samson's ways. But there is one thing that God's Spirit always assumes - the perfect goodness and the unswerving holiness of God. And this, beyond all doubt or fear, we are entitled always to keep before our hearts in reading the Bible.

Never then let the breath of suspicion enter your soul. Invariably, when you listen to the written Word of God, range yourself on His side. You will never understand the Bible otherwise. You may be tried, but be assured that you will be helped out of the trial. The day may come when nobody appears to lend you a helping hand. What is to become of you then? Once allow your soul to be sullied by judging those living oracles, and real faith in the Bible is gone as far as you are concerned. If I do not trust it in everything, I can trust it in nothing.

So, dangerous is apt to be the reaction against one ever so honest; the more you have trusted, when you begin to doubt, the worse it is apt to be, even with poor erring man, who knows not what a serious thing it is. Nor ought anyone to allow a suspicion until he has the certainty of that which can be accounted for in no way save by guilt. And this, I need scarce say, is still more due on the score of brotherly relation and divine love, not merely on the ground of that which we might expect for our own souls.

But when God and His Word are in question, it ought to be a simple matter for a child of God. How often it is ourselves who make the difficulties of which the enemy greedily avails himself against our own souls and His glory! For objections against Scripture are always the creation of unbelief. Difficulties, where they exist for us, would only exercise faith in God. The Word of God is always in itself not only right, but fraught with light. It makes wise the simple; it enlightens the eyes. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130.

Undoubtedly there are many things in Scripture of which we are ignorant; but then we are not entitled to interpret the Word of God by ourselves. There is such a thing as to be taught of God. The Holy Ghost is given for this as for other purposes. It may often be doubtless that we are obliged to wait, and a wholesome thing too for our souls it should be. It is well sometimes for all those who teach, that they should be obliged to learn; well that they should be forced to feel that they do not know; an excellent moral lesson that they should confess it-not only be conscious of it, but own it- for indeed the necessary claim of Scripture is that it be confided in as the Word of God, though it does not thence follow that we are competent to explain it all. By the Holy Spirit only can we enter in and enjoy.

It is not here meant that there is any special difficulty in that which has been the occasion of these general remarks; still less is it implied that he who speaks makes any pretension to know anything as he ought to know, more than those he sees around him. If through the unction from the Holy One we know all, it is equally true that we all are but learners.

Again, it is not of course any attainment of mine that leads me to speak as I have done now. If I have spoken strongly, it is only, I trust, what becomes every believer. I have taken no ground beyond your own, my brethren; but surely this is a ground that calls you to assert the very same inestimable privilege that I boast, by grace, as a man of faith. It is not the vanity of setting up oneself as possessed of exclusive powers or special means of attaining or explaining anything; for I should distrust anyone who pretended to anything of the sort, no matter who or where he might be. But that which does good to every saint and to every soul is the unqualified confidence in God and His Word, which, if it does not reproduce itself in hearts purified by faith, at least deals with the consciences of all others till utterly blinded by Satan. Nor are you thus called to believe anything like an extravagance, though it surely would be so if the Bible were a human book, and so to be treated like any other, which after all even infidels do not; witness their occupation with it and zeal against it. Who troubles himself with the Koran or the Shastres, save their votaries?

But Scripture claims always to be the Word of God-never the word of Isaiah or Ezekiel, of Peter or Paul (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16); for, whatever the instrument may be, it is as truly God's Word as if the Holy Ghost had written it without a single instrumental means. If this be submitted to (and you might more consistently reject the Bible altogether, if you do not submit), one sees the hollowness and falsehood of sitting in judgment upon it; for who can question that to doubt that which comes directly from God Himself would be to take the place not merely of an unbeliever, but of a blasphemer or an atheist? And if unbelief be probed home, it comes to this: it is a virtual denial of God's veracity, of His revelation, if not of His being.

But returning from this to the simple tale of Samson's life, I take it as the plain fact that God meant us to learn that He saw fit at that time to deliver by an unworthy instrument, by a man who showed how low he was, if only by the moral incongruity of an Israelitish Nazarite seeking a wife from the fiercest of Israel's uncircumcised enemies. The grossness of such conduct is left to tell its own tale; and yet God, by the man that was thus pursuing his own self-willed course, meant to overrule the occasion for His glory, snapping the more violently the ties which Samson's ungoverned passion and low thoughts induced him to form. The descent is great, when one bearing the name of the Lord slights His word and seeks a path of his own. If God permits him for a season to do his own will, what shame and pain he must reap ere long! Meanwhile the man, morally speaking, is

ruined- his testimony to His name being worse than lost. Even if God interfere and produce the direct opposite of the fleshly enjoyment which self-will had sought, it is in no way to the man's praise if God effects His purposes by his acts, spite of wrong and folly. Never indeed is good the fruit of man's will, but of God's. This only gains the day, for it alone is as wise and holy as it is good. I take it therefore, that in the present case there is nothing to stumble the simplest believer, though no doubt there may be to one who knows not God and His Word. Alas! how many there are in these days of audacious freethinking who are disposed to sit in judgment on His Word, and give His revelation no credit for telling us the truth as it was and is.

Savor of Christ in a Busy Life

The Christianity of the closet, and the Christianity of busy life, are not, as is often thought, 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 do and care about while we are in the body; 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 goes.

If only willing to leave all and follow Christ, He will 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." Matt. 11:30.

The Secret of Life

Let me say, With what force does the Spirit of God in Scripture teach us the secret of life! With what an intense sense would He impress on our souls that we have lost it, but that Christ has it for us!

The flaming sword in the hand of the Cherubim, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was the expression of this, as soon as ever sin was committed and death brought in. That light let Adam learn, and all of us through Adam, that this life which we have lost we can never regain.

The ordinances which forbade the eating of blood, set up as soon as ever the flesh of animals was given for food, and continued and repeated jealously in the land, were a witness of the same-a standing witness-which spoke to the heart and conscience of man from the days of Noah to the times of the gospel, and perhaps indeed to this present time (Acts 15).

The gospel teaches the same great truth abundantly. None are left with any power to question it; man is dead- dead in trespasses and sins- and he is without strength and can never recover or revive himself.

In this intense emphatic way does Scripture from beginning to end let man know that he has lost life, and lost it irrecoverably.

With equal intenseness is the other great secret unfolded-that life is in Christ, the Son of God, and in Him for us.

Peter was given to know this-that life was in Jesus, who was none less than the Son of God. And upon his confession (Matt. 16), the Lord goes on at once to reveal the further truth, that this life, which they owned to be in Him, was a victorious life that should be used for the Church.

I stop not to give the beautiful proofs which the Lord's ministry affords of this eternal life, this victorious life, this life of the "quickening Spirit" being in Jesus all along His times here; but we see it gloriously displayed after His death. The empty sepulcher as seen in John 20:5-7 is the peculiar witness that a conqueror had been in the regions of death; and He was then, as we know, seen of the chosen witnesses for forty days after He had risen.

But, wanting to meditate a little over the great fact that this victorious life in Jesus the Son of God is for us, I turn to the first three chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews.

There He that was dead is alive again. He did not die simply to exhibit His victory, to show that He was the stronger man, though in the hands of the strong one; but His death is declared to have been for us. It tells us, as Matthew 16 had pledged, that His victorious life the Son uses for the Church. He sat down, having purged our sins.

He by the grace of God tasted death for everyone. He by death met him that was keeping us through fear all our lifetime subject to bondage. These are the interpretations of His death which we find in the first two chapters.

At the opening of the third we are commanded to consider Him who was faithful-faithful to Him that appointed Him then to undertake to give us life through death. We are to consider Him for the establishing of our faith, and for the comfort of our souls, acquainting ourselves with this great secret, that the Son of the living God has been in conflict with death, that He might bring back life to us who had lost it, and lost it irrecoverably.

And as we are exhorted to consider Him, so are we further exhorted to hold Him fast and firm and steadfast, as this same chapter proceeds.

And what is the warning - what must be the warning- after such teaching as this? "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." How simple, yet how needful, and yet how blessed! None less than the living God has been made ours in Christ Jesus; and therefore it is easy to say that our all depends on holding to Him.

Self-Judgment

Nothing but the sense of the presence of God can keep us in self-judgment; we may be ever so sincere, but self is not judged except in the presence of God.

We may not be always conscious of it, while seeking to do the right thing; but let something turn up, and we find flesh is still alive!

But when the presence of God is realized, the practical state of the soul is totally different; there is then a sense of dependence, and of lowliness, and of nothingness which we learn only in God's presence.

A matter comes before a man in his service as a Christian, and he sets about to judge it; he seeks to do this thoroughly according to God's mind; but self gets set in motion, and then it is detected whether he has been with God about it.

The Servant of God in a Day of Failure: 2 Timothy

His devotion, separation, imitation, and preservation

These four come before us very distinctly in this epistle, and hence our understanding and accepting them are most helpful to us as the Lord's servants. This understanding will prevent disappointment. The most important thing in any service is the furnishing and fitting of the servant. This is treated of from chapter 1:1 to 2:19. The servant must be first formed for his service, and in this section the paramount requirement is before us. He is to be devoted -devotion is to characterize him.

Devotion is here manifested in three ways, and these will come out more or less in every believer today who is like-minded with Timothy; for though we are not Timothys, no one will deny that we ought to possess and manifest, in these perhaps darker days, that which characterized the true servant at the close of the apostolic days. The ways in which devotion manifests itself in the servant are: 1) Antagonism to the ruler of this present scene, and seeking to deliver poor blinded souls who accept his sway; that is, he is a soldier. 2) Contending as an athlete to win the prize; that is, he is a racer. 3) Being wholly occupied with hard work - laboring, and not eating of the fruits; that is, he is a husbandman. Each of these three exhibits devotion, and each of them requires it.

In the first, he is not only to be in antagonism to the enemy, but he is not to be entangled with things here. He thus is held ready to present himself at any point, and at any moment at which an enemy may appear. In the second, he is striving as an athlete, and has entered the lists with two things before him. One is that he shall strive according to the rules of the games, or lawfully; the other is that he may be crowned at their termination, and not merely come in on a level with others. Those who strive lawfully will be crowned. In the third, to labor and not to rest in his work now. The reaping time is to come, when he shall partake of the fruits. He has devoted himself to soldier work, to racing, and to a life of ceaseless toil in the field, with many, many obstacles to each. He is just content to have it so. All is divinely settled.

After devotion to our work, which is (in all of us) an individual matter, comes the responsibility of a servant in the midst of servants; that is, his attitude in the house. This is separation. One finds himself in the midst of many vessels in the house, "some to honor, and some to dishonor"; for these vessels form the state of things in which our lot is cast. Separation is the second mark of the faithful servant here. It is before us from chapter 2:19 down to chapter 3:7. He finds himself a poor solitary vessel in the house, but one only desiring to be there "meet for the master's use." In order to this desirable result, he must purge himself from the "vessels" to "dishonor." Only such purged vessels are agreeable to Him. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Two reasons are before us which demand that the servant shall act in separation. One is obedience to the Word, and the other is to keep a good conscience. Devotion calls for separation. This is not isolation. No. Having acted thus, he does not find himself alone. He finds that others have acted

similarly, and he is directed not to walk in isolation, but to walk with them. "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Now comes in chapter 3:8-13 our third point-imitation. What is right, Satan always imitates with one desire - to spoil it. In one way, to find that such a thing as an imitation exists, is a cheer to a true servant, because it proves that there is a right and real thing somewhere. Jannes and Jambres imitated what Moses had done. The action of the Lord's servant was wrought by the power of God. The imitation is by power also, but it is the power of the enemy. Six verses give this to us - from 8 to 13. Now I think it is a great help when things happen in this way that you know all about them before they come. You really expect them, and you are furnished by this scripture with directions for your own conduct in the midst of them. These directions are twofold - we continue in the doctrine learned from Paul, and also cleave very closely to the Holy Scriptures (vv. 14-17). We are struck by the simplicity of this provision. In it lies the antidote when the poison of imitation is abroad. It is God's grand preservative for every servant of His today. But there is an addition to it which is most important also. It is found in chapter 4:1-5; namely, active employment in what is good. The servant is not only preserved himself by what we have already quoted, he is also active in the work of the Master. He must "preach the word" and "do the work of an evangelist." We have thus his internal and his external, and both are necessary, in the midst of a scene such as we are in today, wherein are found professors of the truth, imitators of it, and open enemies to it. The one who is thus serving in simplicity and devotion does not imitate others; and though fully conscious that imitation exists, he is too busily engaged to be occupied with it. He who would help others must keep right himself, and the time is too short for us to stop (save by example and precept) to straighten the crooked. We seek to make straight paths for our feet, and simple obedience finds that these are then "ready-made."

Last, we come to our fourth point - preservation. It must be admitted - however dark the scene in the world, and whatever the confusion in the Church - that God is calmly having His own way in what goes on. There is no contradiction in God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Both are fully admitted, but it is a cheer to the heart to look calmly to His side of things. Whether in the world, in the assembly, or in the individual servant, we can trace His handiwork. This comes out fully in the concluding part of this epistle. The Roman Emperor, the assembly of God, His servant Paul, are all here under review; and all work for the preservation of His poor imprisoned servant. Through all, come what may, Paul will be preserved, and so will Timothy, and so will all who are likeminded. Even a cruel death may come, but that does not touch the preservation of the faithful servant. This section is in chapter 4:6-18. The Lord will both deliver and preserve all His servants who tread this path "unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." Thank God for the cheer of this!

Many a so-called Christian path today presents far more attractions than those which this second epistle to Timothy offers. The true servant in Paul's line is not caught by such. Devotion, separation, and preservation form the only safe path for us, because of the peculiarity of the day in which we live. No greater attraction to serve the Lord could possibly be presented to faith than the assurance of God's preservation, and this we have before us in this epistle, though perhaps it is only the servant who is walking in faith that will see, or will accept it. May the Lord graciously turn many of His servants into the present enjoyment of the privileges of such a path, and keep in it all who are there for His name's sake, for the individual blessing of each servant, and for the

collective blessing of all His saints.

Sifted As Wheat

How good and precious it is that we have at all times the Lord to look to; for if our eye had always to be fixed upon self, not only should we not advance, but we should be thoroughly discouraged by the thought of the evil within us. We confine ourselves to the idea of the evil, and thus deprive ourselves of the strength which can overcome it.

The nature of the flesh and the blindness of man's heart are worthy of remark. What foolish things come between God and us, to hide from us that which we ought to see! How strangely, too, do the thoughts of the natural heart follow their natural course (even when the Lord is near us) and deprive us of the consciousness of the most striking things, which have a sensible effect around us. We find this presented in the portion before us.

The Lord Jesus was about to accomplish that work which can be compared to no other; He was on the point of bearing the wrath of God for us poor sinners; He was in circumstances which ought to have touched His disciples' hearts. He had just spoken, in the most touching terms, of the passover which He desired to eat once more with them before He suffered; He had told them too that one of them should betray Him. All this ought to have rested upon their minds and have filled their hearts. But they? They were striving among themselves which of them was the greatest.

To us the curtain is withdrawn; and when reading of this fact, we can hardly understand how they could be busied with such things; but we know what was then about to take place. How many things have power to turn even us, who have more light than they, from the thought which then filled the heart of Jesus! Such is the heart of man in presence of the most serious and solemn things.

The death of Jesus should exercise the same influence on our hearts as on the disciples'; it should be precious to us.

The Lord is with us when we are gathered two or three together; and yet we well know the thoughts which then pass through our hearts and minds. Here we see the same thing under the circumstances most calculated to touch the heart. Jesus tells His disciples that His blood was to be shed for them; "the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table... but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!" And they inquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing. One might suppose that they would think of nothing save the death of their gracious Master; but, no! "There was... strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What a contrast! But, alas! if we examine our own hearts we shall find these two things generally brought together; namely, real feelings which bear testimony to our love of Jesus, but also, and perhaps within the same half hour, thoughts which are as unworthy as this strife among the disciples. This shows the folly and vanity of man's heart; he is but as the small dust of the balance.

The Lord, ever full of gentleness and meekness, forgets Himself in His care for His disciples, and says to them, "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he

that doth serve." He knows how to teach them, by His own example, what the love of God is; and at the same time He shows them the grace which is in Him, and all the faithfulness for which they are indebted to Him. It is as though He had said, Ye need not raise yourselves; My Father will raise you. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Instead of being irritated by the abominable conduct of His disciples, He shows them that, if there is no grace in men, there is grace in one Man; that is in Himself. This grace is perfect in Jesus; and He places His disciples in it, whatever they may have been toward Him. He has fixed them firmly in the principle of grace, instead of the folly of the flesh which had just shown itself among them, as though He had said, I am all grace toward you, and I trust the kingdom to you.

We are put under grace, and its voice is always heard. It assures us that, notwithstanding all our weakness, we have continued with Jesus, and that He gives the kingdom as His Father gave it to Him. Nevertheless, the soul which is to enjoy these things must be exercised. The flesh must be made manifest to us as men; and therein we see the needs-be of all the trials we pass through; but Jesus enables us to persevere, because we belong to Him. If He says to His disciples, I appoint unto you a kingdom, ye shall sit on thrones," etc., He takes care to show them what the flesh is.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He does not say, Thou shalt not be tempted; I will hinder Satan from sifting thee; no, nor does He do it. We see here that God often leaves His children in the presence of their enemy, whom He does not destroy; but, even while in the presence of the enemy, He watches over His own, as we see in Rev. 2:10: "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried;... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Peter might have said to the Lord, Thou canst hinder my being thus sifted, as Mary and Martha thought Jesus could have hindered the death of Lazarus; and, truly, He who can give the crown of life can shelter us; but He does not do so, that we may be tried. Satan desired to have Job to sift him like wheat, and God permitted him to do so; and this happens to us also. We often say within ourselves, Why has He dealt thus with me? Why has He put me in such and such a crucible? Ah, it is Satan who desired, and God who permitted it.

Things often occur which we cannot understand; such things are intended to show us what the flesh is.

When God is about to use a Christian in His work, He takes the one who has gone the farthest in the path of trial. Thus here it is said, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you." The danger is presented to all; but He adds, speaking to Peter, "I have prayed for thee," for thee in particular; for Jesus distinguished him from all the rest, because he had taken a more prominent position than the others, and was thus more exposed, though they were all sifted at the death of Jesus.

The Lord then says to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He was not going to spare any of His disciples the sifting; but Peter was to be the most severely tried, and, therefore, the best to strengthen his brethren. Notwithstanding all this, Peter is full of self-confidence. "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." But Jesus replies,

"The cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

The flesh acting in Peter had only power to carry him up to the time of trial; for Peter denied the Lord Jesus, even in His very presence. He might have seen his Savior, if his heart had not been turned away from Him. Jesus was looking at him; and yet he denied Him to the maid, saying, "I know Him not." He had been warned; but the Lord would not allow him to be kept by divine power at that moment, because he needed to learn by experience what he was in himself.

If we notice all that Christ did, we shall see how He was watching at this time over Peter; His grace (so to speak) went out to meet him, and took care of him all through the temptation.

The first thing that Jesus tells him is that He has prayed for him. It is not that Peter's repentance led to Jesus' intercession, but the intercession of Jesus brought about Peter's repentance. "I have prayed for thee," and Jesus looked on Peter.

As to Judas, he denied the Lord; and, when his conscience was awakened, he killed himself. No sooner was the crime committed than all confidence fled, and he went and killed himself. But here the effect of the prayer of Jesus was to preserve faith at the bottom of Peter's heart, so that, when Jesus looked on him, he was broken down.

The first thing to remark is, that the Lord had prayed for Peter; and the second, that He always remembered His disciple, and as soon as the cock crowed, Jesus looked on him, and Peter wept bitterly.

It is in this way the Lord deals with us; He prays for us and allows us to go into temptation. If He conducts us when in it, He also bids us to pray that we enter not into temptation; but God permits all this because He sees the end of it.

If Peter had been conscious of his own weakness, he would not have dared to show himself before the High Priest. This trial was the natural consequence of what he was in the flesh; but it was God's purpose to use him, and even to put him in a prominent position in His work. The cause of his fall was self-confidence; the flesh was actively present.

God did everything well for him, and Peter saw what was the power of Satan's sifting. The other disciples, not having the same fleshly strength, fled at once. They had not so much confidence as Peter; but God left him to struggle against Satan, and Jesus prayed for him, in spite of his fall, that his faith should not fail.

The moment Peter fell, the eye of Jesus was turned upon him. That look did not give peace, but confusion of face; Peter wept; he went out, and it was all over. He had learned what he was. There was his failure - the sin was committed and could not be undone. It could be pardoned but never blotted out. Peter could not forget that he had betrayed the Lord; but Jesus made use of this fall to cure him of his presumption.

It is the same with us. We often commit faults which are irreparable, from too much confidence in the flesh. When there is no possibility of correcting one's faults, what is to be done? The only resource is to cast oneself on the grace of God. When the flesh is too strong, God often permits us to fall, because we are not in that precious state of dependence which would preserve us.

Jacob had too deeply offended Esau not to dread his anger; yet God did not leave him in his brother's hand, but gave him enough faith to carry him through the difficulty.

God wrestled with Jacob, and the latter prevailed; but he must have felt within his heart what it is to have had to do with evil. God would not allow him to be given over to the hatred of Esau; and at the end of his course Jacob could say (Gen. 48:15, 16), "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil," etc.

When God tries the heart in this way, He sometimes leaves it in Satan's hands; but He never leaves the consciences of His children in the enemy's hands. Judas' conscience was in Satan's hands, and, therefore, he fell into despair. Peter's heart was in his hands for a time, but his conscience never. Therefore, instead of despairing, like Judas, the love of Jesus, expressed in a look, had power to touch his heart.

Directly grace acts in the heart, it gives the consciousness of sin; but, at the same time, the love of Christ reaches the conscience, deepening the consciousness of sin; but if this is deep, it is because the consciousness of the love of Christ is also deep.

Perfect as was the pardon of Peter, he could never forget his sin. Not only was he fully forgiven, but his conscience was in the Lord's hand when the Holy Ghost revealed the fullness of the heart of Jesus to him. His conscience had been so fully purified, that he could accuse the Jews of the very sin he had himself committed under the most solemn circumstances. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just" were his words. The blood of Christ had fully cleansed his conscience; but if the question of his strength in the flesh was raised, all he had to say of himself was, I have denied the Lord; and, were it not for His pure grace, I could not open my mouth.

Jesus never reproached Peter with his sin in those conversations He had with him. There is never the question, Why hast thou denied Me? No; He does not once remind him of his failure; on the contrary, He acts according to that expression of love of the Holy Spirit, "I will remember their sins no more" (Jer. 31:34). Jesus had forgotten all. But there was one thing He had to show Peter; it was the root of the sin, the point where he had failed. Satan's temptation, with his own want of love, had been the cause of his fall, and had destroyed his confidence; but now, his conscience being touched, it was needful that his spiritual intelligence should be formed. Peter had boasted of more love to Jesus than the rest; and Peter had failed more than all.

Then Jesus said to him,

"Lovest thou Me more than these?" Where is now Peter's self-confidence? Jesus repeats three times, "Lovest thou Me?" but He does not remind him of his history. Peter's answer is, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He appeals to Jesus and to His divine knowledge; "Thou knowest that I love Thee." This is what Jesus did for Peter, and that after his fall.

Jesus had foretold his failure; and here He asked him, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter can say nothing, save that he has learned his weakness and that he has loved Jesus less than the other disciples. The relationship between Jesus and Peter is all of grace; he has no resource except to confide in Jesus, and now he would be a witness for Him; he had felt the power of a look of Jesus.

Peter seems to say, I confide in Thee; Thou knowest how I have denied Thee; do -with me what seemeth Thee good. Then we see Jesus sustaining His disciple's heart, lest Satan should rob him of his confidence, and saying, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." What enabled him to strengthen his brethren? His denial had so taught him what the flesh was, that he would no longer bind himself to anything; he knew that he had nothing to do save to trust God. Whatever his own incapacity to resist Satan, he could appeal to the grace of Him who knows all things. The knowledge that he could confide in Jesus, was that which made him strong. It was after reminding Peter of the utter incapacity of the flesh, that the Lord confided His sheep to him-"Feed My lambs" - and it was not till then that he could strengthen his brethren.

The flesh has a certain confidence in the flesh, and this is often the folly into which we fall. It is then necessary for us to learn ourselves by conflict with Satan; every Christian has to learn what he is through the circumstances in which he is placed. God leaves us there to be sifted by Satan, that we may learn our own hearts. Had we enough humility and faithfulness to say, I can do nothing without Thee, God would not leave us to this sad experience of our infirmity. When we are really weak, God never leaves us; but, when unconscious of our infirmities, we have to learn them by experience.

If a Christian does not walk under a constant sense of his infirmity, God leaves him in the presence of Satan, that he may there be taught it. It is then also that he commits faults which are often irreparable; and it is this which is the most sorrowful part of all.

Jacob halted all his life. Why was this? It was because he had halted, morally, during twenty-one years. He wrestled mightily, yet he must have been conscious what a feeble creature he was in the flesh, although God did not leave him to struggle with Esau.

We need never be surprised if the Lord leaves us in difficulty; it is because there is something in us to be broken down, and which we need to be made sensible of; but grace is always behind this. Christ is all grace, and if He sometimes appears to leave us to learn our weakness, still He is grace, perfect grace, toward us.

It was not when Peter turned his eyes toward the Lord that Jesus showed Himself to him; as to communion, indeed, this is true, but it was before his fall that Jesus had said, "I have prayed for thee," for it is always grace which anticipates us.

Jesus sees what Satan desires, and leaves us to that desire; but He takes care that we should be kept. It was not when Peter looked at Jesus, but when Jesus looked on Peter, that the latter wept bitterly. The love of Christ always precedes His own; it accompanies us, precedes us in our difficulties, and carries us through all obstacles. While it leaves us in Satan's hands, that we may learn experimentally what we are, it is always near to us, and knows how to guard us from the wiles of the enemy. Here we see the perfect goodness and grace of the One who loves us, not only when our hearts are turned toward Him, but who adapts Himself to every fault in our characters, that we may be fully and completely blessed according to the counsels of God.

All this should teach us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due season. When I feel cast down and grieved in thinking of myself after a fall, I ought not then forthwith to seek comfort, however natural that may be; it is not that which I am to seek, but rather, and first of all, the Christ who is there; I have to learn the lesson which God has traced for me.

If, in the midst of painful circumstances, you say that you cannot understand the teaching, God knows what it is, and He leaves you there to be sifted, in order to bring you by this means to a deeper knowledge of Him and yourself; He wishes to show you all He has Himself seen in you, so that we ought not to shrink from this sifting, but rather to seek to receive the precious teaching which the Lord offers us through it; and thus we shall obtain a much deeper knowledge of what He is for us.

We must learn to yield ourselves to His mighty hand, till He exalts us. May God give us to know Him alone! If we had only to learn what we are, we should be cast down, and sink into despondency; but His object in giving us a knowledge of ourselves and of His grace, is to give us an expected end.

One can say then, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

So Let Him Eat

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." 1 Cor. 11:28.

Scripture does not say, Let a man judge himself and so let him stay away, but, "So let him eat." Staying away is mere self-will. It is not enough to judge the mere action; it is ourselves we should judge. The state of our heart which allowed the failure should be subjected to scrutiny and self-judgment. If I am a child, I judge my ways, if they are unsuited to my father; but I do not set about to judge if I am a child, when I fail, but how naughty I have been as the son of such a father. I may behave very unworthily of my kind father, but my behavior is not the ground of the relationship. I cannot be a naughty child, unless I am a child; and the relationship is the ground of self-judgment, that I may behave myself suitably to the relationship, and to Him who is my Father.

The Speculations of Men of Science

"So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And Jehovah said unto Joshua, Fear them not." Why should they? yea, why should they not? "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. And Jehovah discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that Jehovah cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died; they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

"Then spake Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel." How truly the intervention of that day is all felt to be Jehovah's doing! He uses His people, and it was a gracious thing in a certain sense that He should; for He could now, as at the Red Sea, have done all without them; but He would employ the people of God according to the dispensation. Thank God, we have a better calling than this, even a heavenly; but still, in its own place it is shortsighted and irreverent folly to overlook the honor of being employed in doing the then work of the Lord-clearing the land of what was an ulcer and plague spot, not merely for that locality, but for the whole earth; and such the Canaanites were. If there was to be a people of God at all, what other way was open than sweeping the land clean from the world-polluting Canaanites? And so Jehovah then "delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel."

But mark the beauty of the truth. It was to Jehovah Joshua spoke, not to the creature; for Him only did he honor. How admirably clear of all creature worship even when creation was to be used marvelously! "And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." A memorable day it was in every point of view- the cavil no doubt of the infidel, but the joy of every believer. I grant you that the men of science have their difficulties, as they usually have in what is above them; and I am afraid that we shall not be able to help them much. The truth is that the main, yea, the only thing which lifts out of every difficulty, is confidence in God and in His Word. Let us not essay to measure God by difficulties, but measure difficulties by God. Alas! it is the last thing that man thinks of doing.

Another thing not a little remarkable is that on this occasion Joshua addresses not merely the sun (a bold enough thing to do, to bid the sun stand still), but the moon also. It was not that the moon could give any appreciable increase of light when the sun thus ruled the prolonged day. There must therefore have been some other and worthy motive why the moon should be joined along with the sun in Joshua's command, if, as I have not the slightest doubt, Joshua was guided by God in so singular an appeal to the sun and moon, when divine power was exerted to arrest the apparent course of the sun. We all know, of course, that it is the earth that moves; but Scripture

does not speak in the technical language of science, which not only would have been unintelligible to those for whom it was intended, but unnatural in the ordinary language of the greatest philosophers. Sir Isaac Newton talked about the sun's rising and setting just as much as the simplest countryman, and quite right. The man who does otherwise has no common sense. Here then Joshua employed so far the only language proper to his purpose. But this does not explain his call to the moon. Not only was no knowledge then possessed by Jews or Gentiles, but one may doubt whether our men of science would have thought of it even now; at any rate one has never heard it from them. Yet, if there had not been an action of the power of God with regard to the moon as well as the sun, the whole course of nature must have been deranged. How could Joshua, or any Jew who wrote Scripture, have known this? There was no astronomic science for two thousand years afterward adequate to put the two things together; and mere observation of phenomena would certainly have been content with the light of the sun alone. But so it was. He whose power wrought in answer to the call guided his voice and the pen of the writer of the book. If there could have been an interference with the sun without the moon; if the moon's course had not been arrested as well as the earth's, so as to give this appearance to the sun, there would have been confusion in the system. It seems to me therefore that, so far from the sentence affording a just ground of cavil against God's Word, it is none of the least striking instances of a wisdom and power incomparably above science. So faith will always find in Scripture.

But there is one more remark to be made. Whenever you hear men talking about science against Scripture, fear them not. There is not a man of them that will stand before you if you only cleave to the Word of God. Do not dispute with them; there is no moral profit in it, and seldom anything of value to be gained by it; on the contrary, one may have the spirit ruffled if we do not try others by it. But God's Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, and can only be wielded aright by the Holy Ghost. And God will be with you if you trust in the perfection of His Word, and will deign to guide you if dependent on Him. Look the adversaries full in the face, and hear all they have to say to you; but confront them only with the written Word of God. Cleave to the Word in simplicity, and you will find that the difficulties urged against revelation are almost all due to wresting a passage out of its context. When they take this passage, they try to ridicule the voice of man telling the sun to stand still; whereas the moral truth is strikingly grand and beautiful. These scoffers never think of his including the moon in his command, still less of its force, as already hinted.

I merely use the instance that comes before us in this passage, but you will find that the principle applies to every part of the Word of God. Read it as a believer; read it not as one that doubts or that distrusts God; for you have known it, you have fed upon it, you have lived upon it, you have been blessed by it, you have been cheered in every sorrow by it, you have been brought into peace and joy by it, you have been delivered from all your fears by it, you have been set free from follies and sins by it, you have gazed on the glory of God in the face of Jesus by it. All this and more you have enjoyed thereby, and you have thus learned by it, what science never teaches, because it never knows, the reality of God's grace and love in Christ; yea, you thus know God Himself. Am I not then entitled to say, beloved brethren, confide in that Word in the smallest detail, in every difficulty, whatever arises? Take it, looking up to God, and He will be with you in all your need.

But what is the main purport of the wonder of that day? For there surely is no miracle without a divine or moral reason attached to it. I doubt that there is a mere display of power in the Bible. And

here let me add a needed observation on the usual notion of a miracle. Men constantly lay it down that it means a suspension of the laws of nature. This is really defective and misleading. The laws of nature are never suspended as a rule; but God withdraws from the action of those laws either a thing or a person as to whom He wishes to show His special interest. For instance, to give an application of this by examples take n anywhere from the Word of God, when Peter was sustained upon the water, or when the iron was caused to swim, the laws of nature were not really suspended; they went on all the same. Everywhere else iron sunk; and had any other ventured to follow Peter, he must have failed to walk on the water. Thus it was no question at all of suspending the laws of nature. But Peter, by the direct power of God, was sustained, spite of those general laws. That is, he was exempted from their application; but the laws themselves were not suspended. Just so in the case of one raised from the dead before the day of Jehovah [or, the day of the Lord]. There is no change in the reign of death as a law, but unequivocally the power of God interferes for the particular person that is exempted from the operation of those laws-nothing more. So it is all a mistake to speak of the suspension of the laws themselves. This observation will be found to be of some use in meeting not a little sophistry that prevails on the subject.

But to what end was it that God interposed on this occasion? Why this singular intervention? It was the most wonderful sign of a manifest kind up to that moment of the direct interest of a God who was not only the God of Israel, but evidently the Lord of the heavens as well as of all the earth; and this was exhibited on that day particularly for man here below, but more especially in behalf of Israel. And what makes it so much the more surprising was this: it was not wrought when Israel had walked without mistake. Grace was much more apparent than when they were crossing the Jordan. It was in an hour of need, after they had erred and been defeated before the little city of Ai; and it was done after they had been thoroughly deceived by the great city of Gibeon. It was evident therefore that the people of God had no great might or depth of wisdom to boast of. They had been more than once at fault, but only so because they had not sought counsel of Jehovah. There is no enemy that can stand, and there is no defeat that can succeed, where the people of God wait in dependence on the Lord. But it is better to be defeated when we depart from the Lord, than it would be under such circumstances to gain a victory. If there could be victories gained at the expense of dependence on the Lord, I do not know that it is possible to conceive a greater snare. No, beloved brethren; far, far better to be broken, to suffer and be put in the dust, than to be allowed to triumph where we are really far from God and without His direction. The moral import of the wonder is thus plain; and God's part in it appears to me most wholesome, needed, and weighty instruction for the children of God now.

Note: Scripture quotations are as Mr. Kelly gave them.

Spikenard

The box of spikenard of the woman of Bethany was used, by her 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." S. of Sol. 1:12.

It will be an easy thing to greet Jesus in the day of glory. All will do it then (Psalm 45). But to have done it thus at the opening and close of His humiliation, at Bethlehem and at Bethany, was excellent faith indeed.

Strange Fire and the Fire From Heaven

2 Chron. 7:10

Human thoughts concerning Christ and His sacrificial work are at the best poor. Man can think of the crucifixion as a historical fact, and write and speak of the nails that pierced His hands and feet, of the thorny crown, and other external circumstances connected with His death, and come to his own conclusion too as to the worth of that sacrifice. In fact, the gigantic Christendom round about us is built up mainly on man's miserable thoughts of Christ, and of things concerning Him. Like Nadab and Abihu, they have mingled strange fire with the incense, which God commanded them not; and, like them, judgment and death must be the result. We are told that "they died before the LORD"; and so must all those who are bringing the name of Christ and His work into use simply for present advantage and human exaltation, thus making ordinances and religious things their refuge, or relying upon the false foundation of associating man's opinions and his actions with the name of Christ, instead of relying only on Christ Himself and His infinitely efficacious work. Such is "strange fire"; it is not according to God's mind; it does not give Him the glory. It is man's religiousness, and the end of these things is death (Lev. 10:1-3).

It was not so, however, in Solomon's day, when he dedicated the house of the Lord. (See 2 Chron. 7:1-10.) We do not find "strange fire" offered, but "the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices." We see God here, and His acting in relation to the sacrifice. This is what the faith of a Spirit-taught, sin-convicted soul specially beholds in the cross of Christ. They are not ignorant of the external facts of the crucifixion; but until they see God acting in the scene, until they see God dealing with Christ as the sin bearer, they find no real ground of peace and rest. In the cross of Christ faith sees the invisible God searching the victim, trying and estimating its worth by the fire of His uncompromising holiness, and condemning sin in the flesh. The cross of Calvary tells us of an unblemished One, who was in Himself infinitely acceptable to God, who fully glorified God in regard to our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is God's estimate of the death of Christ, and nothing short of it, that establishes our souls in peace before Him. The resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ shows us the infinite acceptability, the savor of rest, of that offering in the sight of God; and all combine to tell us that our security is built upon divine righteousness and truth.

If, then, we would have the joy of this immovable security before God, we must have God's thoughts of "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"; for God has so estimated the priceless value of that finished work on the cross, as to raise Him up from the dead and give us life, righteousness, and completeness in Him. God, we know, has counted that blessed One, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, worthy of the highest possible exaltation. It is God who tells us that we are "now justified by His blood," and who gives us fullest liberty to come into the holiest of all.

Just, then, as we are seeing God's dealing with Jesus, His own Son upon the tree, and learning His mind from His Word and by His Spirit-His estimate of the infinite perfections of that one

offering which was once offered - will our hearts be set at liberty and established in unquestionable security before God. God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Next, observe, that the sacrifices having been consumed with fire from heaven, glory followed. We are told that "the glory of the LORD filled the house." And does not this teach us what a sure title to glory the blood of the cross is? There is a most blessed connection between "the sacrifice" and "the glory." Let us well consider this. The death of Christ, like a mighty lever, gives the one who believes title to the very glory of God. Like the rent veil, it removes every obstacle to going at once into God's presence. Glory must follow. We are at this moment between the cross and the glory, with liberty to enter into the holiest by faith. On no other ground whatever could we enter into the cloudless, holy, presence of God, but that "Christ died for our sins" according to the Scriptures, and that "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." We are therefore told, that "the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house." v. 1. No wonder, then, that we so often sing-

"O Lord, we adore Thee,

For Thou hast redeemed us;

Our title to glory

We read in Thy blood."

Is it not most blessed to see this connection between the sacrifice and the glory? How clearly it shows us that we owe all our blessings to the blood of Christ, and that in the glory itself we shall be so deeply conscious of it, as to be forever rejoicing in the infinite value of that blood, and giving unceasing glory to God and the Lamb.

Nothing so really humbles us as the sense of what God has wrought for us in Christ. It leaves no room for self-exaltation. It is a completed work. We are become "the righteousness of God in Him." This bows the heart before God to praise and give thanks. We are therefore told, that "when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." v. 3. It is, then, being in communion with God's mind as to the glories of Christ, and the unsearchable value of His work on the cross, that the heart is really emptied of self and earth, and filled with praise and gratitude to God. We are taken up with God, and delight to tell God what He is. This is worship.

Devotedness too will be connected with it; for the affections and desires of the heart are stirred by such wondrous mercy; and purposes of the soul are formed according to the will of God. Hence this inspired narrative next tells us, that "Then," yes, "then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD." v. 4. How is it that in the present day many Christians feel it so difficult to yield themselves and their substance to the Lord? The answer is plain. It is because Christ is so little understood - God's estimate of Him so feebly apprehended - His perfections not known. Our ignorance of Christ is great, and very culpable. When God's revelation of the glories of His beloved Son is really known, and the infinite acceptability of His work received, when the blessed reality of being in Christ is laid hold of, our nearness to God in Him apprehended, the all-satisfying portion He is, and His all-sufficiency for us under all circumstances known, then the

affections of our hearts are aroused, and our energies drawn forth.

We are further told, that the people were "glad and merry in heart" (v. 10). And why? Because of "the goodness that the LORD had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people." I ask, then, in conclusion, Can we fail to learn from these lessons that our present happiness, devotedness, and worship, all owe their source to God, as He has revealed Himself in Christ? Learning God's estimate of Christ in His presence, and what He is to us and has done for us, we cannot but be moved to readiness of heart and purpose to associate ourselves with Him in a world that still rejects Him, and most truly feel that His interests are our interests, His joy our joy, and that what grieves and dishonors Him also grieves and dishonors us.

"We are making our boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received the reconciliation." Rom. 5:11;

Strength Made Perfect in Weakness

How hard it is to believe that the work of God and of Christ is always in weakness! The rulers of the people saw in Peter and in John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

It is God's rule of action, if we may so say, to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power; otherwise, God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God; but Christ was crucified in weakness, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For the work of God, we must be weak, that the strength may be of God; and that work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.

A True Heart and Its Contrast

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 quickly draws out the hatred of those that have no love. Mary's worshiping 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; he 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."

Unholy Alliance: the Editor's Column

Recent outbreaks of racial strife in the United States have brought to light some strange facets of religious life. Participants in the strife have come from many quarters with many and varied backgrounds; it is sad when bloodshed is the result. There is a marked increase of violence in all lands, and the world is marching on to the time described in Revelation 6 when peace shall be taken from the earth. Crime, violence, and corruption are commonplace occurrences as we approach the end of this age. The enemy of God and of man is preparing mankind for a day of carnage, as lawlessness is on the increase; but we as Christians should look up expectantly, for the coming of the Lord is our blessed hope. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior to take us home to be with Himself. The moment cannot be far off.

The Christian should, however, be mindful of his heavenly calling. We are not of the world that will pass away; we belong to the day that is coming; "we are not of the night, nor of darkness." We belong to Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost; He took no part in the world's strife. When a man sought to make Him a judge or divider of an estate, He refused. And when He was put on trial by the judges of the earth, He said, "My kingdom is not from hence." He could have had twelve legions of angels to do His bidding, but He left His case in His Father's hands. He would not have His disciples fight that He should not be delivered up to His enemies; but He left the world as He found it, and espoused no worldly cause. When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not. He said of His own that they were not of this world, even as He was not of it. What blessed abstraction from all the currents of the world! When Peter sought to defend Him by carnal means, he was told to put up his sword into the sheath. He disarmed His misguided defender.

And what is the Christian's proper place? The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. A Christian with carnal weapons is an anomaly; his conduct is unworthy of the blessed One whom we are to follow. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:20. We belong to another scene altogether.

Things were certainly out of course in the old Roman Empire when Christ was here, but He did not change them. He gave directions for His own to follow, and from that day to this our pathway has been marked out by the steps He trod. And when Christians follow carnal ways, they are on the wrong path and fall into inconsistencies and contradictions.

The recent racial strife is an indication of how Christians become involved in worldly principles. In March, when Mr. James J. Reeb was killed in mob violence, Christians soon became involved in demonstrations in honor of the Unitarian Universalist minister. Memorial services were held in his honor in many places. In these services true believers in the Lord Jesus were allied with unbelievers. Unitarians were linked with Universalists, and both joined with professing orthodox believers. Can a real Christian join with Unitarians?

Unitarians are the outgrowth of that great heterodoxy named for a man called Arius, in the fourth century. This man boldly said that the Lord Jesus was a human being; he denied His true deity. A man cannot believe the doctrine of Arius and be saved; it is utterly false and soul-damning. And that is not all: the Unitarians have been joined in another false doctrine, that of the Universalists. It is compounded error. It is ruinous to the soul, for their doctrine teaches that everyone will be saved. This is gross error, for none will be saved except through repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. One can scarcely imagine a worse combination of false doctrines than these two basic errors. But it is incredible that true believers should unite with these detractors of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ and find common ground.

A sample of this was witnessed in Pasadena, California in March when an undenominational gathering was held there.

On this occasion 500 persons gathered for the memorial of James J. Reeb; and among them were 100 students and friends of the Fuller Theological Seminary, who marched with banners from the Seminary to the First Baptist Church. Other church groups joined the memorial service. Earlier the same day, memorial services had been held in the Throop Memorial Church - Unitarian-Universalist. On the occasion of the union service, Dr. Paul King Jewett, a professor at Fuller Seminary, was a participant, as were also ministers from the Scott Methodist Church of Pasadena and the Bethany Church of Sierra Madre. Where is a demarcation between faith and unbelief? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:... what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" Have real Christians so lost their bearings that they can lose their way in the present unrest? So-called Jehovah's Witnesses are Arians, and many others take similar stands. We quote the words of another: "It is impossible to accept the Bible without rejecting Arianism as a heinous libel against Christ and the truth; for it is not more certain that He became a man than that He was God before creation, Himself the Creator, the Son, and Jehovah." W.K.

A related incident in the James J. Reeb case has come to light from a Worcester, Mass. newspaper. It said that "The Catholic Free Press, official publication of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester, has suggested that the American Catholic hierarchy petition the Vatican to canonize the Unitarian Universalist minister, the Rev. James J. Reeb, who was killed in Alabama. The editorial, which was not signed, said 'America has needed a model, a symbol of Christian love, such as we had not had before. Now we have him in James Reeb, who made the supreme act of faith, the supreme act of love.'" Here is a man, a Unitarian and Universalist, credited with a supreme act of faith and love. Where is the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Many people have rushed forward into a challenge and heroically ventured their lives in defense of some position, real or imagined. But how few there are now who are willing to take a stand for the "faith once delivered to the saints." It is sad when believers and unbelievers, Christians and Unitarians, find common ground on which to meet.

The Ways of Grace and of Faith: the Book of Ruth

The ways of grace and of faith, and the warrant on which they each act, get very beautiful illustrations in this little book.

Faith has two special characteristics, and so has grace. Faith overcomes the world and returns fully-intimately - to God; or, in language known in Scripture, it takes a place "outside the camp" and "within the veil." Grace encourages the soul (inspiring confidence), and then answers it. These are two of its shining ways; and faith illustrates the two properties, of which I have spoken above, in the actings of Ruth.

Ruth at the beginning casts in her lot with Naomi in the hour of her widowhood, her strangership, and her poverty. For Naomi's sake she will, like a daughter of Abraham, leave country, kindred, and father's house; and all that may be said to daunt her avails nothing. Go she will across the unknown world; and Israel's people shall be her people, their God shall be her God. And this is a faith that takes its place outside the camp, or gains victory over the world.

But faith, that leaves the world, returns to God; and so In Ruth. The great things of Boaz are not too great for her. As far as estate and condition in life went, she was as distant from him as she well could be, a gleaner in his field behind his reapers, not fit to be put among his handmaids. But she aims at himself. It is not a small measure that she seeks, but the very richest and highest. The gleaner would be the wife.

And this is also the way of faith. It goes outside the camp, but it comes within the veil. It leaves the world, but returns to the full presence of God; and then it takes a place the very opposite to that in which the fall has set man. By the fall, man is estranged from God, and finds his place in this world. We see this in Cain. He went out from the presence of the Lord; but there he built a city and filled it in with all manner of profit and of pleasure, with pastime and with traffic. Faith returns by the same road, making the opposite journey. It takes leave of the world, and gets fully, intimately, and forever back to God. And this way and power of faith are shown in Ruth, first joining herself with the poverty of Naomi, and then getting for herself the wealth and dignity of Boaz.

And grace has its greatness and excellency in its day and generation, as surely as faith. It first encourages, as I said, inspiring confidence; and then it rewards the confidence it has awakened.

What was the Lord doing with Gideon in Judges 6? What was He doing with Moses in Exodus 3? What was He doing with Jeremiah when first calling him into his office (see chap. 1)? He found very reluctant hearts there; but He got them ready for the blessing which His grace had proposed for them. And what in the days of His ministry was the way of the Lord Jesus, but this of the God of Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah? How did He sit at the well of Sychar, inviting the confidence of a poor distant Samaritan? How did He again and again rebuke that "little faith," which did not know and could not tell whether it might look to Him or not? And how did He at once knock off from the poor leper's heart the one doubt that hung there, oppressing and clouding it?

And this is also the way of the Spirit in the apostles. How much of the teaching of the epistles, how much of the Spirit's energy there, is occupied in strengthening the faith and encouraging the hearts of the saints! Arguments of divine persuasiveness, rebukes of fine earnest temper, and yearnings of love, are all employed to knit the feeble heart with the grace and gospel of God.

And Boaz is made to express this. The delicacy and yet the sincerity with which he encourages Ruth in the second chapter is beautiful to admiration. And then he is ready to answer all the demands which the confidence he had thus awakened makes upon him. He had not trained her heart for disappointment, as the Lord's hand is ready to fill the hand of the sinner which His Spirit has already opened to receive from Him.

And here, I might say, it was a blessed moment in the soul of Naomi when she awakened to the recollection or to the knowledge of this simple fact, that Boaz was a kinsman (chap. 2:20). "Blessed," she says, "be he of the LORD, who hath not left off His kindness to the living and to the dead." It is so when a soul is brought to the discovery not only of the grace that is in God, but of a sinner's title to that grace, because of Jesus the kinsman.

And then, on the discovery of the fact, Naomi at once charges Ruth to abide fast by his maidens, and not to be found in any other field. For this is the way of faith on the full discovery of Christ. It takes a long farewell, a farewell forever, of all other confidences.

Boaz was a kinsman, and a kinsman has his duties and obligations according to the law and ordinances of Israel. Naomi knew this, and she instructs Ruth, the stranger, in these choice and wondrous secrets; and she is bold and emboldens Ruth. Such is faith still; it counts on the greatest things - pardon, acceptance, adoption, inheritance, and glory. But, though bold, it is warranted. The customs and ordinances of the place to which faith is introduced, the counsels of the God of Israel, the secrets of abounding grace, are faith's warrant. It aims high, but its aim is guided by the Spirit of God; for God has of old counseled these things for faith.

And when Ruth has followed Naomi's word, and laid herself at the kinsman's feet, and claimed him for a lord and husband, Naomi on her return says in beautiful language to her, "Who art thou, my daughter?" (chap. 3:16). That is, she was perfectly beautiful. Naomi looked on Ruth as the bride elect. She knew what the faithful kinsman would make her. She shone in her full dignity and joy in Naomi's eyes at that moment, just as we should survey ourselves and one another in the like power of faith, and say, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2.

What follows is the experience of a soul when the kinsman is discovered by faith. The grace of the kinsman is a great sight to see likewise.

There were hindrances in the way. A nearer kinsman had his claims, and Boaz had to own and answer them. Just so, in the great original, for sin withstands the purposes of love; the guilt of man stands in the way of his blessing from One who is holy as He is gracious. But He has found a way to vindicate righteousness, and set aside sin, while He gratifies His own love and answers all the claims which faith makes upon grace.

Boaz goes to "the gate," the place of judgment, and there meets "the elders," who were the guardians and vindicators of righteousness. And there, in their presence and to their full satisfaction, he sets aside the nearer kinsman, and then gets out of the way the hindrance that stood in the way of his taking Ruth and all her burdens on himself. Faith had counted on this, that the man would not be at rest till he had finished the thing (chap. 3:18); and so it came to pass. Boaz settles the whole affair; Ruth has but to "sit still," as Naomi had instructed her; and her kinsman is faithful, and her redeemer is mighty.

A kinsman in Israel was one that did not, as Naomi had told Ruth, forget his kindness to the dead or to the living (chap. 2:20), nay to the poor and to the oppressed, we may add. He would ransom the inheritance, the whole inheritance, of his poor brother; he was to avenge the blood of his murdered brother; he was to raise up the name of the dead and childless brother. Beautiful service, showing forth grace in its richness, its depth, and its variety.

And Boaz is made to represent this. He acted in taking Ruth, and in blessing her with the richest blessing he could bestow, on the warrant of the laws of Israel. He was acting righteously while bountifully -honoring the claims of the throne of judgment, when taking a gleaner from the field to set her at his side. Beautiful shadow of One who is just while a Justifier.

Faith may aim high and count on great things; but the grace of God and the counsels of God, and the law of the kinsman and the faithfulness of the Redeemer, warrant it all. Faith's boldness will not exceed faith's title. The heart that encourages itself in God shall be blest; blessed to say it!

And grace has as clear a warrant to gratify itself as faith has to encourage itself. The cross has been, so to speak, erected at "the gate," or in the place of judgment. God is never more holy than when forgiving sins upon the warrant of the cross of Christ. There God's glory in the highest is again proclaimed, as is peace on earth. His righteousness is there set forth as brightly as His love. It is enthroned mercy we lean upon - a mercy seat and the ark of the covenant where the tables of the testimony are found. If the blood of sprinkling be there, it is kept and honored and magnified, as law is also. God's righteousness is declared there, that He "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

One further beautiful point in the instructions of Naomi to Ruth I would still notice. She tells her, in the earlier stage while she was still a suitor, to wash herself, to anoint her, to put her raiment upon her, and then to get herself down to the floor, where Boaz was to be. But as soon as Boaz has accepted her, then Naomi changes her voice and tells her to sit still (chap. 3:3, 18).

So it is in the journey of the soul. We are occupied with ourselves at the first. We have many thoughts, as of our uncleanness and nakedness, our condition as sinners convicted and in our shame. But when we get to know the great secret of grace, that our Redeemer is making our cause His own, then silence, stillness, abstraction from self, and occupation with Christ, become us. We have then to stand by and to see the salvation of God. We have then, like Joshua in Zechariah 3, to be silent while the Lord is doing His business with us and for us. We have to let Him answer our accuser, and not open our own lips, like the woman in John 8. We may, beforehand or while on the road like the prodigal, be thinking of ourselves; but as soon as the home is entered, and we see that the Father has made our blessing His care, then, like the prodigal, we have only to sit and eat.

And, let me further say, Naomi standing between Boaz and Ruth, the witness of Boaz to Ruth, is as Scripture between God and us. It witnesses God to us. It even pledges Him; and the business of faith is to listen, to receive, and to enjoy with confidence. So did Ruth. The modest gleaner becomes the assured and (if you please) bold suitor under the word of Naomi. It was enough for Ruth, quite enough, that Naomi had instructed her. She asked no more, nor did she hesitate.

And very blessed it is to add that Naomi's word was enough for Boaz, as it had been for Ruth. Whatever Naomi had pledged for Boaz to the gleaner, Boaz made good to her. It was for Boaz that Naomi had pledged him. And so, blessed to tell it, it is enough that Scripture has spoken, and made promises in the name of the Lord to sinners. All shall be made good; not a jot shall fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away ere that could be. Jesus was fulfilling Scripture all through His ministry here; and He will not rest till He has finished it all, in all its rich and wondrous pledges of grace and glory.

What Is It to Follow Christ?

What is it to follow Christ? One often forms a vague idea of what it is. It is to walk after a Person whom we acknowledge as the Guide we need. The one who has confidence in himself does not want a guide. Moreover, following the Lord implies not merely confidence in Him, but humble dependence on Him. Again, if I follow someone, my eyes are fixed on him, so as to imitate him. Now imitating the Lord is seeking to reproduce Him, to be like Him; and in whatever position God sets me, His object is that I should reproduce Christ in that position. We read of Caleb that he wholly followed the Lord his God.

Woman

Genesis 2

Alienated as fallen man is from God, nothing is so strange to him as the truth. And no wonder. It brings the true God before him, and reminds him of his departure from God. He is under Satan's lie, and naturally opposes the truth, which he is inclined to treat at best as myth, philosophic or religious. But it is by the word of God's revealed truth, that the Father of lights brought of His own will any forth, that they should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. His Word is truth; and of that Word Christ is the great personal Object of faith, who puts every soul that hears the gospel to the test. To this end is He born, and to this end is come into the world, that He should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears His voice, and follows Him who gives the believer eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life; and He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. If a man recognized his ruin and guilt before God, how could he not from his heart receive the Savior?

But, owning neither his own need nor God's grace in Christ, he stumbles at the Word, being disobedient, and judges Scripture instead of being judged by it, as all believers are. Such a one sets Genesis 2 against Genesis 1, because through incredulity he sees God in neither, and is unwilling to learn the truth in each and in both, alike necessary to give us a complete view.

Beyond controversy, Gen. 1:26-28 presents in noble terms the creation of man, the chief of His works here below. Here only did He call Himself into council; as man only He proposed to make in His image after His likeness, assigning to him dominion over the rest of earth's living creatures. But whatever may be the expression of singular dignity, it is simply mankind's place in creation, notably distinguished, and indisputably the highest, but yet the highest of earthly creatures, "male and female," like the rest of animated nature. It is therefore God, Elohim the Creator simply, of whom we read. It could not with propriety be otherwise.

Genesis 2 regards the scene from the point of moral relationship which brings in the name of Him who governs on earth as revealed to Israel nationally, and so, in the Old Testament as a whole, Jehovah, but Jehovah here carefully identified with the Creator, Jehovah Elohim, the LORD God. For there is none other. It is ignorance to account for the different names of God here or elsewhere, and any difference of words, style, etc., by imagining distinct writers, when all is demonstrably due to change of standpoint, and the simple but profound and exquisite accuracy of thought and language in Holy Writ. It is no rival account by another hand, but the same writer guided by the inspiring Spirit to set out man's moral position; the garden of Eden as the scene of his care, and, in the midst of abundance, the prohibition laid on him under penalty of death; the subject beasts, and birds brought to him and named by him as their lord; finally a helpmate, in contrast with every other formation, taken out of himself in the wise goodness of Him with whom we have to do.

All is consistent with the presentation of relationship, beginning with Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) in chapter 2:4, not Creator only, but Moral Governor. Hence here, not in chapter 1, is the garden of delight planted by the LORD God, the testing place of man's obedience. Here only in the midst of the garden we hear of the two trees - one the sovereign gift of life naturally - the other of responsibility. Here only are we told of man formed of the dust of the ground on one hand, and on the other by the LORD God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam was thus "son of God" (Luke 3:38), a living soul, not as other creatures by creative power only, but he only by Jehovah Elohim breathing into his nostrils. Nor is the effect lost for the race; for, as Paul quotes to the Athenians, we too are His offspring, as no other earthly creatures are. Therefore is the soul immortal for good or for ill; if saved, it is forever with Christ; if lost, for everlasting punishment, because He is refused, and men die in their sins. Such was man's relationship to Jehovah Elohim, and the test of obedience here therefore follows.

In pointed contrast with the relationship to him of every animal of the field and every bird of the heavens, to which their master gave names by divine authority, no helpmate appeared, till Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on the man. Then He took one of his ribs, and built it into a woman, and brought her to the man (vv. 21, 22). And the man, notwithstanding his deep sleep, recognized her at once as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh: "She shall be called Woman [or Sheman], because she was taken out of man." It is the strongest possible statement of her peculiar relationship to himself, and as perfectly suiting chapter 2, as it would have been out of place in chapter 1. How sad that men of learning, professed theologians, should be so dull to discern the mind of God in Scripture, so ready to plunge into the dark after any will-o'-the-wisp of rationalism to their own loss and the injury of all who follow them!

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11:8, 9, tersely sums up the truth of the case as having God's authority: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Those who venture to dispute the fact must one day learn what it is to give God the lie. It is the ground of the sanctity of marriage, one woman for one man (Mark 10:6-8); such was the order, "from the beginning," of Him who made her, as He did, of man, and so to be one flesh-alas! too soon forgotten by men generally and even by Israel. But there it was indelibly written to instruct the faithful and shame the rebellious.

And is it nothing for souls that the same Apostle, in Eph. 5:25-33, refers to this oracle of God? Yes, the first man Adam foreshadows the second Man and last Adam, on whom fell a deeper sleep, that a heavenly Eve might be formed, even the Church for which Christ in His love gave Himself, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. No doubt this mystery is great, but it is no less true and blessed. It is infinite grace, and only possible through the death of Christ.

A Woman of Worth

Pro. 31:10-31

(Mr. Darby's translation of this portion is very helpful. See in loco.)

"Who can find a woman of worth? for her price is far above rubies.

"The heart of her husband confideth in her, and he shall have no lack of spoil. [He doe-; not lack profit or gain.]

"She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

"She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

"She is like the merchants' ships: she bringeth her food from afar. [Food is something to eat; it is her living; that is, she is willing to get about to secure the suitable food and clothing.]

"And she riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and the day's work to her maidens. [She is not lazy.]

"She considereth a field, and acquireth it [good business judgment]; of the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. [She provides for the future.]

"She girdeth her loins with strength, and maketh strong her arms. [In activity there is health.]

"She perceiveth that her earning is good; her lamp goeth not out by night. [She helps with the making of the living.]

"She putteth her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. [Taking care of her household.]

"She stretcheth out her hand to the afflicted, and she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. [A generous and thoughtful heart.]

"She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

"She maketh herself coverlets; her clothing is byssus and purple. [Byssus, fine linen.]

"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. [Her diligence and faithfulness result in the promotion of her husband to positions of honor.]

"She maketh body linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. [Helps thus with the family income.]

"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laugheth [at] the coming day. [She has confidence as to the future.]

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and upon her tongue is the law of kindness.

"She surveyeth the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband [also], and he praiseth her!

"Many daughters have done worthily, but thou excellest them all. [The words of her husband praising her.]

"Gracefulness is deceitful and beauty is vain; a woman [that] feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised.

"Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

The World and the Love of God

1 John 4

At the end of 1 John 3 the Holy Spirit is mentioned as having been given to believers, and by this we know that God dwells in us. Immediately afterward we find the work of the enemy in sending forth many false prophets into the world, and the necessity of trying the spirits; forever since the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the tactics of the enemy have been those of spiritual imposture. The world's true character comes out here, and note that it is a world into whose bosom many false prophets have been received; no one is more likely to receive a ready welcome from the world than a false prophet. Such have been popular at all times.

But a certain test is given whereby the spirits may be proved - that is, Jesus Christ come in flesh - and every spirit that would take away in the least degree anything from the divine or human glory of our Lord, is not of God. The presence of the blessed Son of God - truly incarnate, as John's Gospel presents Him - is the test; and the spirit of antichrist is detected where Jesus Christ is not confessed.

This then is the character of the world in which we live. It has rejected Jesus, and has received with open arms a host of false prophets; and it will end with the acceptance of antichrist. The age will end in the development of man's independence to such a degree, that he will exalt himself to the very highest point of pretension, and revolt against God; and, as one who has climbed recklessly to the top of a high steeple, suddenly smitten with vertigo, falls and is broken to pieces, so shall the pride of the antichrist come to an end, judged as he shall be of the Lord when once he shall have attained the bad eminence to which he is ascending.

The point is that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world, and we have to meet it on all sides. It is the spirit which denies man's ruin, and which would exalt him to the skies.

But we have a very blessed statement as to all believers: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." The presence of the Holy Ghost in the family of God (for here the "children" takes in all Christians) is a most wonderful fact, and He is infinitely superior to the terrible and restless spirit which is in the world.

They are of the world, and speak according to its principles, and are listened to readily; the false prophets have very often a philanthropic doctrine to propound, the amelioration of the whole human race, universal brotherhood, and other very great schemes; but all these things are of the world; that is, according to its principles.

These men will be listened to; and I recollect once seeing an immense crowd round a preacher in London, and saying to a friend, "Let us go to listen; I am perfectly certain that it is not the gospel he is preaching, for if so he would not have so large an audience." And indeed it was not the gospel, but exhortations to abstain from alcohol, and to practice civic virtues, and thus to prosper on earth, with a hope of paradise hereafter. All such teaching will be readily received, provided that man's

fall and ruin and God's claims be ignored.

The world studies political economy, in which there is not one thought of God or of His Christ, but how to make the best use of the resources of this planet without Him.

The world listens to the false prophets; but those who are of God listen to the apostles as having the divine message from the Lord Himself, who came into this world, the Son of God incarnate, the Truth. Blessed be all they who receive His message!

The manner in which the love of God is presented to us in the following verses makes a very blessed contrast to this dark world and the antichrist. The whole family of children is characterized by love, and the nearer we are morally to God the more will this be known. I recollect in reading of Mohammed's supposed journey to the seventh heaven (the whole thing an impudent imposture), that the false prophet said that when he approached within a bowshot of the deity, a mortal chill froze the very blood in his veins; and this, I thought, condemns the whole system of Islam, for the nearer we are to God the less we are chilled. It is the very contrary.

The three blessed aspects of the love of God have often been insisted upon, and I merely wish to call attention to the subject.

The love of God manifested (v. 9).

Perfected in us (v. 12).

3) Perfected with us (v. 17; J.N.D. Trans.).

We are called upon to love one another because love is of God, and the character and nature of one born of God is to love. God's love was manifested in the gift of His Son when we had no love for Him; and now, in the midst of a heartless world, we are exhorted to love one another. This has often been spoken of; may we show it in true self-denial and devotedness!

In verse 12 the beginning is the same as in John 1:18; the ending is different. It is no longer a question of the presence of Jesus in the world, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father declaring Him; Jesus is in heaven glorified, and the children of God upon earth are to express God's love. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And the blessed communion of saints follows; for when the Apostle says that we know we abide in Him, he adds not merely that the Holy Spirit has been given us, but that He hath given us of His Spirit - there is communion, participation. We form one family and have by the Holy Spirit the same blessed objects, the Father and the Son.

An illustration of this can be seen when different regiments of soldiers meet at some distant location, and brothers in the same family who are in the regiments get to meet. All their conversation is of their own family - their father, mother etc.; they were of one family, and had the same joys in common. Only for us it is by the Holy Ghost.

The third aspect of the love of God carries us right on to the end - love perfected with us. All fear has been driven out, and it is not said, As He is, so shall we be in heaven; but "as He is, so are we in this world." That is, we are perfect in Him who shall eventually judge the quick and the dead; and knowing the Judge as our blessed Savior, we have no fear of any kind, but the assurance that

the same love which was manifested in the gift of the Son to be the propitiation for our sins - that this same love, I say - shall accompany us to the very end of our course. May our souls be confiding in the God of love, so that we may be kept in the midst of this benighted age, in the full enjoyment of our highest privileges, and be showing in all our conduct that we love one another.

World Conditions Worsening: the Editor's Column

The world situation grows steadily worse. One wonders what will be next, or what overgrown crisis will erupt into a gigantic holocaust. Men may well tremble at the forebodings. The Western world looks on aghast as the whole world teeters closer and closer to an inevitable collision of giants.

Viet Nam has been on peoples' lips for a considerable time, and the war there is constantly escalating into all the horrors of so-called civilization's "dread hour," when all the arsenals of destruction will be unleashed. Surely the moment is at hand when men's hearts will fail them for fear, and of looking after those things that are coming on the earth; for "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

The United States threw men and materiel into the Southeast Asian conflict in an effort to stop the hostilities, but little success has accompanied their costly campaigns. France was originally the main contestant, but her efforts bogged down; and now she belittles the United States' efforts.

As the conflict increases, Red China is getting closer and closer to the maelstrom, and she has little compunction about increasing casualties on all sides. A real battle of giants may be in the making. All this may well chill the hearts of men. One wonders how far this thing that was originally called "a brush war" may escalate, or how many thousands of young men may be hurled into eternity.

There is also the greater problem that nuclear war may follow in the wake of the burgeoning conflict. Men are afraid of an A-bomb race. At the present stage, twelve nations are listed as possible entries into the frightful suicide as nation rises against nation, and each helps to fill the world with carnage. The United States, Russia, Great Britain, China, and France have the equipment and capabilities to stagger the world with their frightful inventions. It was as late as 1960 that France embarked on a course to make A-bombs, and now we understand that her military establishments are not only equipped with the bombs but have a fleet of jet bombers equipped with atomic warheads capable of explosive force of 75,000 tons of T.N.T. How dreadful are the potentials of such a race! India and Pakistan are capable and ready to engage in such a conflict. It is also within the realm of probability that Egypt and Israel may be in like readiness. We have just heard that twelve nations are also potential bomb makers, and other nations are not far behind them.

May we exclaim with the prophet, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself" (Hos. 13:9). And are not the nations rushing on to their own destruction? "The way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:17, 18). There was One who came into the world, designated "Prince of Peace"; but He was rejected here and cast out. What folly it is to look for peace on earth when the one "Prince of Peace" was despised and rejected of men.

When the day of the Lord arrives in this world, then the rightful heir and Lord of all will subdue His enemies and bring in righteousness and peace; but judgment must precede His glorious reign. Let us ask ourselves, Are men looking for His glorious day? Are men willing that He should reign?

Would they anticipate putting aside their sins and honoring Christ the Lord? But God is yet to set His King upon His holy hill of Zion.

Meanwhile, men are filling up the measure of their wickedness. It is a principle with God to allow men to fill up their cup of iniquity that He might judge the earth in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained. His decree is certain, and the appointed hour is approaching.

We may watch as God allows men to reach the zenith of their sins. The United States rushed into the fray with Latin America in the Dominican Republic, but nothing has been solved as yet. Recently one prominent leader predicted that the United States will be embroiled there for some years to come. When will this conflagration cease? How long will the sword devour? Shall it devour forever?

The whole country of the Dominican Republic is being slowly strangled, as civil war continues.

For a long time, the cry of "peace and prosperity" has sounded in this and other nations, and Christians have lived in comparative ease. In such times many Christians have relaxed in their devotedness to Christ. Perhaps God is permitting some of the realities of war and hardship to come closer home, that we might be stirred to the seriousness of these last days. A faithful servant of the Lord used to say that prosperity is the enemy of the Christian.

Then when we think of the tragedies of war which have a way of coming closer to us, we may watch and pray that precious souls may be snatched from their stupor while yet there is room. May God in His grace save many souls in these last days.

During the past week President Johnson informed the nation of the doubling of draft quotas for the armed forces of the United States. Thus the tempo of conflict increases. This will bring war and its tragedies closer home to many families. May God in His grace awaken many souls to the importance of accepting the Lord Jesus as their Savior while salvation is full and free.

The World's Esteem

There is a great difference between giving up the world, and the world giving us up. We may do the one with comparative ease; but when we feel the world despises us as Christ was despised, we shall discover unless He fills and satisfies the heart, that we had a value for its esteem that we were not aware of. When obedience is as important to us in our measure, as obeying was to Christ, we shall go right on with whatever is before us, without regarding the world; not that we shall be insensible, but when Christ is the Object, we shall be occupied only with Him.

Zaphnath-Paaneah

In Jacob's blessing of his sons (Gen. 49), we find those familiar and lovely words about Joseph used by the aged patriarch: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." We know now that a "greater than Joseph" was before the prophetic mind of the Spirit in the patriarch when he spoke those words, of which I now only cite a part. The whole of the blessing may be seen in reading the chapter. The portion I have quoted will answer my present purpose in calling your attention to it.

If we turn back in the book of Genesis and glance at the lovely narrative of Joseph (Gen. 37-50) -evidently that of one of the most blameless of men whose histories are recorded in Scripture-we find in chapter 41 the moment of his full exaltation over all the land of Egypt before us. At this time he was thirty years of age; he had been shamelessly and heartlessly rejected by his brethren, and sold to his captors, oppressed and afflicted, taken from prison and from judgment; the iron had entered into his soul. In all this, as in the many other details of his life, he is a type of Him who was to come. He had just interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, and had counseled Pharaoh to be warned of God in preparing for the years of the famine that was to come. "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" v. 38. And Pharaoh raised him to be head over all the land. There was none so discreet and wise as he. He would be over his house, and according to his word should all his people be ruled; only in the throne would Pharaoh be greater than he. Power over all flesh was his, and all was given into his hands (vv. 43, 44).

He names him "Zaphnathpaaneah," or the "Revealer of secrets," as the Coptic, it is said, indicates; and "Savior of the world," as says another authority. Of course I do not go further here than to notice the double significance of this title which Pharaoh gave to Joseph.

In the seven plenteous years - those years of grace - the earth brought forth by handfuls from the ripened fields. The reaper received his wage, and gathered fruit for the life to come, when famine would stalk through the land. Joseph too married a wife in the land of his rejection, and to him were born his two sons - Manasseh, his first-born, signifying "forgetting"; and Ephraim, the second, bearing the name which means "fruitful." He forgot his toil and his father's house; and he was fruitful in the land of his affliction.

When we turn to the Gospel of John (chap. 4), and read of the opening of the public ministry of the Lord, we find His going forth when thirty years of age to Samaria on His mission of grace. "He left Judea"; He left His own to whom He had come, morally rejected by them. He had come to His own, and His own received Him not. He passes out in the fullness of grace to defiled Samaria, morally now, as actually again, with "power over all flesh," and all things given into His hands by the Father. There He proves Himself to be the true "Revealer of secrets"-One who told the sinful woman all that ever she did. He forgets His toil and the long weary journey of that day through the burning heat, till He sat on the side of the well - the most fruitful bough that ever shadowed it. He forgets His thirst, His hunger too, refreshed by the meat to eat of which the disciples as yet knew

nothing. He forgets too His Father's house, and in the land of His affliction He is fruitful. The woman of Samaria is found by Him who came to seek and to save the lost. His word to the disciples in those years of plenty which now were dawning, was, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Many of the Samaritans too believed on Him; they said 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."

He is the true "Zaphnathpaaneah," now as then. Surely we can say, as in 1 John 4:14, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." We have learned how surely He is the "Revealer of secrets," as did the woman of Samaria, through the window of our souls. The conscience of each can vouch for this. We need no proof or evidence that we have had to do with Christ, and He with us.

I only touch upon those few features of this lovely type. Perhaps it may encourage others to look for the more minute details for themselves. But, when we know Christ, is it not a happy task to find some lines of Him portrayed on those who went before, and in whom His grace and Spirit was working? Shall we deem it a less happy task now to trace in those who are Christ's, the lines of His life and ways, as the Spirit of God has done so blessedly in those who have gone before?

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net