

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 7

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 7, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

104 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 7

Ambassador in Bonds

"Praying always... and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." Eph. 6:18-20. Did you ever hear of such a thing as the ambassador of one nation being put in bonds by the nation to which he was sent? Why, God has fared worse in this world than any nation in it would; and pray, what message did this ambassador bring? A message of boundless grace. And that is the way He has been treated. The law of nations would not allow it for an instant. Yet that is the way God, in the person of His servants and witnesses, has consented to be treated for almost 2000 years.

The Ark of the Lord

The dying grief of Eli, and the living transports of David, alike show what the ark was in the eyes of the truehearted. Even the wise king [Solomon] did not adequately value the ark of God. And this shows the superiority of David, for faith is always wiser than wisdom. If we had the largest human intelligence, and even the highest natural wisdom God can confer, it would never rise to the height of simple faith. Solomon appears before the grand altar. It was a magnificent spectacle and he was an august king and brought suited offerings. But David showed his faith in this, that it was not the altar merely which he prized, but the ark most of all.

God's ark was a hidden thing; not even the High Priest could see it save wrapped in clouds of incense. One had to walk by faith in order to appreciate the ark of God. Therefore David could not rest until the ark had its settled place in Israel; and he never had deeper joy than when it came back to Jerusalem.

It is true it brought judgment on all that despised it, and even David's heart was afraid for a time, and the ark rested in the house of Obed Edom the Gittite. But David regained the spring of confidence in God which so marked his career, for we find him afterward rejoicing when the ark was welcomed back, more than he ever did in all his victories put together.

Baptized for the Dead

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" 1 Cor. 15:29.

This verse is as if the Apostle said, in view of this denial of the resurrection which had gotten in among the Corinthians, "Well, since the object in baptism is death-for we are baptized 'with a view' to it-the very fact of our baptism marks us out for death. What fools you are then to have become Christians if, when the initiatory ordinance points to death, there is no resurrection."

As in a "forlorn hope" men step forward to fill up the ranks of those cut down in death, so was the place of those who "are baptized for [or over] the dead," thus filling up the places, as it were, of those, perhaps, who were martyred for Christ's sake. "Now," he goes on, as it were, "if dead persons do not rise at all, it would be folly to own practically what our baptism implies."

Look at the scope of the chapter and the arguments of the Apostle against what was among them at Corinth, as well as at the objective character of baptism as having death in view, and you will see the force of the verse more distinctly.

Barzillai's Service and Reward

When the king is firmly settled on the throne, and no rebel rises up to dispute his right to fill it, it is easy enough to appear loyal, and to cry with the multitude, "God save the king!" But where rebellion has made progress among the masses, and the popular idol is no longer the king, but some aspirant to regal power and honor, then the sovereign, but lately perhaps welcomed wherever he went with acclamations, discovers who are his real friends, and discriminates between the flattering courtier and the loyal subject. The day of the king's rejection is the day for the subject to declare himself. Thus it was with the aged Barzillai and those who were with him at Mahanaim.

Fickle indeed are the masses of any nation. The idol of today may become the object of popular hatred on the morrow, and the benefactor of a people find himself a wanderer in the very country over which he has reigned. Such was David's experience when Absalom's rebellion broke out. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," had been the song of the women of Israel as they returned from the conflict with the Philistines. He had known what it was to be the man whom Israel delighted to honor. He had received the homage of the twelve tribes of Israel at Hebron, when they went there to anoint him king over all Israel. Now he was an outcast with a company who remained faithful, a fugitive too from the face of his own son Absalom. The warrior and benefactor of his country, who had raised her to a pitch of glory, prosperity, and influence never before enjoyed, was rejected for the king's son, remarkable for nothing but his personal appearance, unbridled will, and immense powers of dissimulation. Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel.

It was true David had sinned grievously in the matter of Uriah's wife, and the cold-blooded murder of his faithful soldier. But of what could Absalom boast except the treacherous murder of his own brother Amnon? God was now punishing David for the sins by which he had given occasion to the enemies of the

Lord to blaspheme, and at the same time was testing the loyalty and fidelity of all the children of Israel to His anointed; and with what result? The king had fled from Jerusalem, Shimei had manifested what he was as he cursed him, the people of Israel showed what they were as they clustered around Absalom, and David and his followers had at length crossed the Jordan, and so passed out of the true limits of the land of promise.

At this juncture, when the fortunes of David were at the lowest ebb, Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai declared themselves on his side as they met him and his company at Mahanaim, and brought with them what they felt must be needed. David had not summoned them to entertain him; no superior force compelled them to yield up to the king what they possessed. They brought of their own accord such things as were suited for the occasion. David was at Mahanaim, but Machir belonged to Lo-debar, and Barzillai to Rogelim. What distance there was between these two places and the Levitical city, the scene of Jacob's meeting with the angels of God, has not been ascertained; but this at least is clear-these three men made advances to David, and Barzillai apparently surpassed

them all as he "provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim." Very marked then was their attitude at this time, most acceptable to David, and we may surely add, pleasing to the Spirit of God, who has seen fit so fully to notice it.

Shobi was an Ammonite, the son of Nahash, David's friend, but a former enemy of Israel, defeated at Jabesh-gilead by Saul. He was also Hanun's brother, whose capital city, Rabbah, the armies of Israel had taken, and whose crown of gold had adorned David's brow. Machir had been the firm friend of the family of Saul when David ascended the throne, in whose house Mephibosheth had found shelter till his father's possessions were restored to him by the man his grandfather had persistently persecuted. Of Barzillai's earlier history we read nothing. These three however, who once had probably trodden different paths, were now united in succoring David and his men. The Ammonite, and the friend of Saul's house, agreed with Barzillai in this. But what made them thus unite?

David deserved his punishment-that, all men must have admitted. Was it simply the son of Jesse they saw? Was it not rather the Lord's anointed? As such, they combined to show kindness to him.

Obliged by prudential motives to put the Jordan between himself and Absalom, backed by the masses of Israel, he meets in the midst of the general defection with substantial tokens of loyalty from these three men. They saw in him the Lord's anointed; so for them the popular idol had no attraction. What others might do, they stopped not to think. They did not calculate the chances of success, nor wait to learn which side appearances favored. Had they looked at the matter in this light, would they have befriended David? Would not the hosts which followed Absalom have determined their place in Israel? With them, however, surely, the question was a most simple one: Should they side with the Lord's anointed or not? Such an alternative admitted then of but one answer. Can it admit of any other than one now?

Worldly caution might have counseled delay before they committed themselves so irrecoverably as they did; but, had they delayed, all opportunity of manifesting their loyalty and devotion would have passed away. It was with them now or never. Reason might have suggested further consideration and a conference with the leaders of Absalom's party before they took this bold step and occupied so prominent a place. Should they not hear both sides before they took the part of the fugitive king? Had not Ahithophel, the Gilonite, David's counselor, actually espoused Absalom's cause? and did not all Israel acknowledge that his counsel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God? Would they pit their wisdom against his? Besides, had not David dishonored the throne, and perverted the fountain of justice? That was true of the man David, but he was the Lord's anointed. So they ministered to his need, and thus openly sided with him before all. It was a noble act on their part, as all must acknowledge. It was also a right act, as it was in accordance with God's thoughts; and the Spirit of God surely delighted to dwell on the tokens of their faithfulness, as He has recounted the different items of refreshment thus furnished for the king and those with him in the wilderness.

They "brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness." 2 Sam. 17:28, 29. Nothing that the people could want seems to have been forgotten; nothing that they brought, it would appear, has been

overlooked in the account.

Events rolled on. Absalom crossed the Jordan with the hosts of Israel under his command. The issue of the battle is well known. David was to be chastised, but not deposed. He had been chastised, and now Absalom's turn came. That on which he had especially prided himself became the means of his capture. Suspended by his hair between heaven and earth, the fratricide, and would-be parricide and regicide met with the due reward of his deeds. Thus ended the rebellion and David's temporary exile. Preparations were now made for his return. The tribes of Israel spoke of it; the tribe of Judah, at first coldhearted toward him, stirred up by Zadok and Abiathar, sent word, "Return thou, and all thy servants." "And all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel."

Now again owned by all as king in Israel, David acted as such by disposing of the lives and possessions of his subjects. He spared Shimei's life, who had cursed him; he restored in some degree to Mephibosheth the possessions of his father, hastily bestowed on Ziba in the day of his flight, and offered to reward Barzillai. Life to Shimei, possessions in the land to Mephibosheth, but nearness to the king's person and feeding with him for Barzillai, were what he meted out to each. "Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem." Barzillai had served David when beyond Jordan; David would have Barzillai beside him ever after, beholding his royal estate, blessed with the favor of the Lord's anointed. "With me"-nothing less than this-was what he desired for Barzillai - with himself, and that in Jerusalem. Most fitting was this reward. When outside the land of Canaan, it was Barzillai's place and duty to own and serve the rejected king; again in power and in the land, it was David's place to reward his faithful adherent.

And as the words, "with me" fall on the ear, do they not recall similar language used by David's Son in the presence of His disciples when addressing His Father? "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am," etc. Little did Barzillai think of the honor in store for him as a reward for his service, and of which he only heard after the time of such service was over, and the day for rewarding those faithful to David had arrived. But we know, while the Lord Jesus Christ is absent from the earth, rejected by His people Israel, and especially His own tribe Judah, what will be the future place of privilege and blessing of all who side with Him during the time of His rejection by the world.

To this offer Barzillai interposes an objection. He has not worked with any view of reward, richly though he deserved it. He had thought of the king in his rejection, and had done what he could to succor him; he had come too to do honor to David now returning to his capital; but to be at the court was unsuited to such a one, for his age forbade his enjoyment of the pleasures of the king's house. When David was in need in the wilderness, Barzillai's age was no hindrance to the bringing it in person. When the king was to recross the Jordan, he suffered not the infirmities of age to be a reason for his absence. He would testify his delight at the king's return, as he had proved his devotion to him while he lay at Mahanaim; but to go to Jerusalem as a reward for his service was what he felt himself unequal to undertake. In how different a manner do men too generally act, putting forth an excuse to avoid the service but grasping eagerly at the reward! Barzillai was not like this; he thought of the king, and acted at once. Much as he and all Israel had enjoyed of comfort under the king's reign, he did not stay at home counting up the blessings he had shared in; for self-ease he knew nothing of when the Lord's anointed was driven out of his land and obliged

to take refuge across the Jordan. As to the proffered reward, Chimham his son might accompany David; he desired to stay and die among his own kindred. Old age, with the prospect of death not far off, thus effectually opposed the fulfillment of the king's wishes. "Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee."

Who could refuse such a touching request? The king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee." "Do to him what shall seem good unto thee," had been Barzillai's prayer. "I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee" was David's promise, reaching beyond the modest request of his servant. And more than this, he told him he had gained the king's ear. What a place was this to occupy! Honor, wealth, rank, are nothing compared with this.

To be with the king was David's wish for him; to have the king's ear was that of which David now assured him. Thus they parted, but not before David had kissed him and blessed him, and that on the right side of Jordan. The river had been recrossed, the king was again as sovereign in the land of Canaan when he kissed him and blessed him. All Israel could see that day whom the king delighted to honor. The multitude was right in escorting back king David, but Barzillai had done what others had not. These were around the monarch in the day of his return; Barzillai had been with him when they had cast him out. Hence the difference between them and this devoted servant of Rogelim

In time Barzillai died, and perhaps this scene and all connected with it was blotted out before long from the remembrance of many in Israel. There was, however, one heart from which the remembrance of Barzillai's service was never effaced; the king never forgot it, and Solomon his son was ever to remember it. Occupied after his return, as David was, with many important concerns, he with his latest breath yet spoke of this service at Mahanaim, and commended Barzillai's sons to Solomon's special care (1 Kings 2:7). Before David and Solomon, types of the Lord on His throne, the sons of Barzillai had a place, not of distance but of distinguished nearness, for they ate bread at the king's table, and feasted in the king's presence, Never then while David lived was this service forgotten, nor while Solomon reigned was it to sink into oblivion. David as king had portioned it out; Solomon who ascended the throne without David's death intervening, was charged to continue it. To Rehoboam, nothing, we read, was said about it, for he was not a type of the Lord on His throne, the Solomon character of whose reign will continue to the end. Faithfulness to the Lord's anointed in a time of general defection, was never to be forgotten; such devotion was never to be unrequited.

For how long did the remembrance of all this last, attested by the reward bestowed on Chimham the son? As long as the kingdom lasted in Judah, so long was there a witness of the king's approval of such conduct. For not only did David give Chimham a place before him, but he assigned him a portion in the city of the king's birth. In the city of his father's house Chimham owned a possession (Jer. 41:17). Barzillai was of the tribe of Gad, the eldest son of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, but Chimham had henceforth a portion in Judah, the fourth son of the first wife Leah. And, till the kingdom of Judah was terminated by the Babylonish captivity, Chimham's portion by

Bethlehem was an abiding witness of Barzillai's faithfulness, and of David's acknowledgment of it.

The application of all this history is plain, and we understand the reason that it has been preserved. Very evident are the points of resemblance, but marked too are the contrasts. David was hindered by Barzillai's age from acting as he would toward him, and his hasty action regarding Mephibosheth tells us we have only a man like ourselves before us. But nothing can hinder the Lord Jesus rewarding as He will all who have followed Him in His rejection, and none will suffer injustice in that day. He will confess them before His Father and before His angels, and the company of heavenly saints who have served Him while absent shall be with Him on high, as those of earth shall be before Him when He reigns over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 12:8; Rev. 3:5; 7:15; 14:1). It will be found that He has been in their thoughts; they shall be before His face when He takes to Himself the power, and reigns.

Be Careful for Nothing

What shall I do then? Go to God. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4:6. Then in the midst of all the care you can give thanks.

We see the exceeding grace of God in this. It is not that you are to *sit till you find out if what you want is the will of God. No, "Let your requests, be made known." Have you, a burden on your heart?

Now go, with your request to God. He does not say that you will get it.

Paul, when he prayed, had for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But peace will keep your heart and mind- not you will keep this peace.

Is He ever troubled by the little things that trouble us? Do they shake His throne? He thinks of us, we know, but He is not troubled; and the peace that is in God's heart is to keep ours.

I go and carry it all to Him, and I find Him all quiet about it. It is all settled.

He knows quite well what He is going to do. I have laid the burden on the throne that never shakes, with the perfect certainty that God takes an interest in me, and the peace He is in, keeps my heart, and I can thank Him even before the trouble has passed. I can say, thank God, He takes an interest in me. It is a blessed thing that I can have this peace, and thus go and make my request-perhaps a very foolish one-and, instead of brooding over trials, that I can be with God about them.

It is sweet, to me to see that, while He carries us up to heaven, He comes down and occupies Himself with everything of ours here. While our affections are occupied with heavenly things, we can trust God for earthly things.

As Paul says, "Without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those' that are cast down, comforted us." 2 Cor. 7:5, 6. It was worth being cast down, to get that kind of comfort. Is He a God afar off, and not a God nigh at hand?

He does not give us to see before us, for then the heart would not be exercised; but, though we see not. Him, He sees us, and comes down to give us all that kind of comfort in the trouble.

The Book and the Soul: a Word to Those Who Minister the Word

In the formation of the character of a successful minister of the Word of God, two ingredients are essentially necessary: first, an accurate acquaintance with the Bible; second, a due sense of the value of the soul and of its necessities. The combination of these two qualities is of the utmost importance in the case of every one who is called to minister in the Word and doctrine. To possess only one of them will leave a man a thoroughly one-sided minister. I may be deeply read in Scripture; I may have a profound acquaintance with the contents of the Book, and a most exquisite sense of its moral glories; but if I forget the soul and its deep and manifold necessities, my ministry will be lamentably defective. It will lack point, pungency, and power. It will not meet the cravings of the heart, or tell upon the conscience. It will be a ministry from the Book, but not to the soul. True and beautiful, no doubt, but deficient in usefulness and practical power.

On the other hand, I may have the soul and its need distinctly before me. I may long to be useful. It may be my heart's desire to minister to the heart and the conscience of my hearer or my reader; but if I am not acquainted with my Bible, if I am not a well-taught scribe, I shall have no material wherewith to be useful. I shall have nothing to give the soul-nothing to reach the heart-nothing to act on the conscience. My ministry will prove barren and tiresome. Instead of teaching souls, I shall tease them; and instead of edifying, I shall irritate them. My exhortation, instead of urging souls on along the upward path of discipleship, will, from a lack of basis, have the effect of discouraging them.

These things are worthy of some consideration. You may sometimes listen to a person, ministering the Word, who possesses a great deal of the first of the above-named qualities, and very little of the second. It is evident he has the Book and its moral glories before his spiritual vision. He is occupied, yes, engrossed with them-so engrossed, indeed, as at times almost to forget that he has souls before him. There is no pointed and powerful appeal to the heart, no fervent grappling with the conscience, no practical application of the contents of the Book to the souls of the hearers. It is very beautiful, but not so useful as it might be. The minister is deficient in the second quality. He is more a minister of the Book than a minister to the soul.

Then again you will find some who in their ministry seem to be wholly occupied with the soul. They appeal, they exhort, they urge. But from lack of acquaintance and regular occupation with Scripture, souls are absolutely exhausted and worn out under their ministry. True, they ostensibly make the Book the basis of their ministry, but their use of it is so unskillful, their handling of it so awkward, their application of it so palpably unintelligent, that their ministry proves as uninteresting as it is unprofitable.

Now, if we were asked which of the two characters of ministry we prefer, without hesitation, we should say the first. If the moral glories of the Book are unfolded, there is something to interest and affect the heart, and if one is at all earnest and conscientious, he may get on. Whereas, in the second case, there is nothing but tiresome appeal and scolding exhortation.

But, we need hardly say, we long to see an accurate acquaintance with the Bible, and a due sense of the value of the soul, combined and healthfully adjusted in every one who stands up to minister to souls. The didactic will not do without the hortatory, or the hortatory without the didactic. Hence, therefore, let every minister study the Book and its glories, and think of the soul and its needs. Yes; let each one remember the link between the Book and the soul.

Bought With a Price

I am going to be like Christ in glory; then I must be as like Him now as ever I can be. Of course we shall all fail, but we are to have our hearts filled with Christ.

Remember this, that the place you are in is that of an epistle of Christ. We are set for this, that the life of Christ should be manifested in us. Christ has settled the question of our sins with God; He appears in the presence of God for us, and we are in the presence of the world for Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." John 14:20. If I know He is in me, I am to manifest the life of Christ in everything. If He has loved me with unutterable love which passes knowledge, I feel bound in heart to Him; my business is to glorify Him in everything I do. "Bought with a price"-that is settled -if bought, I am His. But I press upon you that earnestness of heart which cleaves to Him, especially in these last evil days when we wait for His Son from heaven. Oh! if Christians were more thoroughly Christians, the world would understand what it is all about. There is a great deal of profession and talk; and the activity of the Spirit of God-thank God-there is; but do you think, if a heathen came here to learn what Christianity means, he would find out?

The Lord give you to have such a sense of the love of Christ that, as bought with a price, the only object of your souls may be to live by Christ and to live for Christ; and for those who do not know Him, that they may learn how He came down in love to seek us, and because righteousness could not pass over sin, died to put it away.

Brought to God

Christianity brings us directly, immediately, to God. Each individual is directly, immediately, in relationship to God - his conscience before God, his heart confidently in His presence. Judaism had a priesthood; the people could not go into God's presence. They might receive blessings, offer offerings, celebrate God's goodness, have a law to command them, but the way into the holiest was closed by a veil; "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Heb. 9:8. When the Lord Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom, and have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Heb. 10:19, 20. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20); "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. Hence the essence of Christianity, as applied to man, is that the Christian himself goes directly, personally, to God in Christ's name, and through Christ, but himself into the holiest, and with boldness. He has access, by Christ, through one Spirit, to the Father.

Thus our being brought nigh by the blood of Jesus characterizes Christianity in its nature. The holiness of God's own presence is brought to bear on the soul. "If we walk," it is said, "in the light, as He is in the light"-yet not as in fear, which repels, for we know perfect love through the gift of Jesus. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, that place where the presence of God Himself assures that the confidence of love will be the adoration of reverence while we go forth to the world, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal bodies - the epistle (as it is said) of Christ. I am not discussing how far each individual Christian realizes it; but this is what Christianity practically is. He has made us kings and priests to God and His Father. This truly elevates.

Man is not elevated by intellectual pretensions; for he never gets, nor can get, beyond himself. 'What elevates him is heart intercourse with God- fellowship (wondrous word!) with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. But even where the heart has not found its blessed home there through grace, this principle morally elevates; for it at least puts the natural conscience directly before God, and refers the soul, in its estimate of good and evil, personally and immediately to Him. 'There may be self-will and failure, but the standard of responsibility is preserved for the soul. I do but sketch the great privilege on which I insist.

Romanism has, wherever it exercises its influence, closed the veil again. The faithful are not reconciled to God, they cannot go into the holiest, they do not know (as they quote from Ecclesiastes with so false an application) love and hatred by all that is before them; they have a priesthood, and saints, and the virgin Mary between them and God. Christianity is a divine work which, through the redemption and life of a heavenly Mediator, has brought us to God; Romanism, a system of mediators on earth and in heaven, placed between us and God, to whom we are to go, who go for us, we being too unworthy to go ourselves.

It sounds lowly, this voluntary humility, but it shuts out the conscience from the witness of God's presence, it casts us back on our unworthiness, it puts away and denies the perfect love of God as known to us (shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us) through Christ. It repudiates the blessed, tender grace of Jesus, that High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We must go to the heart of Jesus through the heart of Mary, they tell us. Surely I would rather trust His, blessed and honored as she may have been and was in her own place. It removes me from God to connect me immediately with creatures, however exalted. All this is degrading; it is the denial of Christianity, not in its original facts, but in its power and application to man.

Christ and His Yoke

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

In this precious and well-known passage we have two points which are very distinct, and yet intimately connected; namely, Christ and His yoke. We have, first, coming to Christ and its results; second, taking His yoke and its results. "Come unto Me,... and / will give you rest." "Take My yoke... and ye shall find rest." These things, being distinct, should never be confounded; and, being intimately connected, they should never be separated. To confound them is to dim the luster of divine grace; to separate them is to infringe upon the claims of divine holiness. Both these evils should be carefully guarded against.

There are many who hold up before the eye of the "heavy laden" sinner the yoke of Christ as something which he must "take on" ere his burdened heart can taste of that blessed rest which Christ gives to all who simply come unto Him just as they are. The passage before us does not teach this. It puts Christ first, and His yoke afterward. It does not hide Christ behind His yoke, but rather places Him, in all His attractive grace, before the heart as the One who can meet every need, remove every weight, hush every guilty fear, fill up every blank, satisfy every longing desire—in a word, One who is able to do as He says He will, even to give "rest." There are no conditions proposed, no demands made, no barriers erected. The simple, touching, winning word is, "Come." It is not, "Go"; "Do"; "Give"; "Bring"; "Feel"; "Realize." No; it is, "Come." And how are we to "Come"? Just as we are. To whom are we to "Come"? To Jesus. When are we to "Come"? Now.

Observe, then, we are to come just as we are. We are not to wait for the purpose of altering a single jot or tittle of our state, condition, or character. To do this would be to "come" to some alteration or improvement in ourselves, whereas Christ distinctly and emphatically says, "Come unto Me." Many souls err on this point. They think they must mend their ways, alter their course, or improve their moral condition, ere they come to Christ; whereas in point of fact, until they really do come to Christ they cannot amend or alter or improve anything. There is no warrant whatever for anyone to believe that he will be a single whit better an hour, a day, a month, or a year hence, than he is at this moment. And even were he better, he would not on that account be a whit more welcome to Christ than he is now. There is no such thing as an offer of salvation tomorrow. The word is, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3:15. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2.

There is nothing more certain than that all who have ever tried the self-improvement plan have found it an utter failure. They have begun in darkness, continued in misery, and ended in despair. And yet, strange to say, in view of the numberless beacons which are ranged before us in terrible array to warn us of the folly and danger of traveling that road, we are sure at the first to adopt it. In some way or another self is looked to and wrought upon in order to procure a warrant to come to

Christ. "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. 10:3. Nothing can possibly be a more dreary, depressing, hopeless task than "going about to establish their own righteousness." Indeed, the dreariness of the task must ever be commensurate with the earnestness and sincerity of the soul that undertakes it. Such a one will, assuredly, have sooner or later to give utterance to the cry, "O wretched man that I am!" and also to ask the question, "Who shall deliver me?" Rom. 7:24. There can be no exception. All with whom the Spirit of God has ever wrought, have in one way or another been constrained to own the hopelessness of seeking to work out a righteousness for themselves.

The Lord Jesus does not say, "Come unto My yoke." No; but, "Come unto Me." We must cease from our own works in every shape and form, and come to Christ- come just as we are-come now. We come to Christ and get rest from and in Him before ever we hear a word about the "yoke." To put the yoke first is to displace everything. If a "heavy laden" sinner thinks of the yoke, he must be overwhelmed by the thought of his own total inability to take it upon him or carry it. But when he comes to Jesus and enters into His precious rest, he finds the "yoke is easy," and the burden "light."

This conducts us to the second point in our subject; namely, the "yoke." It has been already observed that we must keep the two things distinct. To confound them is to tarnish the heavenly luster of the grace of Christ, and to put a yoke upon the sinner's neck, and a burden upon his shoulder which he, as being "without strength," is wholly unable to bear. But then they are morally connected. All who come to Christ must take His yoke upon them and learn of Him if they would "find rest" unto their souls. To come to Christ is one thing; to walk with Him, or learn of Him, is quite another. Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." He could meet the most adverse and discouraging circumstances with an "Even so, Father."

John the Baptist's heart might fail amid the heavy clouds which gathered around him in Herod's dungeon; the men of that generation might refuse the double testimony of righteousness and grace as furnished by the ministry of John and of our Lord Himself; Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum might refuse the testimony of His mighty works-a torrent of works which one might suppose would sweep away every opposing barrier. All these things and many more might cross the path of the divine Workman, but, being "meek and lowly in heart," He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father;... even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." His "rest" in the Father's counsels was profound and perfect; and He invites us to take His yoke, to learn of Him, to drink into His spirit, to know the practical results of a subject mind, that so we may "find rest" unto our souls. A broken will is the real ground of the rest which we are to "find" after we have come to Christ. If God wills one thing, and we will another, we cannot find rest in that. It matters not what the scene or circumstances may be. We may swell a list of things to any imaginable extent in which our will may run counter to the will of God; but, in whatever it is, we cannot find rest as long as our will is unbroken. We must get to the end of self in the matter of will, or else we shall not find rest.

This, my beloved reader, is deep, real, earnest, personal work. Moreover, it is a daily thing. It is a continual taking of Christ's yoke upon us, and learning of Him. It is not that we take the yoke in order to come to Christ. No; but we come to Christ first, and then, when His love fills and satisfies our souls, when His rest refreshes our spirits, when we can gaze by faith upon His gracious

countenance, and see Him stooping down to confer upon us the high and holy privilege of bearing His yoke and learning His lesson, we find that His yoke is indeed easy, and His burden light. Unsubdued, unjudged, unmortified nature could never wear that yoke or bear that burden. The first thing is, "Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest." The second thing is, "Take My yoke upon you,... and ye shall find rest."

The First Thought of Christ in Resurrection

Remark that the first thought of Christ, when heard from the horns of the unicorn, is to declare the name of God and His Father to His brethren-now glorious, but not ashamed to call us brethren. Perfect in love, attached to these excellent of the earth, He turns, when once He is entered into the position of joy and blessing through a work which gave them the title to enter, to reveal to them what placed them in the same position with Himself. Thus He gathered them; and then having awakened their voices to the same praise as that which He was to offer, He raises the blessed note as man, and sings praise in the midst of the assembly. Oh, with what loud voices and ready hearts we ought to follow Him! And note, he who is not clear in acceptance and the joy of sonship with God, in virtue of redemption, cannot sing with Christ. He sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Who sings with Him? He who has learned the song, which he has learned to sing as come out of judgment into the full light and joy of acceptance.

Cities of Men: the Editor's Column

From the days of Cain who "went out from the presence of the LORD,... and... builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch," unto this day, men have built cities and adorned them. Cities have furnished the means for men's self-exaltation and pride. There their greatest works and achievements have been and are displayed. Commerce, industry, arts and sciences, wealth, massive structures, great thoroughfares, and bulging populations vie with each other for a place of fame in the cities of men.

Nebuchadnezzar expressed his pride and pleasure in his great city of Babylon when he said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" And many individuals and "Chambers of Commerce" have felt and expressed similar pride in their own cities since that day.

Beneath all the glory and glitter, however, the world's cities have a seamy side, for therein is to be found filth, corruption, poverty, sorrow, and death; and generally the larger and greater the city, the greater is the wretched contrast. Even the names of the cities often belie the sadness that can be found there. Two examples of this can be seen in the Scriptures-Zarephath and Nain. The name of the former means refinement and expresses what men generally like to think of their cities, but the one little incident recorded in 1 Kings 17 lets us see the other side of life in the city of refinement. At the gate of the city Elijah met a poor widow-one who had known sorrow and bereavement-looking forward to nothing but death by starvation. Where was the refinement of a city that could let such dire poverty pass unaided? The latter city, Nain, gives a stark picture of life in the city called "beautiful" or "pleasing," for the Lord Jesus met at the gate of the city a funeral procession, and again the woman mentioned was a widow. What was all the beauty of the city of Nain to one who had lost her husband through death, and now was about to bury her only son?

Surely the Scriptures and common knowledge of existing conditions remind us of the vain show in the cities of the nations. The dread realities of the slums, the hospitals, the jails, the mental and corrective institutions of all kinds, the lives of sin and debauchery, stand in sharp contrast with gilded exteriors and boastful advertising.

Another strange phenomenon in the conduct of men with regard to cities is that from time immemorial the cities have been the special targets of attack and destruction. Some men build them, and others destroy them. The greater the city the more often it has been destroyed ruthlessly. Very few indeed have been the cities of the old world that have not been destroyed by men. Walls, great and high, were built to protect the cities, but conquerors invented machines of war to batter down the walls, or to catapult destructive missiles over the walls. With the invention of gunpowder, walls lost their effectiveness; and with the modern inventions which can rain down destruction from the skies, no city on earth is safe.

How good it is to note that men of faith rose above the cities of men, and looked forward to that which is more sure and certain. Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder

and maker is God." Heb. 11:10. There were some notable cities in his day, but he lived the life of a stranger and a pilgrim, and by faith looked forward to the "city of God." O may we who live in the days of great cities and great achievements have a right perspective and look beyond the present evil world.

In a day that is soon coming, cities are going to be destroyed on an unprecedented scale. Nothing the world has ever known, even during the last world war with its blockbuster bombs by thousands upon thousands, will compare with it. In Isaiah 14 we read of a man who is coming who is described as Lucifer, or son of the morning, or morning star, who will destroy cities. This is not Satan, as is often supposed, but is the last head of the Gentile dominion-the beast who will head up the revived Roman Empire. He will be Satan's counterfeit "morning star," who will claim to usher in a new day. The Lord Jesus is the true bright Morning Star, and He will be the great precursor of the day that is coming when He shall have subdued all His enemies, and reign in righteousness. This false "son of the morning" will wreak havoc and destruction instead of bringing in blessing and peace.

There are several bits of evidence in the Scriptures as to who this person is. Isaiah describes him as the "king of Babylon," but that title is expressive of the last holder of Gentile supremacy over the Jews; this began with Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. The destruction of this Lucifer also precedes the mention of the destruction of the Assyrian power in Palestine (v. 25), which if it referred to the past destruction of these two powers, the order would have had to be reversed, but they are placed according to the events at the end of this age.

In this chapter we find a soliloquy where hell speaks of Lucifer: "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof?" vv. 15-17. This man who will set himself in opposition to the God of heaven, and receive direct Satanic support, will unleash a torrent of destruction on the cities of men. Perhaps this may be by means of atomic and hydrogen bombs which are being stock-piled or prepared against that day. If so, it will be the grand end result of all man's scientific and industrial progress turned loose to destroy his greatest works. What a climax! What a sad tale of the result of departure from God! Yes, the earth a wilderness, the cities destroyed.

These coming events may take place at the beginning of those seven dreadful years after the Church is taken to glory with Christ, and the beast goes forth conquering all before him; or it may more likely be when his kingdom takes on a Satanic character in the middle of the seven years. At any event, we as Christians need not look for these things, or concern ourselves with them, except to realize that we live at the very end, and so have our loins girded (separated from the principles of the world), and our lights burning (our testimony shining brightly for our rejected Lord) as we wait and watch for Him.

Another portion of Scripture which details destruction of cities is found in Revelation 16; verse 19 says, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." This is a description of the destruction of the cities of the nations, not by the beast, and not by men, but by God Himself. This is at the very end of the tribulation when the Lord is

about to assert God's rights to the earth, and at that time God blows on all the works of men -the cities of the nations (that wherein they boasted) fall in the judgment of God. Fellow Christian, do we view with wonder and admiration the vaunted greatness of the cities of the nations, or do we consider them with a measure of sadness when we think of the doom that awaits them?

The "great city" mentioned in verse 19 may refer to Jerusalem, and "great Babylon" is a reference to the city of Rome.

Both cities come prominently before us in the final judgments upon this world-both will receive special dealings of vengeance. It was Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified, and it was under the imperial power of Rome that it took place. The civil power of Rome will come in remembrance before God, for He has not forgotten what it did to His Son, nor what it did to the many thousands of Christians whom it martyred.

"Babylon the Great" of Revelation 17 and 18 is another power based at Rome, and will be the religious and not the secular. Its doom comes earlier, and from the hand of the beast and his confederate kings, while the Roman government will come in for direct visitation from God.

Then after God has blown on the greatest endeavors of men in the destruction of their cities, His beloved Son, His anointed King, shall demonstrate what a city should be. So we read in Psalm 46, where God's presence in Jerusalem is described: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." vv. 4, 5. Jerusalem, the city of peace, shall be His earthly center, and the heavenly Jerusalem above shall be the display of the Church in glory (Rev. 21:9-27). That city will be all perfect within and without, for it will have "the glory of God." It will have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Another great contrast with the cities of men is found in the words: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

"Lord, we can see, by faith in Thee,
A prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine, in light divine,
In glory never fading.
"A home above, of peace and love,
Close to Thy holy Person;
Thy saints shall there see glory fair,
And shine as Thy reflection.

"Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray-
That prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine in light divine,

In glory never fading."

Clarification of an Article in April Issue

On Page 85

It would have been better if the article had read, "When on the cross in the three hours of darkness, when it was expiation, He does not say, 'Father,' until, all being over, He commends His spirit to Him, but *'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'* " If the words here given in italics had been added, they would have made it clear that the Lord Jesus only addressed God as God, not Father, when being made sin. This was doubtless the author's meaning, but it could have been misunderstood to mean all the time He was on the cross, including the first three hours when He was suffering as a martyr from the hand of man. In that time He addressed God as Father, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34.

We give below a list of the seven utterances of the Lord upon the cross as compiled by a brother. There may be a little question as to the order in which they were uttered, but in general it would seem this was the sequence.-

The Conference at Jerusalem: Eating Blood

It is often questioned whether the prohibitions against eating blood in Gen. 9:4, Lev. 17:10-14, and Acts 15 are binding on Christians. The conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15) settles for us the question of abstaining from blood. It does not take up Leviticus 17, but the command to Noah as to this. The question to be settled was, could the Gentiles become Christians without first becoming Jews? Amos 9 is cited for the sake of the words, "And all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called." It is not that the prophecy was fulfilled, but that the name of the Lord could be called on them as Gentiles. Jerusalem herself gives up the title to impose the law on the nations, and the Apostle of the circumcision uses the remarkable expression, "We shall be saved, even as they" (v. 2); that is, through grace - the manner in which a Gentile is dealt with, mercy being God's way, through grace, with the Jew (compare Eph. 2:4-8, etc.). When the "apostles and elders and brethren" write their decision, in verses 23 to 29, they embody in it those "necessary things" which were opportune and right for Christians to observe. First, the unity of the Godhead was to be maintained, in contrast to the "idols" of the heathen. Second, that life belonged to Him they were to abstain from "blood, and from things strangled." Third, the marriage tie was sacred and to be kept pure. In fact, they go back to what was right and ordered of God in creation, coupling it with those things I name; not as enacting new laws, but giving what was right to be observed in the midst of an evil world.

Thus, what was enacted in Gen. 9:4, is held good in Christianity. I do not think therefore we are exempt, but bound, as in all things, to do the will of the Lord.

Conscience Needful Now

It is one of the greatest comforts to me that I shall not want my conscience in heaven. If I let it go to sleep for a moment now, there are temptations and snares; there, there is no evil, and the more my heart goes out, the more good it is. Here I dare not let it, but I must watch and pray; I shall not need that in heaven. The full blessedness of it is the Lord's being there, of course; and next, the saints' being perfect. What does the heart desire that cares for the Lord's people? That they should be just what Christ's heart would have them. That will be there; He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Then there is after that this comfort, that my heart can go out- here it cannot-to God and the Lamb, and to the saints in measure too; but then, roam as it will, there is nothing to roam over but a paradise where evil never comes, and it can never go wrong.

Continuing in Prayer

God exercises our hearts and our faith in delaying to give the answers to our prayers at times. The earnestness of our prayer will be according to the exigency of our need, and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. The heart is exercised and kept in dependence, waiting on Him for the reply. Faith is kept alive. Other sources are not looked to when the soul has learned that He alone can do what is needed. It is a mighty engine, that of prayer-fitting expression of the newborn soul's dependence on God, in contrast to that nature which would ever be independent of Him, though it cannot escape His righteous judgment.

Daniel had to wait in fastings and mournings for three whole weeks at one time before he received the reply (chap. 10). At another time, "While I was speaking," he says, the answer came (chap. 9).

It marks the fact that we are not indifferent to the result when the heart can in earnest entreaty wait upon God.

We may find, like Paul, that it is better for us that our desires are withheld. He learned also the reason why they were withheld after his thrice repeated prayer; thus he could boast in that which was the taunt of his enemies, and the trial of his friends (2 Cor. 12).

We need to be "filled with the Spirit." We need that our faith may grow. Many are the needs of our hearts, and if God is pleased to bless His people, He exercises their hearts in prayer. Paul was indebted to some praying sister, perhaps, who could agonize in prayer before the Lord for those gifts with which he carried on his service in the gospel field. He could agonize in prayer for those he never saw (Col. 2:1); and Epaphras too could labor earnestly (agonize) in prayer for those he knew and loved (Col. 4:12).

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have to "be careful for nothing," but let our "requests be made known unto God." He who has no cares, God, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we have also to "continue in prayer." We have also to "watch in the same," and withal "with thanksgiving" for His ever opened ear. One of the exhortations in Rom. 12:12 is "continuing instant in prayer"; pursuing, as it might be.

The very "importunity" of the man at the unseasonable hour of midnight was the occasion of his obtaining the loaves (Luke 11:8). One can lay down no rules in such cases. The truly exercised heart gets its own answer from God. At times we can, with simple confidence, "make known," and commit the request to God. At other times the heart is conscious that it cannot but cry to God until the heart is at rest as to the petition. He will not give it till His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept in earnest exercise; faith is tested, and patience tried, and the heart watches and waits on Him. Again, such is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14, 15). He listens to everything which is in accordance with His will. He cannot fail in power, and we get the reply. The true heart would ask nothing contrary to His mind and will.

Correction

In the August issue on the fourth line from the bottom of page 199, the word "primarily" should read "only."

Covetousness

The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that word, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord saying, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in among the saints, it is an insidious thing and most difficult to meet because it is often not open to discipline; and yet, if covetousness slips into the heart, it checks the power of Christ over the soul and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in; but this covetous care about earthly things is so subtle that, while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though of course I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

The Cross and the Glory

In the New Testament God has revealed to us two wondrous truths—the cross and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a solemn and blessed subject for the contemplation of our hearts—the death of the Son of God upon Calvary's cross on the earth, and His glorification at the right hand of the Majesty in the heaven above. How little our souls enter into these precious things, although the glory of God, and the eternal destiny of the whole of Adam's race, depends upon them. Without the death of Christ there is no salvation; and without the resurrection, the death would have been ineffectual.

The death of Christ was the voluntary act of a perfect, sinless, holy Man. Death had no claim upon Him, for death is the wages of sin, and in Him is no sin (1 John 3:5). And death is Satan's power (Heb. 2:14). But Satan had no power over Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in

Me." John 14:30. But Jesus laid down His life for the glory of the Father, the salvation of His own, and the deliverance of creation. The foundation of all this was perfectly laid in His death. God was infinitely glorified, and sin's judgment borne by the Holy One. He cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost.

But if all ended there, the cross would simply show that man had wrought his own will against the Christ of God, and that Satan had gotten the victory. But where is He now? He was buried in the grave, but God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory. The enemy's greatest victory proved to be his greatest defeat. The cross is vacated, the grave is empty, and the Christ is risen. And the resurrection of Christ is a complete and eternal triumph over all the power of the enemy. The whole question of sin, sins, Satan, death, judgment, hell, found its answer at the cross. The resurrection is

God's testimony to the whole universe to the fact that His holy claims have all been perfectly met, once and forever, and that He is infinitely glorified in the work of His Son. He has exalted the blessed Man who did it, to His own right hand. The once crucified is the now glorified One. The cross is exchanged for the throne. Jesus is made both Lord and Christ. Soon every created intelligence will celebrate His praise, and own Him worthy as Man of that exalted place.

We must never separate the glory from the cross. If I am occupied with Christ on the cross only, and my death with Him there, I shall stop far short of my proper blessing and privilege as a Christian.

If I am occupied with Christ in glory, and my association with Him there, and forget the cross, I shall become lifted up, and unpractical in my walk and ways. The knowledge of the gospel of the glory of Christ involves corresponding responsibility. If Christ, the Beloved in glory, is the measure of my acceptance before God, Christ, and Christ only, is the standard and model for my walk and ways. May God in His rich grace give to every beloved Christian reader of these lines to enter more and more into our wonderful position before God, and to walk worthy of our elevated calling

in our daily life and circumstances until we behold our Savior face to face.

Words to a Dejected Saint

Look away from yourself and from your backslidings which have filled your heart with darkness and despair. There is no profit in dwelling on them. Look up. There is One in heaven who suffered for the sins you deplore, and who, having loved His own that are in the world, loves them unto the end. When He chose you and called you to know Himself, when He rejoiced over you as the shepherd over the sheep, He knew everything - knew all about these backslidings even as He knew Peter would deny Him with oaths and curses. They have not taken Him by surprise. Go then to Him, unburden your soul to Him, and go confiding in that love which never alters. Jesus is the same; and He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, loves you with a Father's love. Return then, poor wanderer; never did a warmer welcome wait for any than for you.

Difference Between Grace and Mercy

Mercy and grace, though they may touch one another at certain points, are not the same thing, and therefore could not be used interchangeably as if they were words of equal value.

Grace simply means free gift, or free favor, and it does not necessarily raise any question as to the character of the individual to whom the gift is given, or the favor shown. It excludes every idea of remuneration and of legal claim on the part of the recipient; otherwise, grace would be no more grace. (Rom. 11:6.)

When however we speak of mercy shown to any, we imply actual demerit in the person to whom mercy is extended. Both the one who shows mercy and the one who receives it are conscious that another kind of treatment altogether might have been justly measured out.

Now in our soul's blessing, both of these golden words have place. We are said to be justified freely by God's grace, for it is certain that we never worked for it, nor can we in anywise remunerate God for so astonishing an act of favor. By grace also we are saved. Salvation is a free gift; it is too great, too grand, too priceless, too far beyond all human reach ever to visit us any other way. It is equally true that "according to His mercy He saved us." For we who are saved were once dead in trespasses and sins, the willing servants of sin and Satan, and were by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2). Mercy alone could meet our case and, blessed be God, He is rich in it.

So we sing-

"How shall I meet His eyes?

Mine on Himself I cast,

And own myself the Savior's prize;

Mercy from first to last."

Do Angels Sing?

When the Lamb comes out (Rev. 5), the elders sing (not "sung") a new song. Notice that the angels never sing. People make them sing, but they never do in Scripture. Angels shout and cry, but there is only one note found with them. Man has all kinds of infirmities, but he can be tuned; it takes such as man to be tuned. The angels shout and praise, and that is lovely. And they stand. And at the tomb, two angels sat. But these elders sing a new song.

Do I Lack Rest?

"Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest."

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me;... and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. 11.

Faith knows the Lord Jesus, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, as the One in whom all fullness dwells, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth, seated on the throne, the orderer of and ruler over all. There is He blessed, and blessed forever. But it is altogether another place in which we see Him stand in this chapter- despised and rejected of all those unto whom He had presented Himself in the name of Jehovah. And there too He is blessed, and blessed for us.

John the Baptist-"Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"-even he seems doubting.

Israel-"Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented"-equally displeased with John and with Jesus, content neither with law nor with grace. Men do not like righteousness-that is too strict for them. Neither like they grace -that is too free. They would have part one and part the other.

Again. If we look at the "cities wherein most of His mighty works were done"- "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tire and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you"-we find them worse than any other. So here we see the Lord Jesus rejected on every hand.

It is a solemn thought that we are "unto God a sweet savor of Christ... in them that perish," as well as "in them that are saved." His testimony rejected, the soul of Jesus finds its rest in God. He had done God's will; the name of God had been glorified; there was all the full consciousness of this. Therefore, what blessed repose of soul! Nowhere do we find the Lord Jesus rising more above the power of circumstances, rejoicing more in spirit, than here. His soul, in the midst of this weary world, needed rest, needed repose, and it found that which it needed in submitting to the will of God.

"At that time"-after and amid all the rejection - the Lord Jesus "answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." He bowed to the righteous sovereignty of God.

Now I believe this would ever be the position of soul in the saint when walking in communion with God. Assuredly it is the right spirit because it is the recognition of God's ordering "all things after the counsel of His own will." But then how different from the petulance of many of us!

Jesus, when rejected, could still rest in the sovereignty of God. If we witness our testimony rejected; our wishes disappointed; our motives misunderstood; trial coming whence we least expected it, from Christians, perhaps from our own family, from those whom we have sought to serve; then is the time to bow to the righteous sovereignty of God, and to say, "I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight." O dear friends, if our souls knew a little more of the marvelous mercy vouchsafed to any of us, in God's having revealed Jesus, quickened us when dead in trespasses and sins, put forth the arm of His power on our behalf, we should not be wasting our time, as is now too frequently the case, in vain murmurings and regrets. We should be enabled to say, "I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Beloved, this is most blessed; there is in it the recognition of the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"; there is no reasoning here. In Jeremiah we find complaint, cursing the day in which he was born; in Habakkuk, argument; in Job, self-vindication; but here there is nothing of the sort; it is the simple subjection to the "will of God," as being the best thing possible. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

What "seemed good" in the Father's sight, was good in the sight of Jesus. It was ever so. "Lo, I come... to do Thy will, O God." Now this is resignation. It is not resignation merely to bow to that which we cannot escape; true resignation recognizes a thing to be good and fitting because it is the will of God, however trying, however painful to ourselves. "I thank Thee."

There is another blessed truth. When Jesus felt Himself to be rejected by all about Him, He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Here the Lord Jesus stands blessedly, in utter rejection by man, but "all things" given unto Him of God.

Beloved, did you ever find, when your own wills have been thwarted, when there has been self-denial, and the bowing of the will to God, something opened to the soul in blessing which it had never known before? It is habitually and practically true that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

As to matter of fact, Jesus is here the rejected One-rejected of the world-but as the consequence of this, He is the exalted One of the Father. And now He can tell forth, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Although the world knew Him not, the Father knew Him; although the world delighted not in Him, the Father delighted in Him; although He was not precious to the world, He was precious to the Father.

Again: "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." I find that the Lord Jesus Christ, by the knowledge of the Father in His own soul, was supported all through His rejection, and now He stands forth as able to "reveal" the Father's name to others. The Father is only known by the revelation of the Son. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

If you are of the world, you will not want to know that name which Jesus came to manifest. If the world is your portion, you will not want to know that name which was the portion of Jesus when the world had rejected Him "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and

the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

But I would now speak a little on the last verses of this chapter, and endeavor to bring out some of the blessed truth contained in them.

There is a marked distinction between what is said here of Jesus giving rest, and our finding rest-a distinction of much importance. He does not tell me to do anything in order that He might give me rest; it is simply, "Come unto Me." But in order to my finding rest, He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Practical obedience is made necessary.

It is of great moment to see the connection these things have one with the other; the saints often lose the present practical enjoyment of the rest which Jesus has given them because of not taking heed to it.

In the consciousness of the possession of "all things"-all things being delivered unto Him of the Father, all power given unto Him in heaven and earth, all judgment committed unto Him, everything (for there is not one single thing which the Father has not given into the hands of Jesus as the rejected One of the world) His -He says, "Come unto Me."

What a most blessed connection there is then between Jesus receiving "all things" and His asking us to come unto Himself. He does not say, "Come unto Me" as the despised and rejected One merely; no, "Come unto Me" as the One, "despised and rejected" indeed "of men," yet having in Himself all that men eagerly seek after, all that they count estimable, everything that is an object of human ambition. He is worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." There is in Him whom the world has rejected, not only everything that is suited to our need as sinners, but that also which can satisfy the utmost desire of our hearts; therefore it is, "Come." This is most blessed; it shows forth the grace of the heart of Jesus. When we find Him as the "rejected" One turning round and saying, "Come unto Me"- "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"-we learn grace indeed!

Coming unto Him, believing on His name, is all the great secret of the rest He offers. The self-righteous multitude, the scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, had rejected Him, but Jesus knew that there were some standing around weary, heavy laden ones, trying to get rid of their burden of guilt in vain. The law could never give them relief; the law could never take away their sin. To these He turns; "Come unto Me, and / will give you rest." Again: there were those who had had the experience of trying to find rest in society, in friends, in the world, and to them He says, "Come unto Me." Rest, true rest, is received in simply coming to Jesus. What is it that my soul wants? "Come unto Me" is the invitation; all that it needs is in the hands of Jesus-pardon of sin, eternal life, rest, whatever it may desire-all is provided for it there.

I will here notice the order presented. The Lord Jesus does not tell us to find rest until He has first given us rest. I believe many have inverted this order, and have sought to take the yoke before they were bidden. He knows exactly what the sinner needs (as also did the Father who has delivered all things into His hands)- needs simply as a gift, not to be earned, not to be deserved, but to meet him at once-a free gift. I do press this: until there is simple rest to the soul by coming unto Jesus, in any way to act as a Christian, whether it be in worship or in service, will be bondage, for they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We must be set at rest about ourselves before we can think of acting for God. I must have rest in my soul before I can act as a saint,

before I can take upon me the "yoke" of Christ. Ere I can bear His "burden" I must have got rid of my own; I must have left it with Him.

When not coming to Jesus to receive rest at His hands- a free gift-I come to Him as a taskmaster, and thus only get a double burden instead of finding that blessed rest for my soul, wherein I, a pardoned sinner, can rest and delight; and God, a holy God, can delight also.

Jesus is the true Sabbath, wherein God has infinite delight. And He is the soul's most blessed Sabbath also. He has been the obedient One - "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: 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." Man has crucified Jesus, but God has raised Him from the dead, and now God publishes His name as the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. He has done God's will; therefore all things are delivered unto Him of the Father, and He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Beloved friends, I again repeat it: Jesus does not ask us to take His "yoke" or His "burden" upon us until we have laid aside our own. Until I am free in spirit through the knowledge of the work of Jesus on the cross, I am not able to serve aright.

Whatever we may be in our own estimation, or in the estimation of others, though despised and rejected of all around, still, as having come to Jesus, "all things are yours," not one thing withheld from us. For Jesus is the great gift of God, and in Him is treasured up every other gift-righteousness, life, peace, everything.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Jesus had borne the "burden," Jesus had borne the "yoke" Himself, and therefore He could say, "Learn of Me." I am not speaking about the burden of our sins; the Lord Jesus came also to learn "obedience by the things which He suffered." Jesus was the One who had found out all the bitterness of rejection and scorn, and yet could say, "Even so, Father"; therefore it is, "Learn of Me." In Isa. 50:10 we read, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned"; therefore He had "the tongue of the learned," and knew how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He can tell us how He has borne the yoke Himself, going lower and lower, and He can say, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Beloved, if Christ Jesus found the yoke to be easy, and the burden light-if He could say, I have overcome, how was it?-by bowing to the yoke. And how do we overcome? always by enduring, never by endeavoring to alter circumstances, never by seeking rest here. Every man naturally thinks to overcome circumstances of trial by altering them, but this is not the way with the disciple of Jesus. When the soul of the saint complains of being ill at ease, and he is seeking practical peace and rest by endeavoring to alter the circumstances in which he is placed, he is not having that peace in Jesus which Himself has promised- "In the world ye shall have tribulation," b u t i n

Me "peace." We often speak very foolishly one to another, and seem to think that change of circumstances will afford peace. But change of circumstances merely does not affect the peace of the soul at all. Let us listen to that word, "Learn of Me." Jesus did not alter circumstances; the cup did not pass from Him. No! He bowed, and said, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

There are but two ways in which to act; we must either fight our way through the world, or endure. Now I read, God "will render to every man according to his deeds:... unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish"; and on the contrary, "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Here I learn patient continuance in well doing - endurance is the great characteristic of the saint. That is the path of glory and virtue; that is the path that Jesus trod; that is the "yoke" He bore-He endured, and He found it most blessed to do so. Jesus, overcame by patient continuance in well doing, and He says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Not the rest of the fretful, impatient saint who is always trying to alter the circumstances around, but the rest of Jesus - "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

I come to Jesus as a heavy laden sinner, He gives me rest, and He does not take away that which He has given-rest

is my everlasting portion. But then I find myself here, still in the midst of a trying world, exposed to the temptations and wiles of the devil, and having an evil heart of unbelief myself. Now we would desire that all in us and about us were already as it will be by-and-by when Satan is chained, but it is not so. We may fret and be angry and disappointed because it is not; but if God does not choose to alter the character of either the flesh, the devil, or the world, it is no use to fret. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Faith says, This is the path God has chosen for me to tread. Rest is found in the denial of my own will and in following Jesus, not in seeking to alter circumstances, but in bowing the head and saying, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The Lord Jesus Himself found this second character of rest in becoming obedient unto the "yoke," in bearing the "yoke" put upon Him, and then, as One who had had the experience of it, I hear Him saying,

"Learn, of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

This "rest" is a complete contrast to the restlessness which characterizes the walk of some saints. And why? There is perhaps, from a desire for prominence, the going out into a public path of service, instead of living in that of home duties, where God would have them to adorn the doctrine they profess; hence this constant restlessness. They get uneasy, disappointed, discouraged, not settled here, not settled there, but ever disquiet.

A Christian should go on, unaffected by circumstances, in the path of practical obedience to the will of God. There, and therein alone, is the practical rest found (for it is practical, experimental rest of which I am now speaking); when I am trying to have my own will and to go on my own way, I do not find this rest.

The two things act and react one upon the other; very often we find that a saint has lost peace of soul-the blessed joy he had in knowing his sins put away forever by the blood of Jesus, and the possession of eternal life-and what is the cause? In many cases it is because he has not been

bearing the burden of Christ, but walking in the path of fleshly activity and restlessness.

His peace has thus become disturbed, and he is even tempted to doubt if he be a child of God. They do act and react in a manner and to a degree of which we are little aware. It is very wretched for a saint of God to be always questioning whether he indeed be a saint, instead of walking on in the path of healthy service.

There is still another thing that I would desire to notice briefly, and that is the great basis of Christian humility. I mean that humility which a saint has because he is a saint, and not because he is a sinner. A sinner saved by grace ought indeed to be humble; but the humility which a saint has because he is a saint and an heir of glory is of a much deeper kind than that which is occasioned by the discovery of sin. Nothing will bring a soul so low, and make him willing to serve another in the meanest of service, as the consciousness of his standing before God. Mark the Lord Jesus Christ here: He stands forth in the conscious possession of all things-"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." And yet He says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Can you put these two together? I believe you can; the soul of the really instructed saint discerns their needful connection. The Lord Jesus, in conscious possession of all things, could afford to humble Himself. What was it that enabled Him to do so but His real greatness, because God was caring for Him?- "Which thing is true in Him and in you." Nothing enables us to go and wash the saints' feet, to lay ourselves down to be trampled on, but the knowledge of our real greatness: we can then afford to be humbled; we can then afford to come down and minister to others, instead of wanting others to minister to us. A child of God needs not anything to add to his dignity, because of the dignity which is given him of God; he has all dignity, "all things" in Christ. This is the real power of truly humbling ourselves to serve others. That which will enable us to put ourselves lower than anything is the consciousness that "all things are yours;... and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Well, I believe we shall find this real and abiding peace and rest to our souls in taking the "yoke" of Christ, in not "minding high things, but going along with the lowly"

(Rom. 12:16; J.N.D. Trans.), in willingness to serve all saints-"If any man will be great among you, let him become the servant of all." "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

It is one of the happiest things to be thus a learner in the school of Christ.

The Holy Ghost, whose office and delight it is to bring before the soul the Lord Jesus as our example, never does so without grounding us first in the faith of the work that He has done for us on the cross. But if there be a place of real blessing for the servant, it is that of being put in the place of his Master. He is what He is in Himself; we are what we are in Him.

Beloved, remember, if there is restlessness instead of rest, I would say, Is not something of your will, your own will, at work, and not the "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight"?

Thoughts on Ecclesiastes

From two opposite points of view is life on earth generally regarded by mankind. The one half view it as a prospect opening out before them; the other half take a retrospective survey of all they have passed through. Like the cloudless morning of a long summer's day does it appear to one just emerging from childhood, as radiant with hope he starts forth on his journey to realize the dream of his boyhood. Like the gloomy end of a winter's day does it appear to many a one who has reached the verge of that span ordinarily allotted to man on earth, as chastened and bowed down, it may be, with the remembrance of failures, the old man travels on to the tomb. Each has formed an estimate of what life here is, but the one speaks of what he hopes for, and the other tells of that which he has found. A man's idea of a road he has not yet traveled, will often turn out to be wrong; so youth's estimate of life is generally fallacious. Can we trust to one who has traveled the road himself to give us a just idea of what life on earth really is? Each one can tell us of what he has found, and may seek to indoctrinate us with his own idea; but the picture will be differently colored according to the trials or joys each has met with by the way. It will be but the experience of an individual after all.

Man wants something more. Where shall he find it? The wisdom of the ancients cannot supply it; the researches of those who have lived in our day cannot furnish us with it. It needs one gifted with real wisdom to estimate it; it needs one able to search diligently into the things of earth to discover it. One, and one only, of the children of Adam, has been competent for the task, and he has undertaken to perform it. What David, the man after God's own heart., could not have accurately delineated, that Solomon his son could and did; and the book of Ecclesiastes is the utterance of the Preacher, dictated by the Spirit of God, to provide man authoritatively from God, but also experimentally by the wisest of men, with a just estimate of what life here below for a child of Adam really is.

Endowed by God with a measure of wisdom surpassing all before him "For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and He-man, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol." 1 Kings 4:31), and never equaled by any that have come after him, king in Jerusalem, possessed of wealth beyond any monarch the world has ever seen ("silver... was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon"), all that wealth could purchase, all that power could command, all that wisdom could search out, he could enjoy and understand. "What," then, "can the man do that cometh after the king?" "Who can eat, or who else can hasten [or enjoy] hereunto, more than I?" Eccles. 2:12, 25.

This was no idle boast. A man of pleasure, a votary of science, the ruler over kings, meting out justice to his subjects, answering all the hard questions of the Queen of Sheba, fertile in invention, diligent in study, rich in all that constituted the wealth of a nomad, pastoral, or settled, and highly civilized people- what source of pleasure was sealed up to him? what field of knowledge on earth was kept from him? Of all the pleasures that man can revel in, he had drunk deep, while at the same time he investigated the works of God, and learned those laws by which the life and order of the universe are regulated. And, when we speak of Solomon's wisdom, we must remember it was

not mere genius as people speak, nor the fruit of matured study and diligent attention; but God gave him wisdom and knowledge, besides riches, wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings that had been before him, neither shall any after him have the like (2 Chron. 1:12). Such was the one appointed to depict faithfully what the life on earth of a fallen creature is, and only can be, as One and One alone who has trod this earth as man, has rightly and fully exhibited what man should be. David's son describes the one; David's Lord has set forth the other.

The book of Ecclesiastes then is of great value, and might profitably be studied by men of the world in our day. Its writer had no reason to bear a grudge against the world: as men would say, it had used him well, conceding him his place, paying him due honor, and rendering him full homage to his marvelous wisdom. For "King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year." 2 Chron. 9:22-24.

Competent then surely to tell us what life is, what has he to say of it? how does he describe it? "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Eccles. 1:2. Were these the words of a disappointed man whose hopes had been cruelly crushed and himself roughly treated by the way, none could wonder at such a commencement. But these are the words of the most prosperous, humanly speaking, of men the world has ever witnessed. "Vanity of vanities" - a mere breath, a vapor passing over the earth, short-lived in its existence- such is the recorded experience of the son of David, king in Jerusalem, and that not of some things, but of all. "All is vanity," "saith the Preacher."

And here he takes a title not elsewhere met with outside this book-Preacher. He would collect those about him who were desirous to hear, and instruct them, for such is the meaning of the term. So, while other portions of Scripture treat of the future, and the path of the righteous on earth, this addresses itself to all whose hearts are in the world, pursuing the occupations of life, and tells them what they really are, as the king's son has discovered by his own experience, and has recorded by the pen of inspiration for the instruction of all who will hearken to him.

"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" He takes up the diligent, well-occupied man, toiling away, the man who finds plenty to do and is happy in doing it, thoroughly engaged in the business of life. But why this cry of the Preacher who "sought to find out acceptable words"? Chap. 12:10. And why does he view things so mournfully? The secret comes out. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever." The earth abides; man does not; hence the question that needs no answer, "What profit," etc.

And here we are furnished with a view of death of which it is well for man to be reminded. Death is the wages of sin, but it is not viewed in this aspect in Ecclesiastes. It is not the reason of its entrance into the world that Solomon dilates on, but its presence here as a worm at the root of the tree of pleasure. (Chap. 2:15; 3:19, 20; 5:15; 6:6; 9:3.) It mars pleasure, it chills enjoyment, for it cuts off man just when he would sit down after years of toil to reap the fruit of his labor. How different was the prospect of Adam ere he fell! How different will be the experience of saints during the Millennium, and of men on the new earth! But now to man, feeling the consequences of the fall, death is the great marplot blasting all his hopes. What takes place after death is another

matter; other scriptures set that forth. This book regards death from this side of the grave, and shows how it effects a severance between man and the fruits of all his labor which he thinks he is just about to reap. And the misery of it is just this: man has labored for years and looks naturally to enjoy what he, not others, has amassed, but finds death comes in and takes him away, so he leaves all the fruit of his labor to be enjoyed by another. "There is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil." Chap. 2:21.

What a trouble then is death-an unwelcome visitor which none can keep out of his house. It comes unbidden, at an unseasonable time in man's eyes, and strips its victim of everything; for "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?" Chap. 5:15, 16. And whatever his position on earth, all finally go to one place (chap. 6:6)- the rich, the poor, the wise, the fool, the righteous, the wicked are found at last with the untimely birth which has never seen the sun. And death, the great leveler of all ranks, reduces man to a level below himself, even to that of the beasts; "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Chap. 3:19, 20. With the thread of man's life thus unrolling before him, at one end of it his exit from the womb, at the other end his exit from the world by death, all that is seen being the transient existence of a mortal born to die, we can understand the reason of that cry, "What profit hath a man," etc.

But if death deprives a man of the enjoyment of the fruits of his toil, his life and all that surrounds him speaks of ceaseless and reiterated labor. The work begun is never perfected. Things in heaven and things on earth proclaim this. "The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose, going toward the south, and turning again to the north" (thus some connect verses 5 and 6). Each day the work is done, only to be repeated again the next day. Each year, the course it has traversed, is traversed again.

"The wind," too, "whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." The rivers are ever running to the sea, "yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again," or perhaps better, "unto the place where the rivers go, thither they turn to go." "All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

Thus nature would teach him, if he regarded it aright, that here, as yet, no abiding rest can be enjoyed. Life is a busy scene. What has been will be, and there is nothing new under the sun. And to complete the picture of vanity, "there is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." The obliviousness in Solomon's days of what had gone before was not a feature peculiar to his time. It has, it will, characterize man in all ages. What profit then is there in the labor of man? What has been done will be done again, and what has been effected will be forgotten by the generations which may come after.

With this as the preface to his book, the Preacher proceeds to show that he writes not from hearsay, nor culls the wisdom of others, but has tried for himself what life under the sun is for one of the human race. (Chap. 1:12-2:26.)

He set himself absolutely to the task of searching out by wisdom all things that are done under the sun. In this he made good use of that wonderful gift God had bestowed on him. He beheld them all, "And behold," he writes, "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Man may see the defects, be conscious of the want, but he cannot supply it. What a condition to be in! Such is man's condition on earth as one who has departed from God. He must feel keenly, if he feels at all, how bitter are the results of turning from the living and true God. He sees what is crooked, discerns what is wanting, but cannot put things straight, nor supply that which is lacking. "All the foundations of the earth are out of course" are the words of Asaph. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" is the experience of the king's son. And this, we must remember, is not the experience of the sinner reaping the fruit of what he has sown, but one of the old creation (though a sinner himself) feeling the ruin and disorder sin has brought on the earth.

Thoughts on Ecclesiastes

As originally created by God, man was meant to find unalloyed delight on earth, with a nature capable of enjoyment, a mind capable of instruction and expansion, and a frame capable of exertion; and everything around him would have ministered to his pleasure, or have afforded opportunities for the full development of his faculties. Is that the case now? Let us listen to the words of the Preacher again: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Chap. 1:16-18. This is human experience, yet not the experience which of necessity a man must have, but the experience of all men who are still suffering under the consequences of the fall. And however great man may be on earth, whatever be the powers of his mind or the yearnings of his heart, he cannot as a child of Adam get beyond what is here described. Like some fair ruin, with here and there traces of exquisite workmanship still remaining by which we can contrast the evident design of the architect with the present condition of the building, so we can discern in man's feelings and powers what he was originally capable of, while compelled to own he is but a wreck of that noblest of God's works first seen on the sixth day of creation.

But whence did he acquire that experience which enabled him to pronounce such a verdict on all the pursuits of men under the sun? He tells us: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, 'What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting for guiding) mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I

gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts [or, as it might be rendered, and perhaps more correctly, 'a wife and wives,' that is, many wives]. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor." Chap. 2:1-10.

Such was the wide range of pleasures, intellectual and carnal, that he explored. Nothing was withheld of any joy; but while entering so keenly into all that he describes, he tells us his wisdom remained with him. Fully competent then was he from personal experience, and from the wisdom which never forsook him, to estimate aright what all this was worth. Would not such a one be satisfied with what this life afforded? If others less favored were disappointed, he at least had his fill of everything he desired. And, having drunk deeply of all that could be indulged in, he has left on record what he found it all to be. "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." He discerned the value of wisdom; it "excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness"; but to the fool, as well as to the wise, death comes, and after death the fool and wise are forgotten; yes, the wise man dies as the fool. Hence he hated life, and he hated all the labor which he had labored under the sun, because he must leave it to the man that shall be after him; and who knows, he mournfully asks, whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? History answers the question, and illustrates forcibly the vanity of all things which he felt so keenly. Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men that had stood before Solomon his father, and lost by his act of folly the allegiance of the ten tribes. He forsook also the Lord after three years of his reign had elapsed, witnessed the invasion of Shishak king of Egypt, and lost the treasures Solomon had amassed. The shields of gold went to swell the coffers of Egypt, and Rehoboam had to substitute shields of brass in their stead. From speaking of himself, Solomon turns to others and, taking a survey of all things done under the sun, declares all is vanity.

Of wealth he speaks. It has its use. Money is a defense (Chap. 7:12); it is God's gift; yet how often do men feel the vanity of it all. Coveted, toiled after as the one great good, the man acquires wealth, fills his coffers, and yet is unsatisfied. If childless, he may desire offspring, but children are God's gift, not to be purchased by money. If he loves silver, he will not be satisfied with it (Chap. 5:10). How can things of earth really satisfy an immortal spirit? If he feasts his eyes with his money today, it may vanish away shortly, and he be left with an heir-his own child-born to inherit beggary (vv. 13, 14). Again, if he has been prospered to the last, and his riches have not fled away, he must leave them; for as he entered the world, so must he leave it. Death summons him, but not his goods with him. All that he has remains behind him, while he, naked as he entered into the world, passes out of it by the portal of death. Riches cannot satisfy the soul; they cannot buy off death, nor can their owner insure their retention for the morrow. So Solomon admonishes his fellow creatures, "What profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?"

Again the Preacher speaks and discourses about wisdom. He acknowledged its value, for none were more competent than he was to speak of it. It strengthens the wise men more than ten mighty men which are in the city. It is better than strength, he could say, and better than weapons of war. (Chap. 7:11-19; 9:16, 18.) But here also the vanity of all things done under the sun made itself felt; for when he applied his heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on

the earth, as he turned to behold the works of God, he found a limit to the prosecution of his researches; and as he surveyed the works of men, he was only made more painfully conscious of the wretchedness and ruin brought in by sin.

Of the works of creation he had learned a great deal, as is elsewhere recorded; but man is but a finite being, unable to fathom the infinite This Solomon discovered. "I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it." Chap. 8:17. There are fields of knowledge beyond man's capacity to explore or even reach. He may, like Solomon, arrive at this point, to learn from all he knows, how little he knows; how knowledge acquired is the mother of many a question which the student is unable to answer; and how incompetent he is to understand even all that he sees around him. Such must ever be his condition here. By the light of revelation we can look onward to a day when we shall, but not down here, know as we are known (1 Cor. 13:12).

Turning to investigate the actions of men, he may learn the evils that are done under the sun-the crying injustice, the lawlessness, the frauds, and many acts of oppression that are constantly practiced among men-to find, while he sees them, his powerlessness to hinder them (chap. 3:16; 8:14). Another arm is alone able to restrain the lawless; another mind than any of Adam's fallen descendants can alone devise the remedy. The day of the Son of man must dawn ere One will be found on earth competent to put things straight. How often is justice now perverted! The righteous suffer, and the guilty go free. Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place. Servants ride on horses, and princes walk as servants on earth. (Chap. 10:6, 7.) And the wise man, courted for his help in time of pressing need, is forgotten when the hour of distress has passed away (chap. 9:1, 5). Thus wisdom may disclose to its possessor what is wrong, and make him feel the bitterness of it, sensible all the time of his powerlessness to correct it. To know good and evil was the bait held out by the serpent- to be just like God. The wise man sees clearly the evil, knows what ought to be, but learns he cannot do it. And woman, originally God's provision for man, his suited help, is found to become, when a tool of the enemy, an instrument for his everlasting ruin (chap. 7:26-29).

After this we may be prepared for the picture presented at the close of the book. Man, created originally in the image of God, not subject to death, is depicted as traveling onward to the tomb, learning as he goes along, as we have seen, that all around of things done under the sun are vanity; and at the close of his life, giving in his own death a most convincing proof of the accuracy of the Preacher's statement, "All is vanity." Beautiful is the poetry of the description, but sad are the features of it.

While others may love to describe what man might have been, Solomon tells us what he is; but he speaks not of his greatness, his powers of mind or body; he writes of decay. Created to be the lord of God's creation on earth, manifesting the power of mind over matter; a pigmy by the side of the everlasting hills, yet able to accomplish gigantic works which seem almost to defy the ravages of time; far inferior to many of the animals in brute strength, yet able to subdue them, and to make the forces of nature subservient to his will; what might he not have been had sin not entered into the world? A worn out vessel, his strength decayed, his knees tottering, his hands trembling, his sight failing, his ears dull of hearing; all that once charmed him, able to charm him no longer, a

mere wreck of what he was, awaiting the hour of his departure to his long home: such is he as described by Solomon. Who will wonder that the burden with which he began is the burden with which he ends. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity." Chap. 1:2; 12:8.

But amid all that spoke of vanity there was another subject he touched on, for, being wise, he taught the people. He had spoken at length about man and his works; he speaks briefly about God and what He does. And what he says about God (for the name Jehovah does not occur in the book) only brings out in higher relief the ruined condition of man. Man abides not, his thoughts perish, his works crumble to dust, and his name is forgotten. Created originally not for death, he is now born to die; but God abides. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Chap. 3:14. Here in the midst of what is transient is something permanent. This he had found and desired to impress on others (chap. 5:1-7; 11:9; 12:1). He would tell the creature of the Creator. It is not grace that he is charged to proclaim; it is not salvation he is empowered here to offer; but to God's creatures, responsible as such to Him that made them, he would speak. The Creator will take cognizance of, and make judicial inquiry into, the actions of His creatures. This none can escape, and of this all need to be reminded. And now that he has exposed the vanity of all things that are done under the sun, he opens out the only word for man to follow: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Chap. 12:13. The fuller light that we possess confirms all that Solomon said of man, and tells us likewise more about God; but the principle here enunciated is true for all time-the creature should own the authority of God, and yield implicit obedience to all He is pleased to enjoin. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Chap. 12:14.

And just where Ecclesiastes ends, Proverbs begins. Ecclesiastes exposes the vanity of all things here; Proverbs tells us of true wisdom. Ecclesiastes lands man as man in decay and death; Proverbs holds out life, and tells us how to walk wisely on earth. In perfect keeping with this are the subjects of their closing chapters. What Ecclesiastes describes has been briefly referred to. What Proverbs speaks of, is man and woman in their respective spheres; the man, King Lemuel, ruling; the woman, the virtuous wife, guiding the house wisely and well. We see them in their work, but we read of no end to it. Death is not introduced as cutting short their career of usefulness, or carrying them away, when helpless, by old age. They exemplify what Solomon had taught his son would flow from the possession of that wisdom which is to be desired-life. And we close the book, feeling that we leave them, as it were, the one on the throne and the other in the house. We come to the end of the book of Proverbs, but we leave them still in life and activity.

Few Word on Elijah: a Man of Like Passions With Ourselves

These chapters set before us several important principles, and we see there pointed out several very different characters; we learn in them also the ways of God.

Ahab and Jezebel appear on the scene; Elijah prophesies; Obadiah is seen; and the seven thousand men of God are mentioned in chapter 19:18.

The character of Ahab is presented to us in chapter 16: 29-33. Ahab, Jezebel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets were at the head of the apostates of Israel who at that time worshiped Baal. And Obadiah and the seven thousand were mixed up with the people (chap. 18), not that they served the idol, but they were friends of Ahab. As for Elijah, he was the friend of God and, separated entirely from the apostasy, he was the only witness of the truth in the midst of all the evil.

Let us distinguish then these three different classes of persons: Ahab and Israel, apostates on one side; Elijah, on the other, the faithful servant of God; and again, somewhat different, Obadiah and the seven thousand connected always with the evil. Now let us examine the different characters of these persons.

What were the circumstances of Elijah? This feeble and poor man had no force and strength save what he found in the Lord, his only support (chap. 17:1-9). He was a man of faith and prayer; keeping before the Lord, he could boldly testify against the apostasy of Israel, and denounce the judgments of God.

It is said to him (chap. 17:3), "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan"; then in verse 5 we read that he obeyed this command. We see already then that Elijah had no power, but had faith in God and knew that all blessing is in obedience. Also from the moment that the word was addressed to him, he submitted to it and went to the brook Cherith where he learned to depend on God.

Ahab and all Israel were the enemies of Elijah, but God was his friend, and in each step that he took in fidelity to the Lord, he learned the fidelity of the Lord to him. By this means he was more and more strengthened for the mission on which he was about to be employed (chap. 18:1). God sent him to be with a poor widow who entertained him during the famine, after he was fed by the ravens at Cherith. During all the time that he was cared for by the ravens at the brook, and by the widow at Sarepta, he learned to know the riches of the love and grace of God. It is there precisely that we learn to know ourselves also in all the circumstances in which we are placed by the Lord.

We see then in chapter 17 the simple and entire obedience of Elijah. Whether the Lord sent him to a brook to be fed by ravens; whether he was sent to a widow during the famine; whether he was sent before his real enemy Ahab (chap. 18); he made no objection, but counting on the Lord he did that which he was ordered. He was nevertheless a man subject to the same passions and to the same infirmities as ourselves (Jas. 5:17, 18); but he had much of that faith, the power of which is

infinite. By it he could say that there would be no rain, and there was none; by it he could raise the son of the widow, and overcome Ahab the king, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. These circumstances show us clearly that Elijah was in the place where one is blessed; namely, in that of obedience. Men were his enemies; Ahab had sent persons everywhere to find him out; but the Lord was his refuge, and he had learned to trust in Him.

Let us examine what concerns Obadiah (chap. 18:3, etc.). He feared the Lord greatly, but in spite of that he was in the service of Ahab's house and did not bear testimony against its evil. He did not suffer the reproach of Christ. He was not like Elijah, pursued and chased from country to country. He did not know what it was to be fed by the ravens or the widow; that is to say, he lived little by faith, and knew little of the ways of God. He lived at his ease in the midst of the world. Ahab was his lord. But who was Elijah's? Jehovah. (Compare chap. 18:10 and 15.) Oh, what a difference! Obadiah knew the good things of the earth; Elijah knew the good things of heaven.

Let us now read verses 7-11. All the thoughts of Obadiah were about his master whom he dreaded; but all the thoughts of Elijah were centered on the Lord, his only Master. The superiority of his position to that of Obadiah is further indicated by this circumstance, that the latter fell on his face before Elijah when he met him (v. 7). And when Elijah tells him to go and announce to Ahab, Obadiah is frightened. Yet Obadiah was a saint of God; he had even hid the prophets; but he had no strength whatever to bear testimony to the Lord, because he was associated with evil. As to Elijah, he could say fearlessly to Ahab and to all the people, "If the LORD be God, follow Him" (v. 21). Whence did, therefore, this boldness and power come, as seen in Elijah, a poor and weak man who had been straitened to this point, that he depended upon ravens and upon a widow for his food? From the fact that he stood aloof from the apostasy, that he lived by faith and had a single eye fixed upon God. Oh! how far better his position was than that of Obadiah.

There is in these things an application for us to make to ourselves. Let us gather from them this lesson, that since the Lord is God, it is He whom we must serve, and that in order to be faithful to Him, we have to separate ourselves from all the principles of the apostasy by which we are surrounded.

We know how Elijah triumphed over his enemies; there is therefore no need of repeating the issue of the scene on Carmel; but let us observe that when Elijah prayed the Lord that He might give him the victory, what he asked was, that it might be known that the Lord was God (v. 37). All the desire of his heart consisted in these two things: that the Lord might be glorified, and that His people might know Him. There was not in him the least desire to lift himself up or to exalt himself; it mattered not to him if he were nothing, provided that God might be glorified, and His people brought to know Him. Oh! that the same desire might be in us, and that all thought of vainglory may be cast away, far away.

Let us now read chapter 19. Poor Elijah! he had a lesson to learn which we ourselves, weak and poor as he was, need to learn also. When Elijah stood before the Lord, he could by the Lord's power stop or send rain to the earth, raise up the widow's son, etc. But when he stood, not now before the Lord but before Jezebel, he was then without strength, and this ungodly woman was able to cause him to fear. Downcast, Elijah therefore goes into the wilderness, sits down under a juniper tree, and asks the Lord to take away his life (v. 4). How different he is here from what he was in the chapter before! How little did he remember what the Lord had done for him; how little

did he have the mind of God, and did he expect the chariot of fire which would shortly take him up to heaven! (2 Kings 2:11.)

So it is with us. We are downcast, discouraged, and weak in ourselves as soon as we fail to live in faith and prayer, and we cannot say, as Elijah in chapter 18, "The Lord... before whom I stand."

In chapter 17 Elijah by faith could make the widow's oil and meal last; but here he is weak and needs that an angel come to strengthen him and give him some food (chap. 19:5-8). He eats, drinks, and like a man without strength lies down. But the Lord sends the angel back again, for He is plentiful in grace and mercy; He watches over all our ways and feeds our souls according to all our needs and according to all our circumstances. The Lord therefore bore with Elijah and succored him, and it is also what He is with respect to us. As He was afflicted in all the affliction of His people, so is He with us in ours now (Isa. 63:9).

In chapter 17 God was leading Elijah and telling him where to go, and Elijah obeyed. But in chapter 19 Elijah, fearing Jezebel, flees away and does not wait for the Lord's commandment to go into the wilderness. See therefore what a sad message is sent to him, as recorded in verse 13; "What doest thou here, Elijah?" In verses 11 and 12 we read that a wind, an earthquake, and a fire are sent; but Elijah did not find the Lord in these things, and they could not bring comfort or strength to his soul. God was appearing in His grandeur and power, but what Elijah needed was the still small voice; what he wanted was the manifestation of grace, and communion with his God. When, therefore, Elijah had heard the still small voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle and stood ready to obey the Lord. By the power and strength that he had found in this voice he was once again enabled to obey the commandment of the Lord.

What we have said on these chapters is very incomplete, but we believe that the chief thing is to bring out of them the principles calculated to give the intelligence of what the chapters contain. Let us therefore be mindful of avoiding the position of Obadiah and the seven thousand who were taking their ease in the midst of apostasy, but who were without strength to bear testimony against evil. Let us also remember that, though Elijah was despised and rejected of men, he was nevertheless in the place of blessing. And if, like himself, we are brought to realize our weakness, let us remember that communion with God can alone give us afresh both zeal and devotedness and joy.

Evangelizing: the Editor's Column

It is being widely heralded that there is a great spiritual resurgence sweeping this country and other parts of the world, and that people, disillusioned after years of materialism, are now hungry for the gospel. We would that this were so, but it is neither our experience nor is it what we hear from near and far. Where the simple gospel as was preached by the apostles is proclaimed in halls, chapels, on the street corners, in penal institutions, and in tract dissemination, there is still the same apathy and cold indifference manifested that has so long prevailed. The present conditions are much the same as when the Lord Himself spoke in Matthew 11 of the preaching of John the Baptist and of His own. The people then were neither moved by the pronouncements of coming judgment and call to repentance by John, nor by the sweet strains of grace coming from the lips of Him who was full of grace and truth.

There are none of the earmarks present of a distinct work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men as was witnessed about 100 years ago. At that time men, women, and children were burdened with a deep sense of sin and guilt before God, and truly sought salvation. People were saved at prayer meetings where there was no preaching whatever, and many tears dropped from the eyes of those who were overwhelmed by conviction before God. The impact was felt in whole communities, and crime diminished proportionately. The very opposite seems to be the rule now, for many authorities scarcely know how to cope with the rising tide of violence and corruption.

It is true that great crowds turn out to hear world-famed evangelists and to see "Christian celebrities." At some of these meetings thousands have signed cards or raised their hands to signify their interest in Christ, or to dedicate their lives to the church, or for one of the many reasons suggested for coming forward. We sincerely hope that among these there are many who have or will truly find the Savior. We can, with the Apostle, rejoice if Christ is preached and souls get a blessing, but, is our considered judgment that there is much in these big drives that is artificial and spurious. There is a day coming that will declare the true worth of such displays, although we should seek even now to weigh things in the balances of the Sanctuary, and form our own lives and paths of service according to the Word. Many things pass as great religiously, in this world, which will be reduced to ashes by the fire which shall try every man's work of what sort it is-not of how much it is (1 Cor. 3:13). Elaborate preparations and great publicity are no substitute for the work of the Spirit of God. Man naturally is impressed by great displays as the Philistines were when all Israel shouted until the earth rang again, but Israel's religious excitement on that occasion was hollow and vain, and soon they were defeated by the Philistines. Even Elijah was moved by a great wind and an earthquake and fire, but the Lord's power was in the still small voice.

Modern evangelism is mixing with the world it pretends to convert, and the net result will inevitably be a greatly lowered spiritual tone throughout Christendom. It will foster and breed worldliness among true believers and open the floodgates for error. In order to attract the crowds and get what are deemed results, there has to be much that appeals to the flesh. It is not a rejected and

despised Christ that is preached, but a popular and world-adorned Christ. It is not the cross which Paul said crucified him to the world and the world to him, but a cross which has suddenly become honorable and great in the world. Paul never preached a popular gospel in his day. The popular gospel of that time was one which could mix circumcision and Judaism with the truth of God. Judaism was a religion adapted to man in the flesh, and that accommodated itself to the world in its politics and schemes, but Paul preached Christ crucified-a Man cast out by the world- which was foolishness to the cultured Greek, and a stumbling block to the religious Jew.

When Paul went to Rome, he went there as a prisoner. The great of the world were there, and God had decreed that they should hear the gospel, but not in such a way that would flatter them-they were to hear it from a man in chains. Some in Caesar's household were saved, but they were not paraded as "Christian celebrities" to glamorize the gospel. Some might say, Times have changed since then. So they have, but a rejected Christ is no more wanted now than then. Constantine was the Roman emperor that popularized Christianity, and thousands upon thousands were added to the Church; instead of Christians being persecuted, they were honored; but alas! the Church rapidly sank down to the level of the world. Such will ever be the result of a popular, glamorized gospel.

People prominent in the world's affairs-even in the entertainment field-are sought because of their influence. Now we do not say that the entertainment world of Hollywood has greater sinners than there are elsewhere, nor do we think that the gospel of the grace of God cannot reach to them-thank God, it can and perhaps does. But does that make them "Christian celebrities" who should be displayed, while many of them continue in their work of entertaining men, women, and children who are on the road to hell? Such fare is what the god of this world serves to delude his victims Here is a statement of one of these so-called celebrities who was justifying singing religious songs after the manner of the world: "The youth of the country needs impetus. If they can know that religion can be fun and happy, then they'll be interested." And to make religion fun, people are given to feel that they can accept Christ and go right on with their worldly occupations and pastimes; in other words, they can have Christ and the world too. Such carnal Christianity can only have a demoralizing effect on the profession as a whole, and on so-called fundamentalism in particular.

People who profess to be saved under the influence of present-day evangelism with its expertly planned histrionics, are apt to be mere "stony ground" hearers which have no root. The consciences of such have never been plowed, and they have never felt themselves lost sinners in the sight of God, nor been before Him about their sins. They have never had to count the cost of confessing Christ before a hostile world, for they have been led to believe it is a popular thing to do. "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" Luke 14:34. Christianity without repentance, and without its separating effect from the world, is like salt which is no longer salty-it is worthless.

We are mindful of the fact that God is sovereign and can use such carnal presentations of the gospel to save souls if He chooses to do so, but even where it is real it is bound to be shallow and superficial except as God may deepen the work through other means. The Christianity of the Bible is a deep, vital, throbbing thing which is to influence lives day by day-to separate believers in heart from a condemned world. O for more depth in conversions of souls! O for more holy separation

from the world-from its religion, its philosophies, its pleasures, its spirit of wealth, its politics, and all!

And where do these souls who are really converted (if only shallowly) go when the great campaign is over? Everything is so well organized that their names and addresses are collected and turned over to some church. And then what will many of them get? Near the same time that we received an account of the great campaign in England, stating that "about every individual church of all the denominations" participated, we received another paper published under the authority of "The Lord Bishop of Coventry," in which the lead article derided the books of Jonah and Daniel as not of divine inspiration. Think of souls who made a profession of being converted being turned over to a church which would call any part of God's Word only a parable and "superb story telling,... the English of the translation" being "up to the level of Shakespeare." And yet nearly every church with such abominable heterodoxy was linked in a great evangelistic drive-for what? to save souls? or to make church members? And if they were saved, how can they grow on such perversions and poison?

And from these movements which link worldly methods with a gospel effort, and in which many dear children of God participate, there are many gradations of worldly Christianity on down to a vulgarized travesty. There are the religious novels (the sale of which is pointed out as a mark of spiritual resurgence) which distort the Word of God and warp truth so that the reader has wrong thoughts instilled in him, and is blinded thereby. Then there are the songs with religious themes that are being accorded a place side by side with trashy hit songs of the day, and are enjoyed by absolute Christ-rejecters. The world is also being entertained by motion pictures of Biblical narratives which amount to vulgar parodies and caricatures on the truth. Think of a godless, Christ-rejecting world, intoxicated by the pleasures of sin, going down to hell while enjoying a burlesque representation of solemn lessons from the Word of God. O Christendom, whither art thou bound? How true a description has been given us of these days: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3:5.

Just because religion as such is now news which the secular world prints does not mean that the world is any closer to God. Religion is news in India, and in the Moslem world; it was news in the old pagan Roman Empire; it was news in Jerusalem when they cried, "Away with Him, away with Him." The world has had plenty of religion which was false, and the current trend in Christendom is only hastening on to the time when they shall believe a lie, and God will allow it to be so, for they are rejecting the truth-the Christ of God.

And now, fellow-Christian, let us not be discouraged. Let us seek to walk in holy separation from the world, and to hold forth the word of life in whatever sphere we occupy. Let us live Christ before the world, and seek as we may have opportunity to speak a word for Him or to give a good gospel tract to a weary soul. May we keep a clear perspective of the present trend, and yet press on unobtrusively testifying to the true grace of God.

If the reader happens to be one who has been called to preach the gospel, then he should do it as of the ability which God gives-"He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." Jer. 23:28. The Lord is your master, and He takes careful notice of what you do and how you do it. He will not reward you for breaking the rules. It is faithfulness that He values-faithfulness to Him and to His Word. You may have little of what men

call success to show for your labors, but in the coming day may He say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Matt. 25:21, 23.

Faith, Hope and Love

It is very striking to find that in every epistle, with the exception of Galatians, the Apostle gives thanks unceasingly to God for the saints to whom he writes, remembering them in his prayers night and day. His heart being with God, praise to Him is the first thing that rises up, though afterward he may have to instruct or rebuke or correct them in his letters. Thus the heart, being with God, gets at that which God gives.

In the case of the Galatians, they had apparently gotten off the ground of justification by faith, so that he stands in doubt of them; and yet, after he has expressed his feelings of perplexity and sorrow at their state, we find his heart is still with God above the circumstances, enabling him to say, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

Now this is just what we need in passing through the world. We must go through it, and God means that we should find it a place of trial and difficulty, that it may test our hearts and teach us what He is to us under all.

It is important, however, to remember that all our exercises - I mean Christian exercises - follow complete and finished redemption. There are exercises in Egypt before redemption - making bricks without straw, and the taskmaster's lash. But the Red Sea delivered God's redeemed forever from Egypt, as we read in the song of Moses - "Thou... hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." Exod. 15:13. The wilderness journey is not contemplated in this song. It is deliverance from Egypt, and God setting the redeemed in His inheritance.

So with us, our redemption in Christ has delivered us from the world and sin and death, and has brought us in Christ into the heavenly places. But, as a matter of fact, there is a wilderness to go through. God might have brought the Israelites into the land by a short way, but He led them around by the longer, "lest," as He said, "peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Exod. 13:17. He counts the hairs of their heads. He thinks of what is best for them in every circumstance. After forty years they find their clothes have not waxed old, neither have their feet swelled. They had not thought of this till the journey was over, but their God had thought of their clothing every day. He had never omitted to rain manna upon them. True, He suffered them to hunger and thirst, to humble them and prove them, but only that He might supply their bread and their water for them. Through their unbelief they would not go into the land at the end of two years, and were turned back to wander thirty-eight years longer in the desert, but God turned back with them, and took not away from them His pillar of cloud by day, nor His pillar of fire by night.

It is thus that God deals with us in all the trials and difficulties of life. He means us to have trouble and to feel the opposition of every thing around to the life He has given us. What we want then is to have the heart living with God, and then we shall have His mind about all our circumstances. Do you suppose that if Israel had been thinking of God's interest and care for them, they would have

murmured as they did? Surely not.

It does not matter what our troubles are. One may have the care of God's people pressing on him; another, the cares of the world; another, trouble in his family. There are countless varieties of exercises, no doubt appointed by Him for His people; but the answer to every trouble is having the heart living with God above the circumstances.

Now if we turn to the state of the Thessalonians, we shall see them bright and happy in the midst of most terrible persecutions. There is no epistle so happy as this. They are in what we call their first love. The springs of divine affections were bright in them. In the third verse we find faith, and hope, and love - that which constituted the full expression of grace working in the Christian - active in them. The Apostle remembers their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how far it is thus with you, dear friends? It is a blessed thing to work for the Lord. It is a great privilege to be allowed to have any service for Christ; but how far is it with you a work of faith? I do not mean to question sincerity. You may work for the Lord, and earnestly desire His blessing; but is every word you say uttered in direct faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus the expression of what your faith in Him is enjoying? or do you say what you know to be blessed truth, and what you desire God to bless, while the secret spring that should link the work with your communion to Christ is gone? It is not that you may not have faith in the work. That may be all sure, and yet, in those inner springs of your spirit, your work may not be a work of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, you may labor abundantly, and you may love the labor, and do it willingly and honestly; but is the labor so completely the result of your own personal love to Christ, that it is really what these Thessalonians' labor was, a "labor of love"? But there was more than work and labor; there was also the condition of their hearts. They looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a doctrine, but as the object of their affections. A mother looks for a son who is to return from sea, not as a mere truth, but his return is in her heart. If it be delayed, can she settle down and say, I have made a mistake, and think no more of him? Oh, no; she must exercise patience, but hers is the "patience of hope." She may attend to her household duties as before - that is quite right - but where will her thoughts be? why, wondering when her son will be home. All truths in Scripture are persons or facts. People may say, Why, you have talked of the Lord's coming now for forty years, and He has not come yet. But that alters nothing. We look for Him because we love Him, and wait to see Him, and so we exercise the "patience of hope." He is Himself waiting, and we wait with Him. We are companions in the patience of Jesus Christ. We know the reason of His delay. It is God's long-suffering in saving sinners; therefore we are not left in ignorance. But we cannot give up His return; to do so would make us the most miserable of all men. We find the "patience of hope" in our blessed Lord when in this world. He served and labored in faith and love to His Father; but He also waited for the coming glory; His life was the patience of hope.

But if we had not more than the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, the character of Christian walk would be very imperfect. In Christ there was perfect obedience. All His work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, was in obedience to God His Father. As He says in John, "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." These Thessalonians did all "in the sight of God and our Father." This obedience is most blessed, and yet it is a check upon us which we need, carrying about with us the evil we do. Their

faith, hope, and love, sweet as they were in themselves, needed to be in the sight of God their Father, under His eye, and done in obedience to Him.

Now of such the Apostle can speak as "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." He knew it, not by God's secret counsels, for none but God Himself thus knows it, but by the exhibition of His grace in them. He could see, indeed, that they were God's elect. Of the Galatians he had to say, "I stand in doubt of you." He can rejoice in these Thessalonians, as evidently chosen of God. When we see such blessed fruits of grace in any, how sweet it is to rejoice over them, and to know they are indeed God's elect; while of others we can say nothing, but must stand in doubt of them, as Paul did of the Galatians. And this testimony not only rejoices the Apostle, but in every place their faith to God is spread abroad, so that he needs to say nothing about them. People exclaimed, What a wonderful thing has happened in Thessalonica! A man came there and preached to them, and a number of the people have turned to God and broken all their idols, and whatever you do to them, you cannot overcome them. They are so happy in what they believe, that even if you kill them, they do not mind, for they are waiting for the Son of God from heaven. No doubt their lips testified too, but their lives spoke so that Paul had no need of saying what they were.

Is it so with you, beloved? Are you thus waiting for God's Son from heaven, having turned to God from idols? and, whatever be your circumstances and trials, are you living above them in communion with God? or are you happy in the world, whether Christ comes or not?

Felix Trembled

For almost 2000 years "The faith in Christ" has commanded the attention of the learned and the unlearned, the great and small alike.

True, it has received different treatment at their hands. The wicked heart of man may have seen fit to look at it only to neglect, refuse, and despise it; or, on the other hand, by grace to believe, and thus to become the happy possessor of its manifold blessings. The results are wide apart, yet such are the claims, the promises, the revelations of this faith in Christ that, at least, curiosity is awakened, and people are forced to listen to the voice it carries.

Felix a Roman governor of Judea sent for Paul for the purpose of hearing from his lips concerning the faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul had been sent to Felix as a prisoner, and had been accused before him as a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He had declared that the things laid to his charge could not be proved; but he confessed that after the way that they called heresy, so he worshiped God, exercising himself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men.

Now a religion that leads to the worship of God, and a conscience void of offense, cannot be, after all, very heretical. No doubt it may be stigmatized as heresy by those whose consciences are not tender, as, most clearly, in the case of Paul's accusers who were, like himself in earlier days, kicking against the pricks. Such a moral triumph on the part of the accused, led Felix to desire further information, and for this cause, as we have seen, he sent for him.

Perhaps he expected to hear some clever theory, to be initiated into some strange mystery, or to listen to some recondite system of philosophy.

He little thought that the faith in Christ would prove itself to be anything so plain, so homely, so personal; and withal, that it would place himself - the unjust, intemperate sinner - face to face with "judgment to come," or that he should tremble at the truth he could not deny.

"Felix trembled"! And why? Because Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. The governor was anything but righteous or sober. He was partial in his administration, and voluptuous in his life.

These home thrusts must have cut deeply, supplemented as they were by the stern fact of "judgment to come."

Felix quailed in view of judgment, yet only said, "Go thy way for this time." Solemn prayer, indeed! but how often repeated.

The jailor of Philippi trembled; but thank God, he said, "What must I do to be saved?" It was not "Go thy way" with him. He felt his condition - he owned his guilt - the answer came, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

God and Father

All through the life of Christ, He never addressed God as God. We never find Him do so in the Gospels until the cross. It would not have been walking in the power of the relationship which was always unhindered. When on the cross, which was expiation, He does not say, "Father," until, all being over, He commends His spirit to Him, but "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" All that was against us was there coming out against Him. The favor of God was hidden from Him. Righteousness was coming forth in the execution of judgment for sin. Never was there a moment of the Father's more perfect delight in Him; but if God was dealing according to His nature and being, it must be against sin, and therefore all was against Him, for He was made sin for us.

As soon as He has gone through it, He uses both terms, "Father" and "God." He comes out as having done the work and, when He has wrought the atonement, He can bring us into the blessed fruit of it. Not only are we brought to the Father, but to God, and all that was against us before is for us now. The very same things He is in His nature, that were against the sinner, are for the saint. Christ, risen out of death, and having entered (sin being put away) into the unclouded joy of God His Father's countenance, when He had perfectly glorified Him, says to Mary, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17.

All that is connected with these names of God and Father flows out to us. We are holy and without blame before Him in love. "I have manifested Thy name," He says of the Father; but now He could reveal God to them. This would have been condemnation except through the cross. This is the effect of expiation on our position before God, besides bringing us into the place of children through adoption.

God Gives the Increase

Paul may plant and Apollos water, but the increase is of God. How constantly is this forgotten! In the Gospel of Mark, that Gospel so instructive to all servants of Christ, the Pattern of all true service, the Master, tells His disciples, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." What can the sower do to make the corn grow while he sleeps? The seed grows, but "he knoweth not how." Would that all laborers in the gospel more heeded portions like those of I Corinthians 3, and Mark 4. Let us cast the seed into the ground and leave the increase to God who alone can give it. Like the husbandman, let us patiently wait for the early and latter rain.

God Has Given Man Earth, Not the Heavens: the Editor's Column

Man has conquered land, sea, and air. He has unlocked the secrets of the atom, and unleashed much of its powerful potential. Now he lifts his eyes and looks for new worlds to conquer, for new frontiers to cross. He is, as it were, at the stepping-off place from this earth, and he plans now to reach the moon, and dreams of interplanetary trips.

Trips to the moon in rockets and space ships are no longer the talk of idle dreamers, but sober men, staid journals and periodicals expatiate on their feasibility. They have witnessed a rapid change from vision and fantasy to actuality in many fields of endeavor during only one generation, and now see little reason why man should not accomplish whatever he can imagine. Such reasoning seems logical in the light of 20th century developments.

But what say the Scriptures? It is important to discover what God has said., Here is one verse that should dissolve any doubt of the likelihood of man stepping off of this planet for another: "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Loan's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men." Psalm 115:16. God has given man the earth and not the heavens, and he is not going to leave it by his own ingenuity and power. That which man has discovered on the earth, and what the telescope has revealed in the heavens is truly wonderful, but in none of this is he leaving the earth where God put him. And just as God said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11), so He has set bounds beyond which man cannot pass.

The present spectacle is but the re-enactment of a scene which took place thousands of years ago in the Plain of Shinar. There men decided to build a tower which would reach to heaven, and soon proceeded to execute their plans. They were going to get beyond this earth then, but one calculation which they failed to make was basic; namely, what did God think about it? Listen to the divine comment:

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." Gen. 11:5-8.

The project had to be suddenly abandoned because of the judgment of God, and to this day the evidence of that visitation is widely apparent. Every time we meet a person who speaks another language than our own, it should remind us of God's judgment on men at the tower of Babel (that is, confusion). And surely it would seem that nothing would be restrained from men of all that they imagine to do now, except divine interference. But what an exception!

Everything indicates that the end of this age is just about here, and as the end approaches, God has allowed men to reach their zenith, with little or nothing left to conquer; but along with progress

has come moral decay and spiritual apostasy. Everything is soon to be headed up by the "man of sin," and the great catastrophe will come - first "the great tribulation" with its unparalleled time of suffering and destruction of life, so much so that if it were not confined to the very short period of 3 1/2 years, "no flesh should be saved." Then will come the actual judgment by Him who will come out of heaven as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" IO put down all His enemies and reign in righteousness. Thus will all the proud works of men be utterly crushed.

But amid all these observations let us remind ourselves, as Christians, that our portion is not earth, but heaven. It is true that God gave the earth to the children of men, but everything here has been ruined by sin, and bears the sad marks of it. Then God came to us in the gospel and called us to Himself and to a heavenly portion. Our citizenship, or commonwealth, is in the heavens (Phil. 3:20; J.N.D. Trans.), and we are but strangers and sojourners here (1 Pet. 2:11; J.N.D. Trans.), and wait for the Lord Jesus to take us to be with Himself (John 14:3). In fact, we have already died with Christ, and risen with Him, and now are exhorted to set our minds on things above (that is, where He is at the right hand of God), and not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-3).

Very soon all the redeemed shall leave this earth, not by any invention of men, but with changed bodies of glory; at His shout we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. How little we enter into what is before us! Then it will be a joyful farewell to the earth and its days of trial. We who are Christ's may in spirit bid it farewell now:

"Farewell to this world's fleeting joys,

Our home is not below;

There was no home for Jesus here,

And 'tis to Him we go.

"To Him in yonder home of love,

Where He has gone before-

The home He changed for Calvary's cross,

Where all our sins He bore.

"He bore our sins, that we might be

His partners on the throne!

The throne He'll shortly share with those

For whom He did atone.

"Up to our Father's house we go,

To that sweet home of love;

Many the mansions that are found

Where Jesus dwells above!

"And He who left that home above,
To be a suff'rer here,
Has left this world again for us
A mansion to prepare.
"His errand to the earth was love
To wretches such as we!
To pluck us from the jaws of death,
Nailed to th' accursed tree.
"Th' accursed tree was the reward
Which this sad world did give
To Him who gave His precious life
That this lost world might live.
"And has this world a charm for us,
Where Jesus suffered thus?
No; we have died to all its charms,
Through Jesus' wondrous cross.
"The cross on which our Lord expired
Has won the crown for us!
In thankful fellowship with Him,
We bear our daily cross.
"Set free in grace - He vanquished him
Who held us in his chains-
But more than this, He shares with us
The fruit of all His pains.
"To all His ransomed ones He'll give
(To us amongst the rest)
With Him to dwell, with Him to reign,
With Him forever blest.
"Farewell, farewell, poor faithless world,

With all thy boasted store;
We'd not have joy where He had woe-
Be rich where He was poor."

God's Good Pleasure

It is very striking-and the more striking as we study it- how the thoughts of God's heart, which were before the foundation of the world, come out in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as a man. He who shared His Father's heart and the secrets of His bosom, came down to earth in the power of divine love, to accomplish all His thoughts and purposes. Not merely had God these thoughts, nor was it enough to reveal them, but Jesus has accomplished them in the midst of sin and ruin, and God has set us in all the delights of His purposes and counsels which were before the world was.

It is striking too that in the New Testament we find the history of the first Adam is completely dropped out. He has had his day, and his day is past. And while the New Testament notices this fact, it connects what God is, and His eternal thoughts and purposes, with Christ, and passes over the history of the first Adam with a brief notice of what it has been and what God has done with him. Tried in innocence, he fails; sins without the law; transgresses the law when given; the revelation of judgment by John the Baptist affects him not; the piping strains of grace in Jesus are unnoticed and his heart unmoved; the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven with the message of pardon, is resisted; the saints are slain in proclaiming the love which rose above all man's sin; and the Church of God is wasted and persecuted. Such is man! No reciprocity in his heart to the pleadings of divine affection; no receptivity of the truth which proves its power by reaching his conscience, and its fitness for his state by touching his heart. He must be born again!

Now in Pro. 8:22-31, we find a passage of exceeding beauty which tells us of the thoughts which were in God's heart, and His purposes in connection with His Son, before the world was. Before the foundations of the mountains and hills - before all things which had a beginning, even "from everlasting" - the Son was there. He is presented here as "wisdom," and Christ is the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). He was rejoicing always before Him-rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth before it came into being by the fiat of the Son-and His good pleasure (or delight) was in the sons of men.

I will now trace how this wondrous seeking heart of God has had, and has, its eternal satisfaction conceived, made good, revealed, and accomplished in Jesus and, more wondrous still, to God's glory by us, for all things are for our sakes, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

In Bethlehem of Judea, one night nearly two thousand years ago, the glory of Jehovah shone out from heaven on the darkness which really and morally enveloped the earth, and night was turned into day. The angel of Jehovah appeared to some poor shepherds in the fields, to tell them of the birth of a Savior, Christ the Lord. And suddenly the hosts of heaven joined the angel of the Lord, and proclaimed with bursts of praise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." Luke 2:14; J.N.D. Trans.

"How rightly rose the praises

Of heaven that wondrous night

When shepherds hid their faces

In brightest angel light!

"More just those acclamations

Than when the glorious band

Chanted earth's deep foundations,

Just laid by God's right hand!"

The world had come forth from God in all the harmony and beauty of creation, and "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), and now its Creator had become a man. Adam had been set at the head of creation and had fallen, and his history was past. Another Adam appeared-the "last"-and the "dayspring" dawned upon the darkened, ruined earth. God's glory now has its highest expression, for His Son has become a babe. Peace was proposed to the ruined earth, and it was refused. Still God has His "glory" in the highest, and His "good pleasure" is now to have its fruition; and the angels praise with unselfish hearts, happy that God is about to have His way. Then they go back to heaven to ascend and descend upon this Son of man.

Thirty years pass on and a lonely Man, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily was pleased to dwell, passed along His lowly path of obedience. A sinless Man was before

God's eye on earth, and the sweet savor of Jesus refreshed His heart. Thirty years were over, and John the Baptist had thundered out his declamations against ungodly sinners, declaring that God now had the ax in His hand, that He would clear the field of unfruitful trees, no matter what were their pretensions. Some hearts are touched and consciences convicted, and they pass down to the waters of Jordan with the only fruit in their hand which God ever did or ever will accept from the hands of a sinner; that is, the confession of their sins.

Among the crowd appears Jesus. He had patiently waited God's time, and He recognizes that God is now at work in men; and He who knew the secrets of His Father's heart above, and the secrets of men's hearts below, at once identifies Himself with this movement of grace in the hearts of repentant sinners, and passes down in tenderest love and lowliness into the waters of the Jordan. But His delight (or "good pleasure") was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work; and so He says, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee; to the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent [Thou hast said], In them is all My delight." Psalm 16:2, 3; J.N.D. Trans. The lines had fallen unto Him in pleasant places indeed; His goodly heritage was filling His heart in the foretaste of God's good pleasure or delight being fulfilled.

The instant He is there according to God's thought, the heaven is opened on Him-fit object of heaven, as of God. The Holy Ghost descends and seals Him for His service here. And now the Father must have His word; He cannot (so to speak) withhold His satisfaction, and His voice is heard proclaiming, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have good pleasure." (I may remark that the word is really or substantially the same all the way through in the passages I quote in this paper from the New Testament. The verbal or the noun form of the same word is used in them all, and the literal translation is given.) And here, as has been remarked, we find the first revelation of

the Trinity; the Son is there, and the Holy Ghost seals Him as a man, and the Father's voice proclaims His good pleasure in Him.

Time passes on, and after confronting the devil, and binding the strong man in obedience, He comes forth to serve in obedience still, but with a power that could remove every ill that had entered the world and brought men into misery. If they are sick, He heals; if dead, He raises them; if afflicted, He comforts; if hungry, He feeds; if possessed, He breaks the chains in which the strong man bound his victims, and sets them free. He reveals the Father's heart on earth in grace-brings the light of God to detect the conscience of sinners, and yet with a love which attracts their heart. But man would not have Him. He might feed the hungry, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out Satan from man; but it brought God too near to men for them to enjoy their own wills and their own ways; they will not have God on any terms, but beseech Him to depart from their midst.

At last comes the inquiry, "Whom say the people that I am?" The answer discloses that, as said the poet, "None cared His name to know." Men speculated; some said one thing and some another, but a few hearts confessed Him as "the Christ of God." (See Matt. 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20.) But this was no more to be preached, for the "Son of man" was now about to suffer, and here He first speaks definitely of His death. Then in each gospel which gives the scene, He goes to the mount of transfiguration and, while transfigured before His wondering disciples, the Father's voice is again heard through the stillness of the night, which is again, as at the incarnation, turned into day. (Compare Luke 9:37.) "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have good pleasure." This is as if to say, Men have refused My heart and My Son when I have spent it and given Him in seeking theirs; but My heart has not changed in Him. Thus a rejected Christ receives His Father's heart's expression, In Thee "I have good pleasure."

He leaves the mountain and turns to meet the cross and shame which awaited Him at the end of His pathway, with "not where to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). His heart thinks afresh of the deeper need of man, and He sends out the seventy on this last journey. When they return (chap. 10:17, etc.) with the news that to their faith even the power of casting out devils through His name was given, He bids them "rejoice not," for another thought presses itself from His heart-their "names are written in heaven." God was writing down in heaven the names of those who followed Him in whom was all His "good pleasure," and Jesus was revealing to them the Father. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for thus was the good pleasure before Thee." No purpose of His heart would be frustrated or turned aside, and while blindness and darkness was coming on earth and man, the light of these eternal counsels was falling on the hearts of the babes by the Father's "good pleasure" to reveal them.

We still follow this unfrustrated purpose of His heart, and in the midst of Luke 12 we find these "babes" instructed for their pathway, while passing through an adverse world, with girded loins like men that wait for their Lord. To them He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." There is no change in His love, and He will act as a father. He will not merely put you, into it, but He will give it to you.

But in all this pathway He was alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or He would abide alone; and so He passes down to the cross, meets His people's need as to their sins, Satan's power of death, and the judgment of God. He takes up our sins and bears them as His own, and blots them out forever. He meets and destroys Satan's power of death, by death, and bears the judgment and all the demands of God's righteousness as to sin. Sins, death, and judgment, are passed for him who believes His testimony, and sets to his seal that God is true. And God seals with His Spirit him who does so.

Then He bows the head for which He had no place here below, and gives up the ghost. He dies and rises again-tells His disciples that His Father is now their Father, and His God their God, and ascends as man to glory. Then come out all those wonderful counsels and purposes of God's heart. The orbit of the "good pleasure" of God is described, and His people are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Prov. 8), "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. 1:3-6. The circle is complete, and we are brought into all these delights of God's eternal purposes, and the thoughts of His heart which were before the foundation of the world!

Thus we have the eternal bosom revealing this "good pleasure" which was there before the world was made (Prov. 8). The angels praised as the infant Jesus was laid in the manger at Bethlehem-the first expression of this wondrous "good pleasure" in the sons of men (Luke 2).

The Father's voice expressed His "good pleasure" as Jesus entered His path of service, at the Jordan, at the moment when He was working in the hearts of men (Luke 3).

On the mountain of transfiguration this "good pleasure" is again expressed as Jesus, rejected by men, unveils His glory before the eyes of Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17; Luke 9).

His own voice tells us, raised in thanksgiving, of the Father's purposes in revealing Him to the babes according to the "good pleasure" which was ever before Him (Luke 10).

And again, He teaches to this "little flock" the purposes of the Father's heart concerning them, in giving them the kingdom; but a work was yet to be accomplished before all could be made known, and the saints set in all these delights of God; and His heart was straitened until it was accomplished (Luke 12:50).

But this work is over, and the "good pleasure of His will" is brought to fruition, and we are set in its fullest expression in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1).

But there is an age to come in which the preface of this eternal purpose is seen-the millennial glory. And still the "good pleasure" is expressed. He unfolds to us "the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" to gather all things in heaven and earth in one in Christ; and in Him we also have obtained this inheritance in the age to come, where we shall reign with Him until He puts down all authority and power. Then He gives up the kingdom after the perfection of His administration, and becomes, in the eternal age, in the new heavens and the new earth, the Son, subject as man again to His Father, and we with Him in that

scene where God's delights are fully expressed and fulfilled according to His good pleasure in the sons of men forever.

But between this calling into the orbit of the good pleasure of God and its fruition in the ages to come, is God to have no "good pleasure"? We turn to Phil. 2:12 and we find a feeble people always obedient when the Church had apostolic care, but now when it was gone, much more in its absence; and God was working in them "to will and to do of His good pleasure" still.

If the broad line of unsullied light tracked itself before God's eye in Jesus' path on earth, a tiny streak of light is found in the path of those who have, with broken wills and hearts subject to Him, sought and found in the obedient, will-less footprints of Jesus the "good pleasure" expressed in doing the will of His Father, in those who seek to yield themselves to Him who works in their weakness to will and to do of that good pleasure.

What can we say then, beloved, to these things? Shall we not say, "Amen" to the Apostle's prayer in 2 Thess. 1:11, 12? "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

God's Ways of Grace

For a moment look back on all your ways from your youth upward (but you cannot bear to do this if you have not settled peace); look at them all, and look at them all in the light of God's Word and Spirit. I retrace the foolishness and sinfulness of my doings, and the patience and long-suffering of my God. I see Him guarding me here, teaching me there, lifting me up when I was ready to fall, and comforting me when I only expected punishment; and hence I adore and praise Him the more. But if it be thus in looking back now, bow much more will it be in the moment when set in the glory! I shall know Him and see Him, and trace all His ways in the fullness of that light which now, in the measure of it I possess, manifests Him and myself in contrast. For surely it is just in the measure in which I can judge my ways in His presence, that the effect is adoration and praise.

God's Welcome: the Prodigal Son

Many souls are like the prodigal in Luke 15. When he came to himself he had a deep sense of his sinfulness, and he resolved to return, to confess his sins, and he hoped to get a hired servant's place within his father's door. Little did he anticipate the welcome which awaited him. It is so with thousands. They come to themselves; that is, they find out they are good-for-nothing sinners, and mercy is the most they hope for. To escape from hell, and to get inside the door of heaven, is the highest thought they dare indulge. All is measured by the knowledge that God is merciful, and hence they hope to be let off. Alas! how far human thoughts fall short of the grace of God!

But when God saves a soul, He does it in a manner worthy of Himself and for His own glory. He blesses according to His delight in Christ His Son, and His estimate of the infinite worth of His sacrifice. Grace reigns through righteousness; and it is grace, perfect and free, which awaits all who come to Him.

The heavy-hearted prodigal "arose, and came to his father" (Luke 15:20). It is easy to picture his miserable condition, his downcast look, his faltering step, his hesitating manner, as the paternal mansion comes in view. What sort of reception will he meet with? Will he be turned away, will he be kept waiting outside a closed door, or be ushered into the hired servant's room without even seeing his father's face, or what? The thought of a father's love and grace never entered the repentant prodigal's mind.

But what says the inspired record--the words of Jesus, the Son of God? "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:20. Ah, dear reader, the wayward wanderer had never ceased to occupy the heart of that injured father. Love reigned there. And when yet a great way off, his watchful eye discerned the lost one and, filled with compassion, the willing feet sped, and casting his arms around his neck, the caresses of love told of pardon, peace, and reconciliation, even before he had time to own his sin. The eye saw, the heart compassionated, the feet sped, the arms embraced, and the lips covered with kisses him who would beg for bondsman's bread. The father knew him well. Naught but genuine repentance had broken down that proud heart, and brought him there. The lips of the prodigal did but tell what that loving father already knew.

How wondrous the story of grace! This is but a picture of God's welcome to you and me. Not a single rebuke or reproach--nothing but love for those who return in self-judgment to Him. What a revelation for our souls--God occupied with returning prodigals--God's eye upon us--God's heart yearning over us--God's hastening to welcome us--God's reconciling us then and there with the kisses of peace! God is in all. Little do we realize what Christ and His work are to Him. Little do we enter into His thoughts of grace, grace reigning through righteousness, the fruit of that finished redemption work.

The poor prodigal, folded in those arms of love, with the fond kisses of a father's grace upon his cheek, tells out his confession of sin-- "I have sinned... and am no more worthy." It was a true and

good confession of what he had done and what he was. To be right with God we must have those two things thoroughly out - I have sinned and I am the sinner. The death of Christ has met both, for at the cross God has judged both my sins and me. Christ took all upon Him there. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2:24. And God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5:21. And Christ is risen. It is enough. Grace reigns through righteousness. I judge and confess all, and on the ground of Christ's finished work receive all that grace can devise. Thus it was with this poor wanderer. Thus it is with every one who comes back to God.

His thought about being a hired servant-part of his proposed confession in the far-off country-never crossed his lips. How could he utter it when folded in a father's fond embrace? No; but when he reached the words, "thy son," though owning his unworthiness of that relation, we read, "The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke 15:22-24. What a fullness of blessing-the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the feast, the merriment, the music, the dancing! In a moment all was changed. That quiet house becomes at once the scene of joy and festivity. The father, the son, and the whole household (save one) participated in the merrymaking. But first the son must be fitted for that festal scene.

"Bring forth the best robe," says the commanding voice of the father, "and put it on him." And willing servants hasten to obey. The robe is ready, prepared against that day. "The best." An inferior one might have satisfied the prodigal, and far less than that which it prefigures might have satisfied you or me. But God blesses

"Not to suit my thoughts of fitness,

But His wondrous thoughts of love."

The righteousness of God is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22). This is God's best robe, prepared and waiting, as it were, for returning prodigals. It is Christ alone, the righteousness of God, that can fit us for His eye. "Put it on him." It is "upon all" them that believe. Nothing to do but to stand still and see the salvation of God-to submit to God's righteousness in simple faith.

"Clad in this robe, how bright I shine,

Angels possess not such a dress;

Angels have not a robe like mine

Jesus the Lord's my righteousness."

The robe is new, perfect, the best. Nothing short of it will suit the Father's eye and heart and home. In Christ we are complete (Col. 2:10). What a change from the nakedness and filth of the far-off country! Marvel of grace! This is the gospel of God. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1:7.

"And put a ring on his hand." Wondrous favor! May we not learn from this that we are received back forever? The believer is not only in Christ, but sealed with the Holy Ghost for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). We are saved, and set in God's eternal favor.

"And shoes on his feet." The reconciled one has to walk henceforth in the presence of his father. He fits him for it. The Christian, clothed with Christ, sealed with the Holy Ghost, has to walk before God in communion with Him. It is God's grace that teaches us. It is God's provision that fits us. It is God's power that enables us. And "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry." The son being fitted in every way for the position of favor he is henceforth to occupy, the father now commands a feast. He and the son and the servants have their part in the joy. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10. God feasts when a soul is saved, and brings His loved ones into His banqueting house to feast with Him on the riches of His grace in Christ. Blessed communion!

And last, note well the reason the father gives for the feast. "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke 15:24. "This my son." Beloved fellow believer, this is what God says of you. He is our Father. We are His sons. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God." 1 John 3:1. We cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). We are brought right home to God, and we are at home in His presence. Here we rest, and here we feast. Here we enjoy the blest relationship of sons forever. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And we were dead. This was our moral state. But now we are alive. We have "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). We are alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6; 8:2). Eternal life is ours in the Son (1 John 5:11).

And we were lost. But the Savior God found us when still far off. But for grace we were lost forever. Through grace we are found forever. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. How blessed to be at home now-at home with God. Believers have left the far-off country forever. By faith and in spirit we enter now where God our Father is. As the well-known hymn puts it- "In spirit there already,

Soon we ourselves shall be."

"And they began to be merry." Beloved reader, have you? The world's merriment is of short duration. Death and judgment are knocking at the door. But once you come to God and receive His grace, then heavenly merriment, spiritual, pure, everlasting, is yours. "They began to be merry." Truly for God and His loved ones it will never cease.

A Good Conscience

We gain a good conscience before God by the blood of the Lamb. By walking with God we maintain it before men and for communion with God, in order to have strength and spiritual understanding, and to have them increasingly. This is the practical strength of good conduct, of a conscience without rebuke. "I exercise myself" always to this, said the Apostle. What integrity in such a walk; what truthfulness of heart when no eye sees us! We are peremptory with ourselves, with our own hearts, and with regard to our conduct; we can therefore be peaceful in our ways. God also is there. So walk, says the Apostle, and the God of peace shall be with you. If the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace, the path of peace is found in righteousness. If I have a bad conscience, I am vexed with myself, I grow angry with others. When the heart is at peace with God and has nothing to reproach itself with, when the will is held in check, peace reigns in the soul. We walk on the earth, but the heart is above it in intercourse with better things; we walk in a peaceful spirit with others, and nothing troubles our relations with God. He is the God of peace. Peace, the peace of Jesus, fills the heart. The feet are shod with it; we walk in the spirit of peace.

Grace

Job had the blessing, but was working to keep it, as verse 5 of the first chapter shows us. He did not fully know grace, and was miserable, as he himself says in chapter 3:25,26.

God sent all the trial to teach him grace so that he might know that he neither deserved the blessing, nor could he keep it.

This lesson, when learned, made Job a happy man. How many there are like Job! If I get the blessing without deserving it, it is clear I can never lose it for want of merit. We stand in grace (Rom. 5:2). Working to keep the blessing -with that object-is to have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

The Ways of Grace

It is a serious thing, while full of comfort and warning to our souls as well, that there is nothing that so condemns sin, as grace. The law condemns it, no doubt, but the law, in itself, never judges the nature. It condemns acts. If applied by the Spirit of God, it leads one to gather what the tree must be from the fruit. It infers what the nature is, but it does not directly and immediately and entirely deal with it. Grace does: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son [that is grace] in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [as a sacrifice for it] condemned sin in the flesh." God condemned the nature, root and branch, and executed His sentence upon all that man is in his best estate. No disguises could stand now-no excuses -all was brought into the full light of God Himself, and all condemned. It is the same thing from first to last.

Grace is that which strips off all the thin veils which the flesh would cover itself with in order that we should not learn what we are. Grace, while it puts away what we are, yet gives us the privilege of learning it - puts us on God's side to execute His judgment upon it-enables us to deal with it with an unsparing hand just because we have a new nature given from God. We can afford to mortify the old nature because we have a new and divine life that death and Satan cannot touch. And therefore you will find that in those parts of Scripture where grace is most fully brought out, we have the closest exhortations to holiness. Consequently, wherever souls are afraid of grace, they avoid the only thing which can produce real holiness; they avoid the only thing which can detect and destroy the vain show in which they are walking themselves.

But there is another and a very serious thing for those who have received the grace of God, and who profess to stand in it. It is this: "God is not mocked." He will not allow that the name of His Son should ever be allied with evil. He will never allow that His grace should be pleaded as an excuse for sin. Grace has stretched out its hand, and has plucked us from hell to carry us straight from the jaws of death into heaven itself; no less than this is done in principle when we receive the Lord Jesus. We are taken out of the net of the spoiler and set in the hand of the Father and of the Son, whence none shall pluck us. But if this be so, what is the practical purpose of God in it? What does He intend that we should do under the shelter of this almighty grace which has wrought such marvels for us? Assuredly, that we should never allow the natural evil of our hearts-that we should watch for God, and be jealous for Him against ourselves. We are taken out of ourselves, transplanted into Christ. We become therefore (if we have faith in Him, if it be a real work of the Holy Ghost), identified in feeling with the Lord: we are put in the interests of God, if I may so say, against our own corrupt nature -against evil everywhere, but above all wherever the name of Christ is named. We have nothing directly to do with the corrupt world outside, but we have to do with our own corrupt nature-much to do with watching against it., judging it, dealing with it for God, wherever it dares to show itself. In love to one another and jealousy for the Lord, we may have to deal with it even in another; but then it must always be in holy love. For even where we have to watch over one another for the Lord, it is never in the spirit of law -never merely to condemn the evil and then leave a person under the effects of his folly and sin.

But let us listen to a few of the words spoken to the Ephesian saints; and first, in a verse or two of chapter 4: "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, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." Evidently there we have what is to guide and form the spirit of my walk with my brethren. Is that all? No. It only takes up our spirit toward one another. But we are reminded what God's way is toward us: "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Then it goes on to another thing. The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sin, but to give me the immense privilege of being put before God in all His acceptance and loveliness. I could not be in heaven if it were not so - if it were only that sin is put away. God cannot have anything merely negative in heaven. Mere absence of evil is not enough there. If we are to be in heaven at all, God must have us there lovely in all the loveliness of Christ; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here. Accordingly, it is said to us, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," etc. That is going further. A person might forgive another, but there might still be reserve remaining-a shutting oneself up in one's own little circle. Here, on the contrary, we find there is to be the energy that goes out-the love which delights in another's good. It is the activity of love going out toward the saints. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

But then another thing comes to light. There is danger even among the saints of God. The devil can come in and turn brotherly love to a snare, and this not only in the way of positive evil being allowed to break out, but in the unjudged tendency to it. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." The Lord in no way forbids the happy cheerfulness which He loves in His saints. He does not call us to be monks, which is man's way of keeping the flesh under restraint, and only another form of self. We may have self under a legal form, and self under a lax form; but under any form it is not Christ, and the only thing which God values now is Christ.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This raises a serious question for all of us. These are things for use. They are exhortations, not merely to apply to other people, to measure them by, but to take home to ourselves. They are for saints, not for the world. No doubt we find the evil warned against, in the world, and our hearts ought to feel for those who shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. But, remember that the primary object of the Holy Ghost was to warn and guard the saints themselves who, desiring to watch against the evil distance of the flesh, will, directly they come together, find the danger of another thing, and that is evil nearness.

Who then can take care of us if such be the dangers that surround us? Only God, but God still acting in the way of grace. There is no reason why a soul should not have perfect confidence in God against itself. But wherever there is the desire to have our own will and our own evil thoughts gratified - wherever there is the wish to have our way according to the flesh- depend upon it, the judgment of God will be there unless the grace of God interfere to deliver the soul. This is a solemn thing, and one that we need to lay to heart; for the Lord is jealous on our behalf, and He is jealous for His own glory. Therefore, may we be watchful. May we remember what He has written; that if "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are

His," be on the one side, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," is on the other.

"Depart from iniquity"! Is it possible that such a word could be said to the saints of God? Yes. It is the word of the Holy Ghost Himself, wherever the name of Christ is named. Let our souls then hold fast grace; but let us remember that the object of all the grace which has been manifested to us is that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. It is always so. And there is another thought along with it which seems to me of value-that sin, when looked at in the presence of God, always acquires its true name and character. I am not allowed to gloss over it and call it by a name that men might give it. For instance, there are a thousand things that men would only call polite. What does God call them? A lie. Again, there are many things that men would say were allowable in the way of business. What does God call them? Dishonesty and covetousness. Such is God's sentence. And would we escape from it? No. We should be left to manifest what we are-that we had named the name of Christ falsely, in our own strength merely, like the Egyptians essaying to pass through the Red Sea after Israel. The result was that they were all drowned.

May we be jealous not to allow ourselves to indulge in the smallest thing that is contrary to God! 'What a list of things the Spirit of God here warns me against' I can look within and know how my heart answers to what the Word of God says of it, and it has put me on my guard. If I despise the warning, what then? I shall prove what I am, to the dishonor of the name of the Lord Jesus, and my own shame and sorrow. What an effect of a moment's gratification! If then a little word is as the letting out of water, what is a little act of sin, where it is allowed? The. Lord keep us from little sins-keep us watchful, jealous, careful, but at the same time never letting grace slip, rather reminding and strengthening one another in that perfect grace in which we stand.

Let us remember that He who has called us to watch against these things, has also called us to thank Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always, and for all things. Even if we have to humble ourselves before God for what we are, we are never to forget what Christ is for us and to us.

May we be kept faithful and circumspect in our ways for the Lord Jesus' sake.

Grace Through Sacrifice

It is interesting to see the order unfolded here in the establishment of the relations of sovereign grace. First of all, the heart of God and His sovereign grace in election, suspending the execution of the deserved and pronounced judgment; next, the revelation of this judgment - a revelation which produces humiliation before God, and a full confession of sin before His face. David and the elders of Israel clothed in sackcloth fall on their faces, and David presents himself as the guilty one. Then instruction comes from God as to that which must be done to cause the pestilence judicially and definitely to cease; namely, to sacrifice in Oman's threshing floor. God accepts the sacrifice, sending fire to consume it, and then He commands the angel to sheathe his sword. And sovereign grace, thus carried out in righteousness through sacrifice, becomes the means of Israel's approach to their God, and establishes the place of their access to Him. The tabernacle, a testimony to the conditions under which the people had failed, offered no resource in such a case; on the contrary, it occasioned fear. David was afraid to go to Gibeon (vv. 29, 30). Nothing would do but the definitive intervention of God according to His own grace (the circumstances of the sin on the king's own part leaving no room for any other means). The whole system of the tabernacle as a legal institution is set aside, and the worship of Israel founded on grace by sacrifice coming in where all, even the king as responsible had failed. Such was Israel's position for him who understood it.

Grace With Salt

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Col. 4:6.

Our words should be "always with grace," and prove themselves such by ministering good to the souls of others - "grace unto the hearers." This, however, will be oftentimes in the pungency of admonition or rebuke, and at times with severity or decision, or even with indignation and zeal. In this character they will be "seasoned with salt." And having these fine qualities, being thus gracious and yet salted, they will be such as will bear their own virtues, that we have known how to answer every man.

The Lord Jesus, among all others, illustrated this form of moral perfection. He knew how to answer every man with words which always were with grace, or to the soul's profit, but at times seasoned, or seasoned highly, with salt.

In answering inquiries He did not so much aim at satisfying them, as at reaching the conscience or the condition of those who put them.

In His silence, as well as in

His words, when He had to stand before the Jew or the Gentile at the last, before either the priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace full moral beauty and perfection, witnessing that at least One among the sons of men knew "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

Great variety in His style presents itself to us in all this. Sometimes He is gentle, sometimes peremptory, sometimes He reasons, sometimes He rebukes at once, and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of awful condemnation and judgment.

He knows the moral of the scene before Him. By Him actions were "weighed" in their value as before God, and His words as well as His doings answer them accordingly.

Matthew 15 has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection is specially shown us. In the course of the action there, the Lord is called to answer Pharisees, the multitude, Peter, Syrophenician, and the disciples again and again in their mistake, and stupidity, and selfishness; and His tone of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of deep, wise, and gracious training of the soul, are all precious and admirable in their place and occasion.

And, let me ask, is there not a fitness in its not being said of the Lord in Luke 2 that He was either teaching or learning, though it is said that He was hearing and asking questions? It seems to me that there is. To have taught would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders; to have learned would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and brighter light which He knew He ' carried in Himself; for, "He was wiser than His teachers, and had more understanding than the ancients" (Psalm 119:99, 100), we may surely say of Him.

But here again we get the grace of which that scripture- "Let your speech be always with grace"-speaks. For of this Child in the temple with the doctors, we read that He was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." So that He knew how in perfection of grace to use the fullness of wisdom that was in Him, and He is, therefore, not presented to us as either teaching or learning.

Graduation and Looking Ahead: the Editor's Column

This month we wish to address some remarks to you, our young Christian readers, for June frequently brings important changes into your lives.

Some of you will complete your formal education, and receive diplomas. This is a great event for you. At such a time, it is well to remember that in our spiritual lives this never occurs, for we never graduate from God's school while we are in the world. The youngest and oldest saints are in that school. Here we are learning God and His grace on the one hand, and what poor things we are on the other. Here our capacities for the knowledge and enjoyment of Him in that scene of bliss are being formed.

You will find that in God's school it is often the same, in one respect, as in the school you have just left, in that as we go on, the lessons become more advanced. How else would our experience grow? But we have a faithful, wise, and loving Teacher. He leads us on from lesson to lesson with the perfect skill of One who knows the end from the beginning, and He knows just exactly how to bring us into more conformity to Himself, yet withal He does it, in that perfect, divine love to us as His children. And He is too faithful to us to allow us to pass on without learning our lessons. Students in the world's schools are sometimes passed along without having mastered their lessons, but our Father will take us back time and again over the same lesson if needful.

As you now stand with diploma in hand and look at the distant horizon, what are your thoughts? 'What is the main object before you? In all probability you will have to have some way of earning a living, and it is well that it is so. Work has been a wonderful blessing to fallen man; without it, he is just the more the plaything of the devil. When man fell, God's sentence was, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3:19. But men have been seeking to circumvent this divine decree; they seek to eliminate toil and labor, and to live by wit and scheme. Idleness, however, is not good; it has led to many falls. Many scriptures teach us the importance of honest labor. Just a few of the many are: "If any would not work, neither should he eat"; "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth"; "We... exhort... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

If you face the problem of choosing an occupation, or perhaps training for some profession, do seek guidance and wisdom from above. The choice you make will probably determine much of the character of your future life. May your one desire be to be found in the path of the Lord's will for you, and then to seek His help and grace to glorify Him in it. Do not set your heart on being great in this world, for this is indeed a snare to the children of God. The One whom we follow was not great here-He was rejected. Pride is in all hearts, and it easily leads us to aspire for prominence here. Remember that Satan is the god and prince of this world, and the higher we get in it, the closer we are to him who is its ruler. If you should be thrust into an important position you will need more grace to walk with God in it.

Beware too of the snare of seeking to be rich. It is the love of money that lies at the root of every evil. People who love money will do many things that their own consciences condemn. We do not say that God may not give an increase of material goods to some, but "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Those who are rich are warned not to trust in the uncertainty of riches (and how uncertain they are!) but in the living God, and are exhorted to be rich in good works, and ready to distribute to those who have need.

Some of you will marry at this time. We trust that it will be "only in the Lord." To you who do, we wish the Lord's richest blessings. May He grant you grace and wisdom to go on together for His glory -each for the other, and both for the Lord. May we be permitted to urge on you the necessity of family reading of the Word and prayer. Begin it the very first day of your married life, and do not neglect it at any time, nor relegate it to a mere routine matter that has little bearing on your lives. If you do, your spiritual life will suffer as though a worm were eating away the root of a beautiful plant. Also remember the exhortation, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Heb. 10:25.

We earnestly urge you to ponder the scriptures that teach the husband and the wife their respective places and responsibilities. We pass on to you a remark we recently heard from a beloved servant of the Lord: "If you want to be unhappy, just be a rebel against God's word to husbands, wives, fathers, children, servants, etc. We are not wiser than God." He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness, and His blessing is upon those who walk in that path which He has carefully marked for us. (If you have not read the book, "The Institution of Marriage, and Related Subjects," we commend it to you for what we believe is helpful counsel.)

Others of you will be making trips to distant places to see new landscapes and unfamiliar faces. You will have fresh opportunities to see some of the beauties and wonders of God's creation; and just think what it would have been had not sin entered to spoil it! Even in its present state there is much evidence of God's handiwork, where it has not been spoiled through man's touches.

So then, dear young Christian, if God grants you a vacation trip this season, take it from Him with thanksgiving, from Him who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Bring Him into your plans and into all your trip. May your desire be to be found to the glory of Christ at all times, and be ever alert to that which would take you out of the path of obedience and of the fear of God. May eternity declare some fruit to God as the result of your summer's vacation.

We need to remember that while the change and relaxation of a vacation may be beneficial to our bodies and minds, there is never a time to relax our vigilance as Christians- never a time to cease being loyal to Christ. We have a wily foe who never takes a holiday, and we have to be watchful and vigilant against him and his seductions at all times (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11).

A vacation should furnish us with a little more time for reading the Word of God or some good ministry, so that we return from it with renewed spiritual vigor as well as bodily blessings. It may also furnish us with some special opportunities to witness for our Lord and Savior, perhaps in our conduct, or by word of mouth, or by the printed gospel message. We strongly recommend that some good gospel tracts find a place in your summer luggage, and that you then seek grace and wisdom for the suitable opportunities to place them.

The Heart of a Stranger: Strangers in Israel

"Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Exod. 23:9. When no longer in the place of strangership, but in their own land, they would still know the heart of a stranger, having been such themselves in Egypt. And how sweet it is to know about our Lord Jesus, that although He is no longer a stranger here, but gone to the Father (John 16:28), yet, having been such when He was down here, He never forgets it, but knows by experience the heart of a stranger still. But how poorly it would express His tender love for "His own" to say that He does "not oppress" those who are "strangers" as following Him who was once a stranger here Himself, and having won their hearts, has carried them up to heaven where He is. No, "He is able to succor them," and He loves to do it; and He does it as One who has Himself "suffered, being tempted."

The strangers in Israel were objects of Jehovah's especial care, and were not to be "oppressed," even by His own people. How touching the recollection that when "the Son of His love" was a stranger in this world, "He was oppressed and afflicted"; and though it is said, "The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (Psalm 103:6), yet in His case righteousness and judgment were executed against, and not for, Him. "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd." Zech. 13:7. For "He hath made Him to be sin for us," and righteousness must be against Him on the cross before it could be exercised for us in Him, and through Him.

And so the Lord Jesus is now no more a stranger, yet He is "the same," though ascended up far above all heavens. Nor does He forget, in the glory of His present place, the pressure on His spirit of what He met with and witnessed in this world that knew and owned Him not. And His heart of love has cherished interests down here in the "little flock" of His chosen and redeemed ones. But are there not some among them who may especially enjoy the sweetness of reflecting that the Lord knows their path and their heart, as having trod the same path Himself? It was the heart of a "stranger" that Israel knew, for such they had been in Pharaoh's land. "Seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Was it not just this that Jesus was in the world?-His own world, yet unknown in it (John 1:10). Brought to an "inn," the place of strangers and sojourners, to be born, but no room for Him even there! Not even a wayfarer's accommodation in a world full without Him. Rich and increased with goods, and having "need of nothing," as they thought, yet really the land of the "mighty famine," and He alone able to meet the need and fill the hungry with good things, yet for Him, "no room"!

"O ever homeless Stranger,
Thus, dearest Friend to me,
An outcast in the manger,
That Thou might'st with us be!"

And if a certain scribe thought it would be a fine thing to follow One possessed of such extraordinary power and resources as He, the Lord would let him know that it was a stranger whom he essayed to follow, not to a hole or a nest, but to where He had no place "to lay His head." Such was the path of Jesus here; and hence He knows by experience and recollection "the heart of a stranger." Dear reader, does He know your heart and path in this way? If I am finding a nest and rest in this world where He never even sought one, making myself a home where He had not a place to lay His head, I cannot have the consciousness that He knows my heart in this sense.

But on the other hand-like Moses in the bosom of his family, in a land where he was for awhile "content to dwell," yet confessing himself, in his son's name (Gershom, that is stranger), to be a stranger there-you can look up to the Lord from the midst of whatever comforts His gracious hand has surrounded you with, and honestly say, "This is not my rest, Lord; a stranger confessed, Lord; I wait to be blessed at Thy coming again." If thus you can appeal to Him who knows all things, and tell Him you have not ceased to be a stranger in a strange land, but would, like Rebekah, gladly slide down from the camel's back at the first glimpse of Himself, then you can delight yourself in this, that He has been before you across this desert, Himself a "stranger" here, and hence knows not your circumstances only, but your heart in all its loneliness, "for He has felt the same." And He provides for us that, if subject to the leading and teaching of "another Comforter," we may even here know that which is the very joy of the Father's house itself, even communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. He, once a stranger, enters into all the exercises of our hearts as strangers where we are, and He would have us to enter in faith, by His Spirit, into all the tender love and sympathy of His heart where He is (John 16:13, 14).

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Epistle To The Hebrews: Introductory Lectures By William Kelly (Part 1 Chapter 1:1-4)

The epistle to the Hebrews differs in some important respects from all the other epistles of Paul, so much so that many have questioned whether it be the writing of the Apostle Paul, of Apollos, of Barnabas, etc. Of this my mind has no doubt. I believe that Paul, and no other, was the author, and that it bears the strongest intrinsic traits of his doctrine. The style is different, and so is the manner of handling the truth; but the line of truth, though it be affected by the object that he had in view, is that which savors of Paul beyond all-not of Peter, or John, or James, or Jude, but of Paul alone.

One good and plain reason which has graven a difference of character on the epistle is the fact that it goes outside his allotted province. Paul was the Apostle of the uncircumcision -Gentiles. If writing for the instruction of Jews, as here he clearly was, to believers or Christians that had once been of that nation, he was evidently outside the ordinary function of his apostolic work.

There is another reason also why the epistle to the Hebrews diverges very sensibly and materially from the rest of the writings of Paul; that is, it is not, strictly speaking, an exercise of apostleship at all, but of the writer (apostle though he were) as a teacher, and here a teacher clearly not of Gentiles, as he says elsewhere, but of Jews. Now it is plain, if he that was an apostle and preacher and teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth was led by the Holy Spirit to address the saints that were of the old Jewish fold, there must have been a marked departure from his usual methods in the manner of using and presenting the truth of God to these. But we have this blessed result of his acting outside his own ordinary sphere, that it is the finest and indeed the only specimen of teaching, properly so-called, in the New Testament. It is not a revelation given by prophetic or apostolic authority; and for this reason, I presume, he does not introduce himself at all. It is always a failure when the teacher, as such, is prominent. The point for such a one is that the teaching (not himself) should arrest and instruct.

In writing to the Hebrew believers it is not so. Here the Apostle is what indeed he was. Besides being Apostle of the uncircumcision, he was a teacher; and God took care that, although expressly said to be a teacher of Gentiles, his should be the word to teach the Christian Jews too. In fact, we may be assured that he taught them as they never were taught before. He opened the Scriptures as none but Paul could, according to the gospel of the glory of Christ. He taught them the value of the living oracles that God had given them; for this is the beautiful characteristic here. Indeed the epistle to the Hebrews stands unique. By it the believing Jew was led into a divine application of that which was in the Old Testament-that which they had habitually read in the law, Psalms, and prophets, from their cradle we may say, but which they had never seen in such a light before. That mighty, logical, penetrating, richly stored mind! that heart with such affections, large and deep, as scarce ever were concentrated in another bosom! that soul of experience wonderfully varied and profound!- he was the one whom God was now leading in a somewhat unwonted path, no doubt, but in a path which, when once taken, at once approves itself by divine

wisdom to every heart purified by faith.

For if Peter, as is known, were pre-eminently the Apostle of the circumcision, it was through him that God first of all opened the door of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles; and if the Apostle Paul, with the concurrence of the heads of the work among the circumcision, had gone to the Gentiles, none the less did the Spirit of God employ Paul to write to the believers of the circumcision the most consummate treatise of the bearing of Christ and Christianity upon the law and the prophets, and as practically dealing with their wants, dangers, and blessing. Thus did God most carefully guard in every form from the technical drawing of lines of rigid demarcation to which even Christians are so prone, the love of settling things in precise routine, the desire that each should have his own place, not only as the proper sphere of his work, but to the exclusion of every other. With admirable wisdom, indeed, the Lord directs the work and the workmen, but never using one exclusively; and the Apostle Paul is here, as just shown, the proof of it on one side, as Peter is on the other.

What is the consequence under the blessed guidance of the Spirit? As the great teacher of the believers from among the Jews, we have, after all, not Paul, but through him God Himself left to address His own in the words, facts, ceremonies, offices, persons so long familiar to the chosen people. Paul does not appear. This could hardly have been by any other arrangement - at any rate not so naturally. "God," says he, "having in many measures and in many manners spoken in time past to the fathers in the prophets, at the last of these days spoke to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Paul would thus show them the infinite dignity of the Messiah whom they had received. Never would Paul weaken the personal rights or the official place of the Anointed of Jehovah. Contrariwise, he would lead them on to find what they had never yet seen in their Messiah and, wonderful to say, he founds his proofs, not on new revelations, but on those very words of God which they had read so superficially, the depths of which they had never approached, nor had they so much as suspected. They knew the facts of Christianity; they had yet to discover the linking of all Scripture with Christ's Person, and work, and glory.

But mark the manner of the writer. He is careful to establish the thread of connection with God's Word and ways of old; and yet there is not a single epistle which more elaborately, throughout its entire course, sets the believer in present relationship to Christ in heaven; I think one might be bold to say, none so much. From the very starting point we see Christ, not merely dead and risen, but glorified in heaven. There is no doubt that the writer meant his readers to hold fast the truth that He who suffered all things on earth is the same Jesus who is now at the right hand of God; but the first place in which we hear of Him is as Son of God on high, according to chapter 1, and there it is we see Him as Son of man, according to chapter 2. It was there, in fact, that Paul had himself first seen the Lord. Who then was so suitable to introduce Jesus, the rejected Messiah at the right hand of God, as Saul of Tarsus? On the way to Damascus that staunchest of Jews had his eyes first opened - blinded naturally, but enabled by grace so much the more to see by the power of the Holy Spirit the glorified Christ.

It is to Christ in heaven then that Paul, writing to the Christian Jews, first directs their attention. But he does it in a manner which shows the singularly delicate tact given him. True affection is prudent for its object when peril is nigh, and delights to help effectively instead of being indifferent whether

the way of it wounds those whose good is sought. In no way are the former messages of God forgotten in the days of their fathers. Nor would one gather from this epistle that its writer labored among the Gentiles, nor even that there was a calling of Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus. The epistle to the Hebrews never speaks of either.

We can understand, therefore, how active-minded men who occupied themselves with the surface—the method, the style, the unusual absence of the writer's name, and other peculiarities in the phenomena of this epistle—too readily hesitated to attribute it to Paul. They might not attach much moment to the general tradition which ascribed it to him. But they ought to have looked more steadily into its depths, and the motives for obvious points of difference, even were it written by Paul.

Granted that there is a striking absence of allusion to the one body here—but there was one nearer and dearer to Paul than even the Church. There was one truth that Paul labored yet more to hold up than that one body wherein is neither Jew nor Greek - the glory of Him who is the head of it. Christ Himself was what made the assembly of God precious to him. Christ Himself was infinitely more precious than even the Church which He had loved so well, and for which He gave Himself. Of Christ, then, he would deliver his last message to his brethren after the flesh as well as the Spirit; and as he began preaching in the synagogues that He is the Son of God (Acts 9), so here he begins his epistle to the Hebrews. He would lead them on, and this with gentle but firm and witting hand. He would deepen their knowledge lovingly and wisely. He would not share their unbelief, their love of ease, their value for outward show, their dread of suffering; but he would reserve each folly for the most fitting moment. He would lay a vigorous hand on that which threatened their departure from the faith, but he would smooth lightly lesser difficulties out of their way. But when he gained their ear, and they were enabled to see the bright lights and perfections of the great High Priest, there is no warning more energetic than this epistle affords against the imminent and remediless danger of those who abandon Christ, whether for religious form or to indulge in sin. All is carried on in the full power of the Spirit of God, but with the nicest consideration of Jewish prejudices, and the most scrupulous care to bring every warrant for his doctrine from their own ancient yet little understood testimonies.

It is evident, however, even from the opening of the epistle, that though he does not slight, but uphold, the Old Testament scriptures, yet he will not let the Jews pervert them to dishonor the Lord Jesus. How had God spoken to the fathers? In many measures and in many manners. So had He spoken in the prophets. It was fragmentary and various—not a full and final manifestation of Himself. Mark the skill, He thereby cuts off, by the unquestionable facts of the Old Testament, that over-weening self-complacency of the Jew which would set Moses and Elias against hearing the Son of God. Had God spoken to the fathers in the prophets? Unquestionably. Paul, who loved Israel and estimated their privileges more highly than themselves (Rom. 9), was the last man to deny or enfeeble it. But how had God spoken then? Had He formerly brought out the fullness of His mind? Not so. The early communications were but refracted rays, not the light unbroken and complete. Who could deny that such was the character of all the Old Testament? Yet so cautiously does he insinuate the obviously and necessarily practical character of that which was revealed of old, that at a first reading - no, however often read perfunctorily—they might have no more perceived it than, I suppose, most of us must confess as to ourselves. But there it is; and when we begin to prove the divine certainty of every word, we weigh and weigh again its value.

As then it is pointed out that there were formerly many portions, so also were there many modes in the prophetic communications of God. This was, beyond doubt, the way in which His revelations had been gradually vouchsafed to His people. But for this very reason, it was not complete. God was giving piecemeal His various words, "here a little, and there a little." Such was the character of His ways with Israel. They could not-man could not-bear more till redemption was accomplished, after the Son of God Himself was come, and His glory fully revealed. Now when promises were given to the fathers, they did not go beyond the earthly glory of Christ; but known to Him were all things from the beginning, yet He did not outrun the course of His dealings with His people. But as they manifested themselves in relation to Himself, and alas! their own weakness and ruin, higher glories began to dawn, and were needful as a support to the people. Hence, invariably, you will find these two things correlative. Reduce the glory of Christ, and you equally lower your judgment of the state of man. See the total absolute ruin of the creature; and none but the Son in all His glory is felt to be a sufficient Savior for such.

Accordingly, while he intimates thus that all was but partial, being piecemeal and multiform in the revelations from God to the fathers, he lets them know in the next verse that the same God had in the last of these days "spoken unto us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." If such and so great were His glory, what must not be the word of such a Son? What the fullness of the truth that God was now making known to His people by Him? Was this to slight the glory of the Messiah? Let them rather take heed that there be no oversight of Him on their part; none could justly put it to the account of God. For who was He - this Messiah - that they would fain occupy themselves with as a king, and would have confirmed, had it been possible, to aggrandize themselves-the ancient people of God? The brightness of God's glory, the express image of His substance; the upholder, not of Israel or their land only, but of all things "by the word of His power." But hearken- "When He had by Himself purged our sins"-was not the whole Jewish system blotted out by such a truth? - "When He had by Himself purged our sins." It is to the exclusion of every other instrument. Help there was not; means there could not be. He Himself undertook and achieved the task alone and, when He had thus done it, "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." This furnishes the first part of the doctrine on which the Apostle insists.

(To be continued)

Any variation from the King James Version of the Scriptures, is Mr. Kelly's own translation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

If any beings had special account or stood highly exalted in a Jew's eye, the holy angels were they; and no wonder. It was in this form that Jehovah ordinarily appeared whenever He visited the fathers or the sons of Israel. There were exceptions, but, as a rule, He who made known the will and manifested the power of Jehovah in these early days to the fathers is spoken of habitually as the angel of Jehovah. It is thus He was represented. He had not yet taken manhood, or made it part of His Person. I do not deny that there was sometimes the appearance of man. An angel might appear in whatever guise it pleased God, but, appear as He might, He was the representative of Jehovah. Accordingly, the Jews always associated angels with the highest idea of beings, next to Jehovah Himself - the chosen messengers of the divine will for any passing

vision among men. But now appeared One who completely surpassed the angels. Who was He? The Son of God. It ought to have filled them with joy.

We may easily understand that every soul truly born of God would and must break forth into thanksgiving to hear of a deeper glory than he had first perceived in Christ. We must not look on the Lord according to our experience, if there has been simplicity in the way God has brought us to the perception of His glory; we must endeavor to put ourselves back, and consider the prejudices and difficulties of the Jew. They had their own peculiar hindrances, and one of their greatest was the idea of a divine person becoming a man; for a man, to a Jew, was far below an angel. Are there not many now, even professing Christians (to their shame be it spoken), who think somewhat similarly? Not every Christian knows that an angel, as such, is but a servant; not every Christian understands that man was made to rule. No doubt he is a servant, but not merely one so accomplishing orders, but having a given sphere in which he was to rule as the image and glory of God—a thing never true of an angel - never was, and never can be. The Jews had not entered into this; no man ever did receive such a thought. The great mass of Christians now are totally ignorant of it. The time, the manner, and the only way in which such a truth could be known, was in the Person of Christ, for He became not an angel but a man.

But the very thing that to us is so simple, when we have laid hold of the astonishing place of man in the Person of Christ—this was to them the difficulty. The Lord God being a man, they imagined, must lower Him necessarily below an angel. The Apostle, therefore, has to prove that which to us is an evident matter of truth—of revelation from God—without argument at all. And this he proves from their own scriptures. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" Now it is true that angels are sometimes called "sons of God," but God never singles out one and says, "Thou art My Son." In a vague, general way, He speaks of all men as being His sons. He speaks of the angels in a similar way as being His sons. Adam was a son of God—apart, I mean, from the grace of God—as a mere creature of God into whose nostrils He breathed the breath of life. Adam was a son of God; angels were sons of God; but to which of the angels did God ever speak in such language as this? No, it was to a man, for He was thus speaking of the Lord as Messiah here below, and this is what gives the emphasis of the passage. It is not predicated of the Son as eternally such; there would be no wonder in this. None could be surprised, assuredly, that the Son of God, viewed in His own eternal being, should be greater than an angel. But that He, an infant on earth, looked at as the Son of the virgin, should be above all the angels in heaven—this was a wonder to the Jewish mind. And yet, what had in their scriptures a plainer proof? It was not to an angel in heaven, but to the Babe at Bethlehem, that God had said, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; and again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"—words said historically of David's son, but, as usual, looking onward to a greater than David or his wise son who immediately succeeded him, Christ is the true and continual object of the inspiring Spirit.

But next follows a still more powerful proof of His glory: "And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." So far from any angel approaching the glory of the Lord Jesus, it is God Himself who commands that all the angels shall worship Him. "And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." They are but servants, whatever their might, function, or sphere. They may have a singular place as servants, and a spiritual nature accomplishing the pleasure of the Lord, but they

are only servants. They never rule. "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Not a word is said about His fellows until God Himself addresses Him as God. The angels worshiped Him; God now salutes Him as God; for such He was, counting it no robbery to be on equality with God, one with the Father.

But this is far from all. The chain of scriptural testimony is carried out and confirmed with another and even more wondrous citation. "God" may be used in a subordinate sense. Elohim has His representatives who are therefore called gods. Magistrates and kings are so named in Scripture. So are they styled, as the Lord told the Jews. The word of God came and commissioned them to govern in earthly things, for it might be no more than in judicial matters. Still, there they were, in their own sphere, representing God's authority, and are called gods, though clearly with a very subordinate force. But there is another name which never is employed in any sense save that which is supreme. The dread and incommunicable name is "Jehovah." Is then the Messiah ever called Jehovah? Certainly He is. And under what circumstances? In His deepest shame. I do not speak now of God's forsaking Christ as the point of view in which He is looked at, though at the same general time.

We that believe can all understand that solemn judgment of our sins on the part of God, when Jesus was accomplishing atonement on the cross. But there was more in the cross than this, which is not the subject of Psalm 102, but rather the Messiah utterly put to shame by man and the people; nevertheless, taking it all-for this was His perfection in it-from the hand of Jehovah. It is under such circumstances He pours out His plaint. Jehovah raised Him up and Jehovah cast Him down. Had atonement, as such, been in view here as in Psalm 22, would it not be put as casting Him down, and then raising Him up? This is the way in which we Christians naturally think of Christ in that which is nearest to the sinner's need and God's answer of grace. But here Jehovah raised Him up and Jehovah cast Him down, which evidently refers to His Messianic place, not to His position as the suffering and afterward glorified Christ, the Head of the Church. He was raised up as the true Messiah by Jehovah on earth and He was cast down by Jehovah on earth. No doubt man was the instrument of it.

The world which He made did not know Him; His own people received Him not, neither would have Him. Jewish unbelief hated Him; the more they knew Him, the less they could endure Him. The goodness, the love, the glory of His Person only drew out the deadly enmity of man, and especially of Israel, for they were worse than the Romans; and all this He, in the perfection of His dependence, takes from Jehovah. For Himself, He came to suffer and die by wicked hands, but it was in the accomplishment of the will and purpose of God His Father. He knew full well that all the power of man or Satan would not have availed one instant before Jehovah permitted it. Hence all is taken meekly, but with none the less agony, from Jehovah's hand; and less or other than this had not been perfection. In the midst of Messiah's profound sense and expression of His humiliation to the lowest point thus accepted from Jehovah, He contrasts His own estate-wasted, prostrate, and coming to nothing. He contrasts it with two things. First, the certainty of every promise being accomplished for Israel and Zion, He unhesitatingly anticipates while He., the Messiah, submits to be given up to every possible abasement. He then contrasts Himself with the great commanding truth of Jehovah's own permanence. And what is the answer from on high to

the holy sufferer? Jehovah from above answers Jehovah below; He owns that the smitten Messiah is Jehovah, of stability and unchangeableness equal with His own.

What need of further proof after this? Nothing could be asked or conceived more conclusive as far as concerned His divine glory. And all that the Apostle thinks it necessary to cite after this is the connecting link of His present place on the throne of Jehovah in heaven with all these ascending evidences of His divine glory, beginning with His being Son as begotten in time and in the world; then His emphatic relationship to God as of the lineage of David-not Solomon, save typically, but the Christ really and ultimately-then worshiped by the angels of God; next, owned by God as God and, finally, as Jehovah by Jehovah.

All is closed by the citation of Psalm 110:1, which declares that God bids Him sit as man at His right hand on high till the hour of judgment on His foes. It is one of the most interesting psalms in the whole collection, and of the deepest possible moment as preparatory both to what is now brought in for the Christian (which, however, is hidden here) and to what it declares shall be by-and-by for Israel. Thus it is a sort of bridge between old and new, as it is more frequently quoted in the New Testament than any other Old Testament scripture. "Therefore" (as should be the conclusion, though commencing the next chapter) "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels"- clearly he is still summing up the matter - "was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard?" It is striking to see how the Apostle takes the place of such as simply had the message, like other Jews, from those who personally heard Him; so completely was he writing, not as the Apostle of the Gentiles magnifying his office, but as one of the people of Israel who were addressed by those who companied with Messiah on earth.

It was confirmed "unto us," says he, putting himself along with his nation instead of conveying his heavenly revelations as one taken out from the people, and the Gentiles, to which last he was sent. He looks at what was their proper testimony, not at that to which he had been separated extraordinarily. He is dealing with them as much as possible on their own ground, though, of course, without compromise of his own. He does not overlook the testimony to the Jews as such: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will."

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Epistle To The Hebrews: Introductory Lectures by William Kelly (Part 3 Chapter 2:5-18)

Now the Apostle enters on another and very distinct portion of the glory of Christ. He is not only the Son of God, but Son of man. They are both, I will not say equally necessary but, without a doubt, absolutely necessary, whether for God's glory or for his salvation to whomsoever it may be applied. Touch Christ on either side, and all is gone. Touch Him on the human side; it is hardly less fatal than on the divine. I admit that His divine glory has a place which humanity could not possess; but His human perfection is no less necessary to found the blessing for us on redemption, glorifying God in His righteousness and love. This accordingly the Apostle now traces. Jesus was God as truly as man, and in both above the angels. His superiority as Son of God has

been proved in the most masterly manner from their own scriptures in the first chapter. He had drawn his conclusions, urging the all-importance of giving heed, and the danger of letting slip such a testimony. The law, as he had said elsewhere, was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. He had just said, if under it every transgression and disobedience received just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Outward infraction and inner rebellion met their retribution. The sanction of the gospel would be commensurate with its grace, and God would avenge the slights of a testimony begun by the Lord, further carried on and confirmed by the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, powers, and distributions according to His will.

Now he takes the other side, saying, "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come." "Whatever may have been God's employment of angels about the law, the world to come was never destined to be subjected to them. It is the good pleasure of God to use an angel where it is a question of providence, or law, or power; but where it comes to be the manifestation of His glory in Christ, He must have other instruments more suitable for His nature, and according to His affections. "For one has somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that Thou visitest Him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels;

Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands." Thus we see the first question raised is one as to the littleness of man in comparison with that which God has made; but the question is no sooner raised than answered, and this by one who looks at the second Man and not at the first. Behold then man in Christ, and then talk, if you can, about his littleness. Behold man in Christ, and then be amazed at the wonders of the heavens. Let creation be as great as it may be, He that made all things is above them. The Son of man has a glory that completely eclipses the brightness of the highest objects. But also He shows that the humiliation of the Savior, in which He was made a little lower than the angels, was for an end that led up to this heavenly glory. Grant that He was made a little lower than the angels; what was it for? "We see not yet all things put under Him. But we behold Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything."

Nor was this the only object; He was "crowned with glory and honor" as fruit of His sufferings unto death; but it had a gracious object as well as a glorious end; "so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything"; for thus was the only door of deliverance for what was ruined by the fall, and this because it was the only means of morally vindicating God who yearned in love over every work of His hands. There can be otherwise no efficacious because no righteous deliverance. It may be infinitely more, but righteous footing it must have; and this the death of Christ has given. Flowing from God's grace, Christ's death is the ground of reconciliation for the universe. It has also made it a part of His righteousness to bring man thus out of that ruin, misery, and subjection to death in which he lay. It has put into the hands of God that infinite fund of blessing in which He now loves to admit us reconciled to Himself.

The Apostle does not yet draw all the consequences; but he lays down in these two chapters the twofold glory of Christ - Son of God, Son of man - and following up the latter, he approaches that which fitted Him, on the score of sympathy, for the priesthood. I do not mean that Jesus could have been High Priest according to God because He was a man. Not His manhood, but His

Godhead is the ground of His glory; nevertheless, if He had not been man as well as Son of God, He could not have been priest. As for atonement, so for priesthood, that ground was essential. But it was for man, and therefore He too must be man. So it is here shown that it "became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Remark, it is not "all one" - we never reach that height in the epistle to the Hebrews; never have we the body here, any more than unity. For the body we must search into some other epistles of Paul, though unity we may see in another shape in John. But the epistle to the Hebrews never goes so far as either. It does what was even more important for those whom it concerned and, I add, what is of the deepest possible moment for us. For those who think that they can live according to God on the truth of either Ephesians or of the epistles of John, without the doctrine of the epistle to the Hebrews, have made a miserable mistake.

Say what men will, we have our wants, as traversing this wilderness; and although we might like to soar, it cannot long, if at all, prosper. We have, therefore, the adaptation of Christ as priest to the infirmities that we feel, and so much the more because of an exercised conscience toward God, and a realizing of the desert sin has made - this defiled scene of our actual pilgrimage.

Accordingly, in the latter part of the chapter, the Apostle begins to introduce the great truths which form so large a part of the epistle to the Hebrews. He speaks of Christ, the Sanctifier: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." He means one and the same condition, without entering into particulars. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." There is a common relationship which the Sanctifier and the sanctified possess. It might be supposed, because He is the Sanctifier and they the sanctified, that there could be no such communion. But there is: "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He never called them so till He became a man; nor did He do so fully then till He was man risen from the dead. The Apostle here most fittingly introduces Psalm 22, etc., "Saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee. And again, I will put My trust in Him." He is proving the reality of this common relationship of the Sanctifier and the sanctified. He, like themselves, can say, and He alone could say as they never did, "I will put My trust in Him." Indeed Psalm 16 was the expression of all His course as man - trust in life, trust in death, trust in resurrection. As in everything else, so in this, He has the pre-eminence, but it is a preeminence founded on a common ground. It could not have been true of Him had He not been a man; had He been simply God, to talk of trusting in God would have been altogether unnatural and impossible. As for Him then, though the Sanctifier, He and they were all of one. And so further; "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." Here is again a different but equally good proof of mutual relationship.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels." This last should be, that He does not take up angels; He does not help them. They are not the objects of His concern in the work here described; "but He takes up the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest"-here you have the object of all the proof of His being man-"in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the

sins of the people." I use the word "atonement," or expiation, as being decidedly preferable to "reconciliation." You cannot talk of reconciling sins. It is not a question of making sins right. They are atoned for; people are reconciled. Those who have been sinners are reconciled to God; but as to sins, they do not admit of being reconciled at all (which is a mistake). There is need of a propitiation, or expiation, for the sins of His people. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Temptation to Him was nothing but suffering; He suffered, being tempted, because there was that intrinsic holiness which repelled but, at the same time, most acutely felt the temptation.

Thus the Apostle enters on the vast field that will come before us a little more fully. He has laid the basis for the high priesthood of Christ. He could not have been such a High Priest, had He not been both divine and human; and He has proved both, in the fullest manner, from their own scriptures.

(To be continued)

Any variation from the King James Version of the Scriptures is Mr. Kelly's own translation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Before the Apostle enters upon the unfolding of His High Priesthood, there is a digression (the two chapters that follow, I apprehend, linking themselves with the two we have considered). Thus, "Christ as Son over His own house" answers pretty much to the first chapter, as the rest of God by-and-by answers to the second chapter; for I hope to prove it is to be in the scene of future glory. In writings so profound as the Apostle's, one generally hails the least help toward appreciating the structure of an epistle; let the reader consider it.

We need not dwell long on these intervening chapters. It is evident that he opens with our Lord as "Apostle and High Priest of our confession," in contrast with the apostle and high priest of the Jews. Moses was the revealer of the mind of God of old, as Aaron had the title and privilege of access then into the sanctuary of God for the people. Jesus unites both in His own Person.

He came from God and went to God.

The holy brethren then, partakers of a heavenly calling (not earthly like Israel's), are told to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus, who is faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses in all His house. Moses, "as a servant," he takes care particularly to say, in everything shows the superiority of the Messiah. "For He was counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by how much He that built it hath more honor than the house." He becomes bold now. He can venture, after having brought out such glory to Christ, to use plainness of speech; and they could bear it if they believed their own scriptures. If they honored the man who was God's servant in founding and directing the tabernacle (or house of God in its rudimentary state), how much more did the ancient oracles call attention to a greater than Moses-to Jehovah-Messiah, even Jesus. How plainly this chapter presupposes the proofs of the divine glory of Christ! We shall see also His Sonship presently. "And Moses was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of the things to be spoken after; but Christ, as Son over His house, whose house are we." Christ, being God, built the house; Christ built all things. Moses ministered as servant, and was faithful in God's house; Christ as Son is over the house; "whose house are we, if we hold fast

the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

There were great difficulties, circumstances calculated especially to affect the Jew who, after receiving the truth with joy, might be exposed to great trial, and so in danger of giving up his hope. It was, besides, particularly hard for a Jew at first to put these two facts together: a Messiah come, and entered into glory; and the people who belonged to the Messiah left in sorrow, and shame, and suffering here below. In fact, no person from the Old Testament could, at first sight at least, have combined these two elements. We can understand it now in Christianity. It is partly, indeed, to the shame of Gentiles, that they do not even see the difficulty for a Jew. It shows how naturally, so to speak, they have forgotten the Jew as having a special place in the Word and purposes of God. They consequently cannot enter into the feelings of the Jew; and by such the authority and use of this epistle was grievously slighted. It is the self-conceit of the Gentile (Rom. 11), not their faith, that makes the Jewish difficulty to be so little felt. Faith enables us to look at all difficulties, on the one hand measuring them, on the other raising us above them. This is not at all the case with ordinary Gentile thought. Unbelief, indifferent and unfeeling, does not even see, still less appreciate, the trials of the weak.

The Apostle here enters into everything of value for the way. Although it is perfectly true that the Son is in this place of universal glory and, in relation to us, Son over His house (God's house having an all-comprehending sense and a narrower one), he explains how it is that His people are in actual weakness, trial, exposure, danger, and sorrow here below. The people are still traveling through the wilderness, not yet in the land. He immediately appeals to the voice of the Spirit in the Psalms: "Wherefore-(as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.) - take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses."

What is pressed here is this: that the people of God are still in the path of faith, just like their fathers of old before they crossed the Jordan; that now there is that which puts our patience to the proof; that the grand thing for such is to hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm unto the end. They were tempted to stumble at the truth of Christ because of the bitter experiences of the way through which they were going onward. To turn back is but the evil heart of unbelief; to abandon Jesus is to turn away from the living God. To be fellows or companions of the Messiah (Psalm 45) depends on holding fast the beginning of the assurance to the end; for, remember, we are in the wilderness. Following Christ, as of old they followed Moses, we are not arrived at the rest of God. "But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

This leads us to the very important, but often misunderstood, chapter 4. What is the meaning of the "rest of God"? Not rest of soul, nor rest of conscience, any more than of heart. It is none of these things, but simply what the Apostle says, God's rest. His rest is not merely your rest. It is not our faith seizing the rest that Christ gives to him that trusts Himself, as when He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He did not say, "I will give you God's rest." It was not the time, nor is it of that nature. God's rest is the rest of His own satisfaction. His rest is a change of all the present scene of trial and toil, the consequences of sin. Of course the people of God must be formed for the scene, as well as it for them. They are incomparably more to God than that which they are going to fill. But the scene has its importance too.

It would not suit God, if it would suit us, to be ever so blessed in such a world as this. He means to have a rest as worthy of Himself as the righteousness we are made in Christ is worthy of Himself now. As it is His righteousness, so will it be His rest. Therefore it is not merely, as Gentiles are apt to suppose, the bringing of comfort into the heart, and the spirit filled with the consciousness of blessings from God and of His grace to us. The Jew too had, in another direction, a miserably inadequate conception of it; for it was earthly, if not sensual. Still, what a Jewish believer often staggered at, what he felt to be a serious riddle for his mind, was the contrast between the circumstances through which he was passing, and the Christ of which the prophets had spoken to him. Now the Apostle does not in any way make light of the grief by the way, nor forget that the pilgrimage in the desert is the type of our earthly circumstances. He takes the scriptures that speak of Israel journeying toward, but not yet in, the pleasant land, applying them to the present facts, and at the same time he sets before them in hope the rest of God.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us were glad tidings preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we who have believed do enter into rest." That is, we are on the road. He does not say that we have entered, nor does he mean anything of the sort, which is clean contrary to the argument and aim. It is altogether a mistake, therefore, to so interpret the passage. The very reverse is meant; namely, that we have not entered into the rest but, as the hymn says, we are on our way, I will not say to God, but assuredly to His rest. We are entering into the rest, having got it before us, and on to that rest we move; but we are not yet there. "We who have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest."

It is quite true that it is the Holy Ghost's object to bring the rest close to us, so as to make us always conscious of the little interval that separates us from the rest of God; but still, let the interval be ever so short, we are not there yet; we are only going toward it. For the present, our place, beyond controversy, is viewed as in fact in the wilderness. According to the doctrine of this epistle (as of the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Philippians), to present us as in heavenly places would be altogether out of place and season. To the Ephesians he does develop our blessing as in and with Christ in the heavenlies. There it was exactly consonant to the character of the truth; for it is truth, and of the highest order. But as far as the epistle to the Hebrews goes, we should never have learned this side of the truth of God, or its appropriation to us, for we are only regarded in our actual place; that is, marching through the desert.

Here objections, which might be founded on the scriptures of the Old Testament, are met. There were two, and only two, occasions of old whence it might be argued that there had been an entrance into God's rest.

The first was when God made the creation; but was there any entering of man into that rest? God, doubtless, rested from His works; but even God is never said then to have rested in His works. Was there anything that satisfied God, or blessed man permanently? All was good; yes, very good; but could God rest in His love? Surely not till all could be founded on the basis of redemption. Before all worlds were, God meant to have this. Nothing but redemption could bring into His own rest. Consequently, a rest capable of being spoiled, and all requiring to be begun over again in a new and more blessed way, never could meet the heart or mind of God. This, accordingly, is not His rest; it served as a sign and witness of it, but nothing more.

Then we come down lower to the second instance of deep and special interest to Israel. When Joshua brought the people triumphantly into the possession of Canaan, was this the rest of God? Not so. How is it disproved? By the selfsame Psalm - "If they shall enter into My rest," written afterward. So wrote David, "Today, after so long a time." Not only after the creation, but after Joshua had planted the people in the land, a certain day is determined in the future. For if Jesus (Joshua) had brought them into rest, He would not have spoken afterward about another day. They had not entered into it yet.

The "rest" was still beyond. Is it not future still? What has there been to bring people into the rest of God since then? What is there to be compared with creation, or with His people settled in Canaan by the destruction of their foes? That which Gentile theology has brought into the matter; namely, the work of the Lord on the cross, or the application of it to meet the needs of the soul - precious as it was to the Apostle, as it must be to faith - has no place whatever in the Apostle's argument. If so, where does he bring it into the context? The idea that this is the point debated is so perfectly foreign and futile that to my mind it demonstrates exceeding prepossession, if not looseness, of mind as well as a lack of subjection to scripture in those who allow their theories to override the plain Word of God, which is here conspicuous for the absence of that infinite truth.

The Apostle, therefore, at once draws the conclusion that neither at creation, nor in Canaan, was the rest of God really come. The latter part of the Old Testament shows us how Israel got unsettled and finally driven from their land, though it also predicts their future ingathering. The New Testament shows us the rejection of the Messiah, the ruin of Israel, the salvation of believers, the Church formed of such in one body (whether Jews or Gentiles), but in the stronger contrast with the rest of God. Consequently, the rest is but coming, not come; it is future. This is the application: "There remaineth therefore a rest" (or sabbatism) "to the people of God. For he that hath entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from His own." I must ask you thus to alter the passage, the Authorized Version giving it wrongly. The emphasis is taken out of one place and put into another without the slightest reason.

What he deduces is, "Let us use diligence therefore to enter into that rest." The meaning is, you cannot be laboring and resting in the same sense and time. All must confess that when you rest, you cease from labor. His statement is that now is the time not for rest, but for diligence; and the moral reason why we labor is that love-whether looked at in God Himself, in His Son, or in His children-never can rest where there is either sin or wretchedness. In the world there is both. No

doubt for the believer; his sins are blotted out and forgiven, and hope anticipates with joy the final deliverance of the Lord. But as to the course of this age and all things here below, it is impossible to think or speak of rest as these are, not even for our bodies, as part of the fallen creation. There ought not to be rest, therefore, beyond what we have by faith in our souls. It would be mere sentimentalizing; it is not the truth of God. I ought to feel the misery and the estrangement of the earth from God; I ought to go--however joyful in the Lord--with a heart sad, and knowing how to weep, in a world where there is so much sin, and suffering, and sorrow. But the time is coming when God will wipe away tears from all eyes; yes, every tear. And this will be the rest of God. To this rest we are journeying, but we are only journeying. At the same time we should labor; love cannot but toil in such a world as this. If there be the spirit that feels the pressure of sin, there is the love that rises up in the power of God's grace, bringing in that which lifts out of sin, and delivers from it. So he says, "Let us be diligent therefore to enter into that rest."

Allow me to say a word to any person who may be a little confused by old thoughts on this subject. Look again a little more exactly into the two chief calls of the chapter (verses 1 and 11), and let me ask you if it be safe and sound to apply them to rest for the conscience now? Are souls who have never yet tasted that the Lord is gracious to be summoned to fear? And how does the call to labor or diligence square with the Apostle's word in Rom. 4:4, 5, where justification by faith, apart from works, is beyond cavil the point of teaching? What can be the effect of such prejudices of interpretation (no matter who may have endorsed them) but to muddle the gospel of God's grace? Thus it seems to me clearly and certainly such a notion is proved to be false. The test of a wrong notion is that it always dislocates the truth of God; often, indeed, like this, running counter to the plainest and most elementary forms of the gospel itself. Thus, take the text already referred to- "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly"-the popular misinterpretation sets people working to enter into rest for their conscience. But the doctrine is as false as the written Word is true; and the meaning of that which is before us is not rest now for the soul by faith, but the rest of God, when He has made a scene in the day of glory as worthy of Himself as it will be suited for those whom He loves.

Accordingly, we are next shown the provision of grace, not for the rest of glory, but for those who are only journeying on toward it here below. And what is that provision? The Word of God which comes and searches, tries and deals with us, judging the thoughts and intents of the heart; and the priesthood of Christ which converts and strengthens, and applies all that is needed here -the grace and mercy of our God. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Epistle To The Hebrews: By William Kelly (Part 5 Chapters 5 and 6)

And now we enter upon the priesthood, for it is a priest we need--we who stand already accepted by sacrifice. Not a priest, but a sacrifice, is the foundation of all relationship with God; but we need along the way a living person who can deal both with God for us, and for God with us. Such a Great High Priest who passed through the heavens, yet able to sympathize with our infirmities, we have in Jesus the Son of God. How little these Jews, even when saints, knew the treasure of grace that God had given in Him whom the nation abhorred! As previously, the Apostle takes the proofs from their own oracles. It is not a question of revealing, but of rightly applying, by the Holy

Ghost, the word they had in their hand.

"For every high priest taken from among men is established for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Men, confident in their own resources, have dared to apply this description of priesthood to Christ. They have failed to see that it is a distinct contrast with Christ, and not at all a picture of His priesthood. It is evidently general, and sets before us a human priest, not Jesus-God's High Priest. If there be analogy, there is certainly the strongest contrast here. An ordinary priest is able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since he himself is compassed with infirmity. "And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." Did Christ need to suffer for Himself, yea, for sins? This blasphemy would follow if the foregoing words applied to Christ.

"And no one taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, even as Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest." Now he teaches a point of contact, as the other was of contrast. All you can procure from among men is one that can feel, as being a man, for men after a human sort. Such is not the priest that God has given us, but one who, though man, feels for us after a divine sort. And so we are told that Christ, while He was and is this glorious Person in His nature and right, nevertheless as man did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest; "But He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee; as He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

The same God who owned Him as His Son, born of the virgin, owned Him also as Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. And in this order too: first, Son (on earth); next, the true Melchisedec (in heaven, as we shall find). Albeit true God and Son of God, in everything He displays perfect lowliness among men, and absolute dependence on God; such also was His moral fitness for each office and function which God gave Him to discharge. Again, mark the skill with which all is gradually approached-how the inspired writer saps and mines their exorbitant (yet after all only earthly) pretensions founded on the Aaronic priesthood. Such was the great boast of the Jews. And here we learn out of their own scriptures another order of priesthood reserved for the Messiah, which he knew right well could not but put the Aaronic priesthood completely in the shade. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

At the same time, it is plain that there is no forgetfulness of the suffering obedience of Christ's place here below; but He is presented in this glory before we are given to hear of the path of shame which ushered it in. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him, called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." The Apostle had much to say, but hard to be interpreted because they were dull of hearing. It is not that the Word of God in itself is obscure, but that men bring in their difficulties. Nor does His Word, as is often thought, need light to be thrown on it; rather it is light itself. By the Spirit's power it dispels the darkness of nature. Many obstacles there are to the entrance of light through the Word, but there is none more decided than the force of religious prejudice; and this would naturally operate most among the Hebrew saints. They clung too much to old things; they could not take in the new. We may see a similar hindrance every day. What Paul had to say of the Melchisedec priesthood was hard to

explain to them, not because the things were in themselves unintelligible, but they were dull in hearing. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye again have need that one teach you the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God."

There is nothing, I repeat, which tends to make dullness in spiritual things so much as religious tradition. The next to it in dead weight, and in other respects more daringly dangerous, will be found to be philosophy. At any rate, it is remarkable that these are the two occasions of this reproach from the Apostle. So he wrote to the Corinthians, who generally admired rhetoric, and had no small confidence, like other Greeks, in their own wisdom. They did not consider Paul, either in style or topics, at all up to the requirements of the age—at least in their midst. How cutting to hear themselves counted babes, and incapable of meat for grown men, so that being carnal, they must have milk administered to them! The Apostle had to put them down, and tell them, with all their high-flown wisdom, they were such that he could not discourse to them about the deep things of God. This, no doubt, was a painful surprise for them. So here the same Apostle writing to the Hebrew believers treats them as babes, though from a different source. Thus we see two errors totally opposed in appearance, but leading to the same conclusion. Both unfit the soul for going on with God; and the reason why they so hinder is because they are precisely the things in which man lives. Whether it be the mind of man or his natural religiousness, either idolizes its own object; and consequently blindness to the glory of Christ ensues.

Hence the Apostle could not but feel himself arrested by their state. He shows also that this very state was not merely one of weakness, but exposed them to the greatest danger; and this is pursued not on the philosophical side so much as on that of religious forms. Both were at work in Colosse. But on the Hebrews he presses their excessive danger of abandoning Christ for religious traditions. First of all, these hinder progress; finally they draw the soul aside from grace and truth; and, if the mighty power of God does not interfere, they ruin. This had been the course of some; they had better be watchful that it be not their own case. He begins gently with their state of infantine feebleness; and then in the beginning of the following chapter he sets before them the awful picture of apostasy. "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

"Therefore" (adds he in chapter 6), "leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection." He proves that we cannot safely linger among the Jewish elements when we have heard and received Christian truth; that not merely blessing, not simply power and enjoyment, but the only place even of safety is in going on to this full growth. To stop short for them was to go back. Let those that had heard of Christ return to the forms of Judaism, and what would become of them?

Then he speaks of the various constituents that make up the word of the beginning of Christ (that is, Christ known short of death, resurrection, and ascension). He would have them advance, "not laying again a foundation of 'repentance from dead works and faith in God, of a teaching of washings and imposition of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.'" Not that these were not true and important in their place—no one disputed them—but they were in no way the power, nor even characteristic, of Christianity. They go in pairs, and a mere Jew would hardly object; but what is all this for the Christian? Why live on such points? "And this" (that is, going on

to full growth) "will we do if God permit. For it is impossible [as to] those once enlightened, and that tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and that tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and fell away, to renew [them] again to repentance, seeing they crucify for themselves and expose the Son of God."

It is a question of persons drawn into apostasy after having enjoyed every privilege and power of the gospel, short of a new nature and that indwelling of the Spirit which seals renewed souls till the day of redemption. For those who rejected the Messiah on earth under Judaism, God gave repentance and remission of sins; but if they gave up the risen and glorified Christ, there was no provision of grace, no third estate of Christ to meet the case. It is not the case of a person surprised into sin; no, not even the very awful case of one who may go on in sin, sorrowful to think that it may be so with one of whom we had hoped better things. But here there is another evil altogether. There are those who might be ever so correct, moral, religious, but who, having confessed Jesus as the Christ after the outpouring of the Spirit, had lapsed back into Jewish elements, counting it perhaps a wise and wholesome check on a too rapid advance, instead of seeing that in principle it was an abandonment of Christ altogether. The full case here supposed is a thorough renunciation of Christian truth.

The Apostle describes a confessor with all the crowning evidences of the gospel, but not a converted man. Not a word implies this either here or in 2 Peter. Short of this he uses uncommonly strong expressions, and purposely so; he sets forth the possession of the highest possible external privileges, and this in that abundant form and measure which God gave on the ascension of the Lord. He says it all, no doubt, about the baptized; but there is nothing about baptism as the ancients would have it, any more than, with some moderns, the progressive steps of the spiritual life. There is knowledge, joy, privilege, and power, but no spiritual life. Enlightenment is in no sense the new birth, nor does baptism in Scripture ever mean illumination. It is the effect of the gospel on the dark soul—the shining on the mind, of Him who is the only true light. But light is not life; and life is not predicated here.

Further, they had "tasted of the heavenly gift." It is not the Messiah as He was preached when the disciples went about here below, but Christ after He went on high - not Christ after the flesh, but Christ risen and glorified above.

But again, they were "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." Of Him everyone became a partaker, who confessed the Lord and entered into the house of God. There the Holy Ghost dwelt; and all who were there became partakers, after an outward sort, of Him who constituted the assembly of God's habitation and temple. He pervaded, as it were, the whole atmosphere of the house of God. It is not in the least a question of a person individually born of God, and so sealed by the Holy Spirit. There is not an allusion to either in this case, but to their taking a share in this immense privilege, the word not being that which speaks of a joint known portion, but only of getting a share.

Moreover, they "tasted the good word of God." Even an unconverted man might feel strong emotions, and feel enjoyment to a certain extent, more particularly those that had lain in Judaism, that dreary valley of dry bones. What fare was the gospel of grace! Certainly nothing could be more miserable than the scraps which the scribes and Pharisees put before the sheep of the house of Israel. There is nothing to forbid the natural mind from being attracted by the delightful sweetness of the glad tidings which Christianity proclaims.

Last, we hear of "the powers of the age to come." This seems more than a general share in the presence of the Holy Ghost who inhabited the house of God. They were positively endued with miraculous energies - samples of that which will characterize the reign of the Messiah. Thus we may fairly give the fullest force to every one of these expressions. Yet write them out ever so largely, they fall short both of the new birth and of sealing with the Holy Ghost. There is everything, one may say, save inward spiritual life in Christ, or the indwelling seal of it. That is to say, one may have the very highest endowments and privileges, in the way of meeting the mind and also of exterior power, and yet all may be given up, and the man become so much the keener enemy of Christ. Indeed, such is the natural result. It had been the mournful fact as to some. They had fallen away. Hence renewal to repentance is an impossibility, seeing they crucify for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

Why impossible? The case supposed is of persons, after the richest proof and privilege, turning aside, apostates from Christ in order to take up Judaism once more. As long as that course is pursued, there cannot be repentance. Supposing a man had been the adversary of Messiah here below; there was still the opening for him of grace from on high. It was possible that the very man that had slighted Christ, when He was here below, might have his eyes opened to see and receive Christ now above; but, this abandoned, there is no fresh condition in which He can be presented to men. Those who rejected Christ in all the fullness of His grace, and in the height of glory in which God had set Him as man before them - those that had rejected Him not merely on earth but in heaven-what was there to fall back on? what possible means to bring them to a repentance after that? There is none. What is there but Christ coming in judgment? Now apostasy, sooner or later, must fall under that judgment. Such is the force of the comparison. "For land which hath drunk in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is for burning."

"But we are persuaded better things of you, beloved." There might seem too much ground for fear, but of the two ends he was persuaded respecting them the better things, and akin to salvation, if even he thus spoke; for God was not unrighteous, and the Apostle too remembered the traits of love and devotedness which gave him this confidence about them. But, he says, "We earnestly desire that each of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of those who through faith and longsuffering inherit the promises." Here is given a remarkable instance of the true character of the epistle; namely, the combination of two features peculiar to the Hebrews. On the one hand are the promises, the oath of God, taking up His ways with Abraham; and, on the other hand, the hope set before us, that enters into what is within the veil. We may account for the former, because the writer was not confining himself to that which fell within the proper sphere of his apostleship. But, again, had he been writing according to his ordinary place, nothing was more strictly his line of testimony than to have dwelt on our hope that enters within the veil. The peculiarity of the epistle to the Hebrews lies in combining the promises with Christ's heavenly glory. None but Paul, I believe, would have been suited to bring in the heavenly portion. At the same time, only in writing to the Hebrews could Paul have brought in the Old Testament hopes as he has done.

Another point of interest which may be remarked here is the intimation at the end compared with the beginning of the chapter. We have seen the highest external privileges -not only the mind of

man, as far as it could, enjoying the truth, but the power of the Holy Ghost making the man, at any rate, an instrument of power, even though it be to his own shame and deeper condemnation afterward. In short, man may have the utmost conceivable advantage, and the greatest external power even of the Spirit of God Himself; and yet all comes to nothing. But the very same chapter which affirms and warns of the possible failure of every advantage, shows us the weakest faith that the whole New Testament describes coming into the secure possession of the best blessings of grace. Who but God could have dictated that this same chapter (Heb. 6) should depict the weakest faith that the New

Testament ever acknowledges? What can look feebler, what more desperately pressed, than a man fleeing for refuge? It is not a soul as coming to Jesus; it is not as one whom the Lord meets and blesses on the spot; but here is a man hard pushed, fleeing for very life (evidently a figure drawn from the blood-stained person fleeing from the avenger of blood), yet eternally saved and blessed according to the acceptance of Christ on high.

There was no reality found to be in those so highly favored in the early verses; and therefore it was (as there was no conscience before God, no sense of sin, no cleaving to Christ) that everything came to naught; but here there is the fruit of faith, feeble indeed and sorely tried, but in the light that appreciates the judgment of God against sin. Hence, although it be only fleeing in an agony of soul to refuge, what is it that God gives to one in such a state? Strong consolation, and that which enters within the veil.

Impossible that the Son should be shaken from His place on the throne of God; so is it that the least believer should come to any hurt whatever. The weakest of saints is more than conqueror; and therefore the Apostle, having brought us to this glorious point of conclusion, as well as shown us the awful danger of men giving up such a Christ as that which we have presented to us in this epistle, now finds himself free to unfold the character of His priesthood, as well as the resulting position of the Christian. But on these I hope to enter, if the Lord will, on another occasion.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Apostle now resumes his great theme, Christ called a Priest of God forever after the order of Melchisedec. He alludes, in the beginning of our chapter, to the historical facts of Genesis. We must bear in mind that Melchisedec was a man like any other. There is no ground, in my judgment, for the thought of anything mysterious in the facts as to his person. The manner in which Scripture introduces him is such as to furnish a very striking type of Christ. There is no necessity for considering anything else but that the Spirit of God, forecasting the future, was pleased to conceal the line of Melchisedec's parentage (or descendants, if any), and their birth or death. He is suddenly ushered upon the scene. He has not been heard of by the reader before; he is never heard of again in history. Thus the only time when he comes into notice, he is acting in the double capacity here spoken of: King of righteousness as to his name, King of Salem as to his place, blessing Abraham on his return from the victory over the kings of the Gentiles in the name of the Most High God, and blessing the Most High God the possessor of heaven and earth in the name of Abraham.

The Apostle does not dwell on the detailed application of His Melchisedec priesthood as to the object and character of its exercise. He does not draw attention here to the account that there was

only blessing from man to God, and from God to man. He does not reason from the singular circumstance that there was no incense any more than sacrifice. He alludes to several facts, but leaves them. The point to which he directs the reader is the evident and surpassing dignity of the case-the unity too of the Priest and the priesthood-and this for an obvious reason.

The time for the proper exercise of the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ is not yet arrived. The millennial day will see this. The battle which Abraham fought, the first recorded one in Scripture (Gen. 14), is the type of the last battle of this age. It is the conflict which introduces the reign of peace founded on righteousness, when God will manifest Himself as the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. This is, as is well known, the special characteristic of the Millennium. Heaven and earth have not been united, nor have they been in fact possessed for the blessing of men by the power of God, since sin severed between the earth and that which is above it, and the prince of the power of the air perverted all, so that what should have been, according to God's nature and counsels, the source of every blessing, became rather the point from which the guilty conscience of man cannot but look for judgment. Heaven, therefore, by man's own conviction, must be arrayed in justice against earth because of sin. But the day is coming when Israel shall be no more rebellious, and the nations shall be no longer deceived, and Satan shall be dethroned from his bad eminence, and all idols shall flee apace, and God shall be left the undisputed and evidently Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth. In that day it will be the joy of Him who is the true Melchisedec, to bring out not the mere signs, but the reality of all that can be the stay and comfort of man, and all that sustains and cheers, the patent proof of the beneficent might of God, when "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

But meanwhile, confessedly, the Spirit of God directs attention not to the exercise, but to the order of the Melchisedec Priest. If we have to wait for the exercise at a future day, the order is as true and plain now as it ever can be. Indeed, at no time will its order be more apparent than at present; for I think there can be little doubt to any unbiased Christian who enters with intelligence into the Old Testament prophecies, that there is yet to be an earthly sanctuary and, consequently, earthly priests and sacrifices for Israel in their own land; that the sons of Zadok, as Ezekiel lets us know, will perpetuate the line at the time when the Lord shall be owned to be there, in the Person of the true David their King, blessing His people long distressed but then joyful on earth. But this time is not yet come. There is nothing to divert the heart from Christ, the great High Priest in the heavens. No doubt all will be good and right in its due season then. Meanwhile Christianity gives the utmost force to every type and truth of God. The undivided place of Christ is more fully witnessed now, when there are no others to occupy the thought or to distract the heart from Him as seen by faith in glory on high.

Hence the Apostle applies the type distinctly now, as far as the "order" of the priesthood goes. We hear first of Melchisedec (King of righteousness), next of Salem, or peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy. Unlike others in Genesis, neither parents are recorded; nor is there any hint of descent from him. In short, there is no mention of family or ancestors, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" -neither is recorded in Scripture-"but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually "

The next point proved is the indisputable superiority of the Melchisedec priesthood to that of Aaron, of which the Jews naturally boasted. After all, the telling fact was before them that whoever

wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, it was not a Christian who wrote the book of Genesis, but Moses; and Moses bears witness to the homage which Abram rendered to Melchisedec by the paying of tithes. On the other hand, the priests, Aaron's family, among the sons of Levi, "have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham." Thus Melchisedec, "whose descent is not of Aaron nor of Levi," like Jesus, "received tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had the promises!" "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." No argument could be more distinct or conclusive. The other descendants of Abraham honored the house of Aaron as Levitical priests; but Abraham himself, and so Levi himself, and of course Aaron, in his loins honored Melchisedec. Thus another and a higher priesthood was incontestably acknowledged by the father of the faithful. "And, as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."

This leads to another point, for the change of the priesthood imports a change of the law. "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" This change was clearly taught in the book of Psalms. It was not only that there had been at the beginning such a priest, but that fact became the form of a glorious anticipation which the Holy Ghost holds out for the latter day. Psalm 110, which, as all the Jews owned, spoke throughout its greater part at least of the Messiah and His times, shows us Jehovah Himself-by an oath which is afterward reasoned on - signifying that another priest should arise after a different order from that of Aaron. "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest." Thus the Pentateuch and the Psalms bore their double testimony to a Priest superior to the Aaronic.

Further, that this Priest was to be a living one, in some most singular manner to be an undying Priest, was made evident beyond question, because in that Psalm it is said, "He testifieth, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." This was also a grand point of distinction. Where could they find such a priest? where one competent to take up that word "forever"? Such was the Priest of whom God spoke. "For," says He, "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (for the law made nothing perfect)." He uses in the most skillful manner the change of the priest in order to bring along with it a change of the law, the whole Levitical system passing away-"but [there is] the bringing in of a better hope." Such is the true sense of the passage. "For the law made nothing perfect" is a parenthesis. By that hope then "we draw nigh unto God."

But again the solemn notice of Jehovah's oath is enlarged on. "Inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath"- no oath ushers in the sons of Aaron- "but He with an oath by Him that said as to Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec:) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant."

And finally he sums up the superiority of Christ in this, that "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but He, because of His continuing forever, hath the priesthood intransmissible." There was but one such Priest.

In every point of view, therefore, the superiority of the Melchisedec priest was demonstrated over the line of Aaron. The fulfillment of the Melchisedec order is found in Christ, and in Him alone. The Jews themselves acknowledge that Psalm 110 must be fulfilled in Christ, in His quality of Messiah. Nothing but stupid, obstinate, unbelieving prejudice, after the appearance of the Lord Jesus, could have suggested any other application of the Psalm. Before Jesus came, there was no question of it among the Jews. So little was it a question, that our Lord could appeal to its acknowledged meaning, and press the difficulty His Person created for unbelief. By their own confession the application of that Psalm was to the Messiah, and the very point that Jesus urged upon the Jews of His day was this: how, if He were David's Son, as they agreed, could He be his Lord, as the psalmist David confesses? This shows that beyond question among the Jews of that day, Psalm 110 was understood to refer to the Christ alone. But if so, He was the Priest after the order of Melchisedec, as well as seated at Jehovah's right hand-a cardinal truth of Christianity, the import of which the Jews did not receive in their conception of the Messiah. Hence throughout this epistle the utmost stress is laid on His being exalted in heaven. Yet there was no excuse for a difficulty on this score. Their own Psalm in its grand prophetic sweep, and looking back on the law, pointed to the place in which Christ is now seated above, and where it is of necessity He should be in order to give Christianity its heavenly character.

The doctrine follows: "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost." He does not mean by this the worst of sinners, but saving believers to the uttermost, bringing through every difficulty those "that come unto God by Him." A priest is always in connection with the people of God, never as such with those that are outside, but in a positive known relation with God -"seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." This statement is so much the more remarkable because in the beginning of this epistle he had pointed out what became God. It became Him that Christ should suffer. It became us to have a Priest, "holy, harmless, undefiled, made higher than the heavens."

What infinite thoughts are those that God's Word gives, as glorifying for Himself as elevating for our souls! Yet, who beforehand would have anticipated either? It became God that Christ should go down to the uttermost; it became us that He should be exalted to the highest. And why? Because Christians are a heavenly people, and none but a heavenly Priest would suit them. It became God to give Him to die, for such was our estate by sin that nothing short of His atoning death could deliver us; but, having delivered us, God would make us to be heavenly. None but a heavenly Priest would suffice for the counsels He has in hand. "Who needeth not daily," therefore says He, "as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's."

The Apostle always keeps up the evidence of the utter inferiority of the Jewish priest, as well as of the accompanying state of things, to that of Christianity. "For this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law, a Son perfected [or consecrated] forever." This was the very difficulty that the Jew

pleaded; but now, in point of fact, it was only what the Psalm of Messiah insisted on the law itself bearing witness of a priest superior to any under the law. Holy Scripture then demanded that a man should sit down at the right hand of God. It was accomplished in Christ, exalted as the great Melchisedec in heaven. If they were Abraham's children, and not his seed only, surely they would honor Him.

(To be continued)

Any variation from the King James Version of the Scriptures is Mr. Kelly's own translation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Epistle To The Hebrews: Introductory Lectures by William Kelly (Part 7 Chapter 8)

In chapter 8 the Apostle draws his conclusion. "Now of the things that are being spoken of this is a summary: We have such a high priest who is set down on [the] right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the holies, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." In Hebrews 1 it is written that "having by Himself made purification of our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The point there is personal glory. No other seat was suitable to such a One. He sat down there as of His own right and title, but nevertheless making a part of His divine glory to be witnessed, as indeed His Person was necessary to make His blood efficacious to the purging of our sins. But in chapter 8 He sits there not merely as the proof of the perfection with which He has purged our sins by Himself alone, but as the Priest; and accordingly it is not merely said "on high," but "in the heavens." Such is the emphasis. Accordingly, observe the change of expression. He has been proved to be a divine Person, and the true royal Priest of whom not Aaron only but Melchisedec was the type. Hence the right hand of the throne is introduced, but besides, "of the Majesty in the heavens." So that, let the Jews say what they might, there was only found what answered to their own scriptures, and what proved the incontestable superiority of the great Priest whom Melchisedec foreshadowed, and of whom it was now for the Christian justly to boast. He is "minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Now the tone becomes bolder with them, and shows clearly that the Jew had but an empty form, a foreshadow of value once, but now superseded by the true anti-type in the heavens.

Here too he begins to introduce what a priest does; that is, the exercise of his functions. "For every high priest is constituted to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if He were on earth, He should not even be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve the representation and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was oracularly told when about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shown to thee in the mountain. But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant."

Thus, before he enters on the subject of the sacrifices at length, he takes notice of the covenants, and thence he draws a conclusion from the well-known prophecy in Jeremiah where God declares that the days were coming when He would make a new covenant. What is the inference from that? He presses upon the Jews the fact of a new principle, as well as an institution established on better promises. For why should there be a new covenant unless because the first was faulty or

ineffectual? What was the necessity for a new covenant if the old one would do as well? According to the Jews it was quite impossible, if God had once established a covenant, that He could ever change it; but the Apostle replies that their own prophet is against their theory. Jeremiah positively declares that God will make a new covenant. He argues that the word "new" puts the other out of date, and this to make room for a better. A new covenant shows that the other must have thereby become old, and therefore is decaying and ready to vanish away.

All this is a gradual undermining of the wall until the whole structure is overthrown. He is laboring for this, and accomplishes it, with divine skill, by the testimonies of their own law and prophets. He does not require to add more to the Person and facts of Christ than the Old Testament furnishes, to prove the certainty of Christianity and all its characteristic truths with which he occupies himself in this epistle. I say not absolutely all its great truths. Were it a question of the mystery of Christ the Head, and of the Church His body, this would not be proved from the Old Testament which does not reveal it at all. It was hid in God from ages and generations. There are types that suit the mystery when it is revealed, but of themselves they never could make it known, though illustrating particular parts when it is. But whether we look at the heavenly supremacy of Christ over the universe, which is the highest part of the mystery, or at the Church associated with Him as His body, composed of both Jew and Gentile, where all distinction is gone, no wit of man ever did or could possibly draw this beforehand from the Old Testament. Indeed, not being revealed of old, according to the Apostle, it is altogether a mistake to go to the Old Testament for that truth.

Hence in Hebrews we never find the body of Christ, as such, referred to. We have the Church, but even when the expression "church" occurs, it is the Church altogether vaguely, as in chapter 2:12, or viewed in the units that compose it- not at all in its unity. It is the assembly composed of certain individuals that make it up, regarded either as brethren, as in the second chapter ("In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee"), or as the Church of the first-born ones, as in chapter 12 - persons who drew their title from Christ the first-born Heir. There we have those that compose the Church, in allusion to Christ, contrasted with the position of Israel as a nation, because of the nearness which they possess by the grace of Christ known on high.

It may also be observed that the Holy Ghost appears but little in this epistle. Not of course that one denies that He has His own proper place, for all is perfect as to each Person of the Trinity and all else, but never to this end. For a similar reason we never find life treated in the epistle, nor righteousness. It is not a question of justification here. We hear of sanctification often, but even what is thus spoken of throughout the epistle is rather in connection with separation to God and the work of Christ, than the continuous energy of the Holy Ghost except, as far as I remember, in one practical passage - "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." In other cases the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of sanctification by God's call, and Christ's blood. I refer to the fact just to exemplify on the one hand the true bearing of the epistle, and what I believe will be discovered in it, and on the other hand, to extract from it, what is not there.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Chapter 9 brings us into the types of the Levitical ritual, priesthood, and sacrifice. Before developing these, the Apostle refers to the tabernacle itself in which these sacrifices were offered. "There was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the

showbread; which is called holy. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called holy of holies; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold." Carefully observe that it is the tabernacle, never the temple. The latter is not referred to because it represents the millennial glory; the former is, because it finds its proper fulfillment in that which is made good in the Christian scheme now. This supposes the people of God not actually settled in the land, but still pilgrims and strangers on the earth; and the epistle to the Hebrews, as we have already seen, looks emphatically and exclusively at the people of God as not yet passed out of the wilderness- never as brought into the land, though it might be on the verge of it-just entering, but not actually entered. There remains, therefore, a sabbath-keeping for the people of God. Thither they are to be brought, and there are means for the road to keep us moving onward. But meanwhile we have not yet entered into the rest of God. It remains. Such is a main point, not of chapter 4 only, but of the epistle. It was the more urgent to insist on it because the Jews, like others, would have liked to be settled in rest here and now. This is natural and pleasant to the flesh, no doubt; but it is precisely what opposes the whole object of God in Christianity (since Christ went on high till He comes again), and therefore opposes the path of faith to which the children of God are called.

Accordingly, then, as suiting this pilgrim path of the Christian, the tabernacle is referred to, and not the temple. This is the more remarkable because his language is essentially of the actual state of what was going on in the temple; but he always calls it the tabernacle. In truth, the substratum was the same, and therefore it was not only quite lawful so to call it, but if he had not, the design would have been marred. This shows the main object of the Spirit of God in directing us to the type that applies to the believer now in an unsettled pilgrim condition, not to Israel established in the land of promise.

To what, then, is the allusion to the sanctuary applied? To mark that in it the veil was unrent. "Into the second [goes] the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way of the holies was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing: which is a figure for the present time, according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not, as pertaining to the conscience, make him that did the religious service perfect; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation."

Christianity is contrasted with all this. "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, nor by blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood entered in once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption." Here the words "for us" had better be left out. They really mar the sense because they draw attention not to the truth in itself so much as its application to us, which is not the point in chapter 9, but rather in chapter 10. Here it is the grand truth in itself in its own character. 'What is the value, the import, of the sacrifice of Christ viewed according to God, and as bearing on His ways? This is the fact. Christ has gone into the presence of God, "having obtained eternal redemption." For whom it may be, is another thing, of which he will speak by-and-by. Meanwhile we are told that He has obtained (not temporary, but) "eternal redemption." It is that which infinitely exceeds the deliverance out of Egypt, or any ceremonial atonement ever wrought by a high priest for Israel. Christ has obtained redemption, and this is witnessed by the token of

the veil rent from top to bottom. The unrent veil bore evidence on its front that man could not yet draw near into the holiest—that he had no access into the presence of God. This is of the deepest importance. It did not matter whether it was a priest or an Israelite. A priest, as such, could no more draw near into the presence of God in the holiest than any of the common people. Christianity is stamped by this: that, in virtue of the blood of Christ, once for all for every believer the way is made manifest into the holiest of all. The veil is rent: the believer can draw near, as is shown in the next chapter, but meanwhile it is merely pointed out that there is no veil now, eternal redemption being obtained.

Thus does the Apostle reason on it: "For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh" (which the Jew would not contest): "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to do religious service to the living God? And for this cause He is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, the called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Thus the power of what Christ had wrought was now brought in for future ends; it was not merely retrospective, but above all in present efficacy while the Jews refuse Christ.

The allusion in the last clause to the eternal inheritance (for everything is eternal in the Hebrews, standing in decided contrast with Jewish things which were but for a season) leads the Holy Spirit to take up the other meaning of the same word, which was and is rightly enough translated covenant. At first sight everyone may have been surprised, especially those that read the New Testament in the language in which God wrote it, at the double meaning of the word which is here translated covenant. It means testament as well as covenant. In point of fact the English translators did not know what to make of the matter; for they give sometimes one, sometimes the other, without any apparent reason for it, except to vary the phrase. In my judgment it is correct to translate it both ways, never arbitrarily, but according to context. There is nothing capricious about the usage. There are certain surroundings which indicate to the competent eye when the word covenant is right, and when the word testament is better.

It may then be stated summarily, in few words, unless I am greatly mistaken, that the word should always be translated covenant in every part of the New Testament, except in these two verses; namely, Heb. 9:16 and 17. If therefore, when you find the word testament anywhere else in the authorized version, you turn it into covenant, in my opinion, you will not do amiss. If in these two verses we bear in mind that it really means testament, growing out of the previous mention of the "inheritance," I am persuaded that you will have better understanding of the argument. In short, the word in itself may mean either; but this is no proof that it may indifferently or without adequate reason be translated both ways. The fact is that love of uniformity may mislead some, as love of variety misled our English translators too often. It is hard to keep clear of both. Everyone can understand, when once we find that the word almost always means covenant, how great the temptation is to translate it so in these two verses, especially as before and after it means covenant in the same passage. But why should it be testament in these two verses alone, and covenant in all other places? The answer is that the language is peculiar and precise in these same two verses, requiring not a covenant but a testament, and therefore the sense of testament here is the preferable one, and not covenant. The reasons will be given.

First of all, as has been hinted, that which suggests testament is the end of verse 15-"They which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." How is it that anybody ordinarily gets an inheritance? By a testament, to be sure, as everyone knows. Such has been the usual form in all countries not savage, and in all ages. No figure therefore would be more natural than that if God intended certain persons called

to have an inheritance, there should be a testament about the matter. Accordingly, advantage is taken of an unquestionable meaning of the word for this added illustration, which is based on the death of Christ; "Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." That the word in this connection means testator, appears to me beyond just question. I am not aware that it is, nor do. I believe that it could be, ever used in such a sense as covenanting victim, for which some contend. It often means one who arranges or disposes of property, or anything else, such as a treaty or covenant.

Let us next apply the word covenant here, and you will soon see the insuperable difficulties into which you are plunged if you say, "For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the covenanter"-the person. Now is it an axiom that a covenant maker must die to give it force? It is quite evident, on the contrary, that this is not only not the truth which all recognize when stated, but altogether inconsistent with the Bible, with all books, and with all experience. In every covenant of Scripture the man that makes it has never to die for any such end. Indeed both should die, for it usually consists of two parties who are thus bound, and therefore, were the maxim true, both ought to die, which is an evident absurdity.

The consequence is that many have tried (and I remember making efforts of that kind myself, until convinced that it could not succeed) to give the Greek word here which is rightly rendered the testator in the King James translation, the force of the covenanting victim. But the answer to this is that there is not a single writer in the language, not sacred only but profane, who employs it in such a sense. Those therefore that so translate our two verses have invented a meaning for the phrase, instead of accepting its legitimate sense as attested by all the monuments of the Greek tongue; whereas the moment that we give it the meaning assigned here rightly by the better translators, that is, the sense of testator and testament, all runs with perfect smoothness, and with striking aptitude.

He is showing us the efficacy of Christ's death. He demonstrates its vicarious nature and value from the sacrifices so familiar to all then, and to the Jew particularly, in connection with the covenant that required them. Now his rapid mind seizes, under the Spirit's guidance, the other well-known sense of the word; namely, as a testamentary disposition, and shows the necessity of Christ's death to bring it into force. It is true that victims were sometimes slain in ratifying a covenant, and thus were the seal of that covenant; but first, they were not essential; second, the covenanter or contracting party had in no case to die in order to make the contract valid. On the other hand, it is notoriously true that in no case can a testament come into execution without the testator's death- a figure that every man at once discerns. There must be the death of him who so disposes of his property in order that the heir should take it under his testament. Which of these two most commends itself as the unforced meaning of the passage, it is for the reader to judge. And observe that it is assumed to be so common and obvious a maxim that it could not be questioned. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."

The addition of this last clause as a necessary condition confirms the sense assigned. Had he merely referred to the covenant (that is, the sense of the word which had been used before), what would be the aim of the also? It is just what he had been speaking of throughout, if covenant were still meant. Apply it to Christ's death as the testator, and nothing can be plainer or more forcible. The death of Christ, both in the sense of a victim sacrificed, and of a testator, though a double figure, is evident to all, and tends to the selfsame point. "For a testament is of force after men are dead" (or, in case of dead men): "since it is never of force when the testator liveth."

But now, returning from this striking instance of Paul's habit of bringing out the meaning of a word, let us resume the regular course of the Apostle's argument. "Whereupon neither the first [covenant] was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people, saying, This [is] the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you. And he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are according to the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the representations of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into holies made with hands, figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us."

Thus we have distinctly set before us the general doctrine of the chapter-that Christ has suffered but once, and has been offered but once - that the offering cannot be severed from the suffering. If He is to be often offered, He must also often suffer. The truth, on the contrary, is that there was but one offering and but one suffering of Christ, once for all, in witness of the perfection of which He is gone into the presence of God, there to appear for us. Thus it will be observed that at the end of all the moral and experimental dealings with the first man (manifested in Israel), we come to a deeply momentous point, as in God's ways, so in the Apostle's reasoning. Up to this time man was the object of those ways; it was simply, and rightly of course, a probation. Man was tried by all sorts of tests from time to time. God knew perfectly well, and even declared here and there, the end from the beginning; but He would make it manifest to every conscience that all He got from man, in these His varied dealings, was sin. Then comes a total change: God takes up the matter Himself, acting in view of man's sin; but in Jesus, in the very Messiah for whom the Jews were waiting, He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and has accomplished this mighty work as admirably befitting the goodness of God, as it alone descends low enough to reach the vilest man, and yet deliver him with a salvation which only the more humbles man and glorifies God. For now God came out, so to speak, in His own power and grace, and, in the Person of Christ on the cross, put away sin-abolished it from before His face, and set the believer absolutely free from it as regards judgment.

"But now once in the consummation of the ages"-this is the meaning of the "end of the world"-it is the consummation of those dispensations for bringing out what man was. Man's worst sin culminated in the death of Christ who knew no sin; but in that very death He put away sin. Christ, therefore, goes into heaven, and will come again apart from sin. He has nothing more to do with sin; He will judge man who rejects Himself and slights sin, as He will appear to the salvation of His own people. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the

second time without sin unto salvation."

It is perfectly true that if we think of Christ, He was here below absolutely without sin; but He who was without sin in His Person, and all His life, had everything to do with sin on the cross when God made Him to be sin for us. The atonement was at least as real as our sin; and God Himself dealt with Christ as laying sin upon Him, and treating Him, the Great Substitute, as sin before Himself, that at one blow it might be all put away from before His face. This He has done, and done with. Now accordingly, by virtue of His death which rent the veil, God and man stand face to face. What then is man's actual estate? "As it is appointed unto men once to die"-wages of sin, though not all-"but after this the judgment," or the full wages of sin-"so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"-this He has finished- "and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He will have nothing more to do with sin. He has so absolutely swept it away for those who believe on Him, that when He comes again, there will be no question of judgment, as far as they are concerned, but only of salvation in the sense of their being cleared from the last relic or result of sin, even for the body. Indeed it is only the body that is here spoken of. As far as the soul is concerned, Christ would not go up to heaven until sin was abrogated before God. Christ is doing nothing there to take away sin; nor when He comes again will He touch the question of sin, because it is a finished work. Christ Himself could not add to the perfection of that sacrifice by which He has put away sin. Consequently, when He comes again to them that look for Him, it is simply to bring them into all the eternal results of that great salvation.

(To be continued)

Any variation from the King James Version of the Scriptures is Mr. Kelly's own translation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

In chapter 10 the Apostle applies the subject of the 9th chapter to the present state of the believer. He had shown the work of Christ and His coming again in glory. What comes in between the two? Christianity. And here we learn the direct application. The Christian stands between the cross and the glory of the Lord Jesus. He rests confidently on the cross, that only valid moral basis before God; at the same time he is waiting for the glory that is to be revealed. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very, image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the corners thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." No Jew could or ought to pretend to such purgation as its result.

I should like to ask whether (or how far) all the believers here assembled can take this as their place with simplicity. You, as a Christian, ought to have the calm settled consciousness that God, looking on you, discerns not one spot or stain, but only the blood of Jesus Christ His Son that cleanses from all sin. You ought to have the consciousness that there is no judgment for you with God by-and-by, however truly He, as a Father, judges you now on earth. How can such a consciousness as this be the portion of the Christian? Because the Holy Ghost bears this witness, and nothing less, to the perfection of the work of Christ. If God's Word be true, and to this the Spirit adheres, the blood of Christ has thus perfectly washed away the sins of the believer. I mean his sins now -not sin as a principle, but in fact, though it be only for faith. "The worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." It is not implied that they may not sin, or that they

have no consciousness of their failure, either past or present. "Conscience

of sins" means a dread of God's judging one because of his sins. For this, knowing His grace in the work of Christ for them, they do not look; on the contrary, they rest in the assurance of the perfection with which their sins are effaced by the precious blood of Christ.

The epistle insists on the blood of Christ, making all to turn on that efficacious work for us. It was not so of old, when the Israelite brought his calf or goat. "In those sacrifices," referring to the law to which some Hebrew Christians were in danger of going back, "there is a remembrance made again of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Therefore all such recurring sacrifices only call sins to remembrance; but what the blood of Christ has done is so completely to blot them out, that God Himself says, I will remember them no more.

Accordingly he now turns to set forth the contrast between the weakness and the unavailingness of the Jewish sacrifices which, in point of fact, only and always brought up sins again, instead of putting them away as does the sacrifice of Christ. In the most admirable manner he proves that this was what God was waiting for all along. First of all, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." There we find these two facts. First, in God's counsels it was always before Him to have One more than man to deal with this greatest of all transactions. There was but One who could do God's will in that which concerned man's deepest wants. Who was this One? Jesus alone. As for the first Adam and all his race, their portion was only death and judgment, because he was a sinner But here is One who proffers Himself to come, and does come. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me" -a book which none ever saw but God and His Son. There it was written, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Redemption was the first thought of God-a counsel of His previous to the dealings with man which made the necessity of redemption felt. God meant to have His will done, and thereby a people for Himself capable of enjoying His presence and His nature, where no question of sin or fall could ever enter.

First, He makes a scene where sin enters at once. Because His people had no heart for His promises, He imposed a system of law and ordinances which provoked the sin and made it still more manifest and heinous. Then comes forth the wondrous counsel that was settled before either the sin of man, or the promises to the fathers, or the law which subsequently put man to the test. And this blessed Person, single-handed but according to the will of God, accomplishes that will in offering Himself on the cross.

So it is said here, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first" (that is, the law), "that He may establish the second" (that is, God's will, often unintelligently confounded by men with the law, which is here set in the most manifest contradistinction). Next the Apostle, with increasing boldness, comes to the proof from the Old Testament that the legal institution as a whole was to be set aside. "He taketh away the first." Was this Paul's doctrine? There it was in the Psalms. They could not deny it to be written in the 40th psalm. "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." All he does is to interpret that will, and to apply it to what was wrought on the cross.

"By the which will" (not man's, which is sin, but God's) "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

This leads to a further contrast with the action of the Aaronic priest. "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." Jesus sits down in perpetuity. This is the meaning of the phrase - not that He will sit there throughout all eternity, but "for continuance." He sits there continually, in contrast with the Jewish priest who was always rising up in order to do fresh work because there was fresh sin;

for their sacrifices never could absolutely put away sin. The fact was plain that the priest was always doing and doing, his work being never done; whereas now there is manifested, in the glorious facts of Christianity, a Priest set down at God's right hand, a Priest who has taken His place there expressly because our sins are blotted out by His sacrifice. If there was any place for the priest, one might have supposed, that to be active in his functions, it would be in the presence of God, unless the sins were completely gone. But they are completely gone; and therefore, He who is the witness, sits down at God's right hand.

How could this be disputed by one who simply believed Psalm 110? For there is seen not only the proof that the Messiah is the One whom God pronounced by an oath "a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec," but the glorious seat He has taken at the right hand of God is now worked into this magnificent pleading. Christianity turns everything to account. The Jew never understood the law until the light of Christ on the cross and in glory shone upon it. So here the Psalms acquire a meaning self-evidently true, the moment Christ is brought in, who is the truth, and nothing less. Accordingly, we have the third use of the seat Christ has taken. In the first chapter we saw the seat of personal glory connected with atonement; in the eighth chapter it is the witness of His priesthood, and where it is. Here it is the proof of the perpetual efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. We shall find another use before we finish, which I hope to notice in its place.

But the Holy Ghost's testimony is not forgotten. As it was God's will and the work of Christ, so the Holy Ghost is He who witnesses to the perfection of it. It is also founded on one of their own prophets. "This is the covenant," says he, "that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

Then we hear of the practical use of all. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, Which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our hope [for so it should be] without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." But the higher the privilege, the greater the danger of either despising it or perverting it.

In the sixth chapter we see that the Spirit of God brings in a most solemn warning for those who turn their backs on the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, as bearing witness of Christianity. Here the Apostle warns those who turn their backs on Christ's one sacrifice. It is evident that in these we have the two main parts of Christianity. The foundation is sacrifice; the power is of the

Holy Ghost. The truth is that the Holy Ghost is come down for the purpose of bearing His witness; and he that deserts this for Judaism, or anything else, is an apostate and lost man. And is he better or safer who slights the sacrifice of the Son of God, and goes back either to earthly sacrifices or to lusts of flesh, giving a loose rein to sin, which is expressly what the Son of God shed His blood to put away? He who, having professed to value the blessing of God, abandons it, and rushes here below into the sins of the flesh knowingly and deliberately, is evidently no Christian at all. Accordingly, it is shown that such a one becomes an adversary of the Lord, and God will deal with him as such. As in chapter 6 he declares that he is persuaded better things of them than that they would abandon the Holy Ghost, so here he expected better things than that they would thus dishonor the sacrifice of Christ. In that case he says, God was not unrighteous to forget their work and labor of love; in this case he lets them know that he had not forgotten the way in which they had suffered for Christ. There it was more particularly the activity of faith; here it is the suffering of faith.

This leads into the life of faith, which was a great stumblingblock to some of these Christian Jews. They could not understand how it was they should come into greater trouble than before. They had never known so great and frequent and constant trial. It seemed as if everything went against them. They had looked for advance and triumph and peace and prosperity everywhere; on the contrary, they had come into reproach and shame, partly in their own persons, partly as becoming the companions of others who so suffered. But the Apostle takes all this difficulty by the horns, as good as telling them that their having suffered all this was simply because it is the right road. These two things-the cross on earth and glory on high-are correlative. As they are companions, so do they test a walk with God; one is faith, the other is suffering. This, he maintains, has always been so; it is no novelty he is preaching. Accordingly the epistle to the Hebrews, while it does put the believer in association with Christ, does not, for all this, dissociate him from whatever is good in the saints of God in every age. Hence the Apostle takes care to keep up the real link with the past witnesses for God in faith and suffering, not in ordinances.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

In the beginning of chapter 11 we are told what faith is. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is no definition of what it is to believe, but a description of the qualities of faith. "For by it the elders obtained a good report." How could any believers put a slight upon it? "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God"-a simple but a most sublime truth, and one that man never really found out, that we are, after all, entirely dependent on faith for. The wise men of the present day are fast giving up the truth of creation. They do not believe that God called all things into being. The greater number of them may use the word "creation," but it must never be assumed that they mean what they say. It is wise and necessary to examine closely what they mean. Never was there a time when men used terms with a more equivocal design than at the present moment. Hence they apply some terms to the work of God in nature similar to what they apply to His work in grace. The favorite thought is

"development"; and so they hold a development or genesis of matter, not a creation - matter continually progressing in various forms until at last it has progressed into these wise men of our day. This is precisely what modern research amounts to. It is the setting aside of God, and the setting up of man; it is the precursor of the apostasy that is coming, which again will issue in man's taking the place of God, and becoming the object of worship instead of the true Creator. Nor is it that redemption only is denied, but creation also, so that there is very great importance in maintaining the rights and the truth of God in creation.

Therefore it is well to stand clear of all men's schemes and thoughts, ever rising up more and more presumptuously, because they mainly consist of some slight in one way or another on the Word of God. A simple word of Scripture settles a thousand questions. What the wise men of antiquity, the Platos and Aristotles, never knew-what the modern sages blunder about without the slightest reason after all-the Word of God has made the possession of every child of His. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

There is no indulgence of human curiosity. We do not know the steps of His work until we come to the preparation of an abode for man. Nothing can be more admirable than this reserve of God. We are not told the details of what preceded the great week when God made the man and the woman. I am not going to enter into any statement of facts as to this now, but there is no truth in its own place more important than that with which the Apostle commences in this chapter; namely, that "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." It is not only that we believe it, but we understand it thereby. There is nothing more simple; at the same time it is just one of those questions that God has answered, and this so as to settle the mind perfectly, and fill the heart with praise. Man never did nor could settle it without the Word of God. There is nothing here below so difficult for the natural mind, and for the simple reason that man can never rise above that which is caused. The reason is obvious - because he is caused himself. Therefore is it that men so naturally slip into, or rest on, second causes. He is only one of a series of existing objects, and consequently never can rise above that in his own nature. He may infer that there must be; but he never can say that there is. Reason is ever drawing conclusions; God is, and reveals what is. I may, of course, see what is before my eyes, and may so far have sensible evidence of what exists now; but it is only God who can tell me that He in the beginning caused that which now is. God alone who spake it into being can pronounce upon it. This is just what the believer receives, feeds on, and lives accordingly.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." It is possible that the word worlds, which is a Hebraistic word, belonging to the Alexandrian Jews particularly, may embrace dispensations; but undoubtedly the material world is included in it. It may mean the worlds governed by dispensations, but still that the idea of the whole universe is in it cannot be fairly contested by competent minds. "The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen"-which would not be the case if it were only a dispensation-"were not made of things which do appear."

Having laid this as the first application of faith, the next question is - when man fell, how was he to approach God? The answer is, by sacrifice. This then is brought before us. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

The third point is how to walk with God, and this again is by faith. Thus in every case it is faith. It owns the creation; it recognizes sacrifice as the only righteous means of being accepted with God-the only means of approaching Him worthily. Faith, again, is the only principle of walk with God; as it is, again, the only means of realizing the judgment of God coming on all around us.

Here, it is plain, we have the chief lineaments of revealed truth. That is to say, God is owned in His glory as Creator of all by His word. Then, consequent on the fall, comes the ground of the believer's acceptance; then his walk with God, and deliverance from His judgment of the whole scene, in the midst of which we actually are. Faith brings God into everything. (vv. 1-7.)

But then comes far more definite instruction and, beginning with Abraham, the details of faith. The father of the faithful was the one first called out by promise. At first it was (v. 8) but the promise of a land; but when in the land he received the promise of a better country, that is, a heavenly, which raised his eyes to the city on high, in express contrast with the earthly land. When he dwelt in Mesopotamia, he had a promise to bring him into Canaan; and when he got there, he had a promise of what was higher to lead his heart above. At the end of his course there was a still heavier tax on him. Would he give up the one who was a type of the true Seed, the progenitor, and the channel of the promised blessing, yea, of the Blessor? He knew that in Isaac his seed was to be called. Would he give up Isaac? A most searching and

practical question, the very unseen hinge in God Himself on which not Christianity only, but all blessing, turns for heaven and earth, at least as far as the fallen creation is concerned. For what did the Jews wait in hope? For Christ, on whom the promises depend. And of what did Christianity speak? Of Christ who was given up to death, who is risen and gone above, in whom we find all the blessing promised, and after a better sort. Thus it is evident that the introduction of the last trial of Abraham was of all possible moment to every one that stood in the place of a son of Abraham. The severest and final trial of Abraham's faith was giving up the son, in whom all the promises were infolded, to receive him back on a resurrection ground in figure. It was, parabolically, like that of Christ Himself. The Jews would not have Him living. The Christians gained Him in a far more excellent way after the pattern of resurrection, as Abraham at the close received Isaac as it were from the dead.

Then we have the other patriarchs introduced, yet chiefly as regards earthly hopes, but not apart from resurrection and its connection with the people of God here below. On these things I need not now dwell further than to characterize all, from Abraham inclusively, as the patience of faith. (vv. 8-22.)

Then, having finished this part of the subject, the Apostle turns to another characteristic in believers - the mighty power of faith which knows how to draw on God, and breaks through all difficulties. It is not merely that which goes on quietly waiting for the accomplishment of the counsels of God. This it was of all consequence to have stated first, and for this simple reason: no place is given herein to man's importance. Had the energetic activity of faith been first noticed, it would have made more of man; but when the heart had been disciplined in quiet endurance and lowly expectancy from God, then he could be clothed with the energy of the Spirit. Both are true; and Moses is the type of the latter, as Abraham is of the former. Accordingly we find everything about Moses, as well as done by him, extraordinary His deliverance was strange; still more, his decision and its results. He goes out, deliberately and knowingly, just at the time of life when a

man is most sensitive to the value of a grand sphere of influence, as well as exercise of his powers, wherein, too, he could have ordinarily exerted all in favor of his people. Not so Moses. He acted in faith, not policy. He made nothing of himself because he knew they were God's people. Accordingly he became just the more the vessel of divine power to the glory of God. He chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." And what then? "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." This was, in the ways of God, the necessary moral consequence of his self-abnegation.

"Through faith he instituted the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." These last two verses bear witness to the grace of God in redemption. In the blood of the Lamb, sprinkled on the door-posts of Israel, we see the type of God's judgment of their sins; next, in the passage of the Red Sea, the exhibition of His power which, in the most conspicuous way, saved them, and destroyed forever their enemies. But whether the one or the other, all was by faith.

But mark another striking and instructive feature of this chapter. No attention is paid here to the march through the wilderness, any more than to the establishment in the land, still less to the kingdom. We have just the fact of their passing through the Red Sea, and no more, as we have the fall of Jericho, and no more. The intention here was not to dwell either on the scene in which their waiting was put to the test, the wilderness, or on anything that could insinuate the settled position of Israel in the land. As to the pathway through the wilderness, it has been disposed of in chapter 4. The grounds why Canaan could not consistently be made prominent in this epistle as a present thing, but only as a hope, we have already seen.

This deeply interesting chapter closes with the reason why those who had thus not only lived but died in faith did not get the promise: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." What was this "better thing"? Can there be a doubt that Christianity is meant? that good portion which shall not be taken away from those who cleave to the Crucified, who is now exalted in heaven? One can well understand that the Apostle would leave his readers to gather thus generally what it must have been. God then has provided some better thing for us. He has brought in redemption in present accomplishment, and at the same time He has given scope for a brighter hope, founded on His mighty work on the cross, measured by Christ's glory as its present answer at the right hand of God. Hence He crowns the noble army of witnesses with Christ Himself.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus the captain and completer of faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This is a different way of looking at His session there. In all the other passages of the epistle the meaning is that He took His seat, or simply sat down there. It is the fact that there He sat down; but in this place it will be observed that His taking His seat there is the reward of the life of faith. As the result of enduring the cross, having despised the shame, the word used here for sitting down has a remarkably beautiful shade of meaning different from what is given in all the other occurrences. Its force implies that it is not merely what He did once, but what He is also doing still. Attention is drawn to the permanence of His position at the right hand of God. Of course it is true that Jesus took His seat there, but more is conveyed in the true form of the text here.

This, however, only by the way. Beyond question the Lord is regarded as the completer of the whole walk of faith in its deepest and, morally, most glorious form. Instead of having one person illustrating one thing, and another person another, the Lord Jesus sums up the perfection of all trial in His own pathway, not as Savior only, but in the point of view of bearing witness in His ways for God here below. Who ever walked in faith as He? For indeed He was a man as really as any other, though infinitely above man.

From this, practical lessons of great value are drawn. "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children." Thus the first part of the chapter shows us simply what God holds out to the new man; but the epistle to the Hebrews never looks at the Christian simply in the new man, but rather as a concrete person. From the beginning to the end of it, the Christian in Hebrews is not dealt with apart from the old nature as we may see him regarded in the ordinary epistles of Paul where the old and the new man are most carefully separated. It is not the case in the epistles of James and Peter, with which so far the epistle to the Hebrews agrees. I take the reason to be that the Apostle meets the Jewish believer where he is, as much as possible giving credit for what was really true in the Old Testament saints, and so in the Jewish mind. Now it is evident that in the Old Testament the distinction was not made between flesh and spirit in the way in which we have it brought out in the general doctrine of Christianity.

The Apostle is dealing with the saints as to their walk; and as he had shown how Christ alone had purged the sins of the believer, and how He is on high as the Priest in the presence of God to intercede for them in their weakness and dangers, so now when he has come to the question of the walk of faith, Christ is the leader of that walk. Accordingly, this is an appeal to the hearts which cleave to Christ the rejected King and Holy Sufferer, who is now in glory above. He necessarily completes all as the pattern for the Christian. But then there are impediments, as well as sin, by which the enemy would keep us from the race set before us, while God carries on His discipline in our favor. And the Apostle shows that we need not only a perfect pattern in the walk of faith, but chastenings by the way. This, he says, must be from a father who loves his true and faulty children; others enjoy no such care. First of all, it is love that calls us to the path that Christ trod; next, it is the love that chastens us. Christ never needed this, but we do. He reasons that while our parents only chastise us the best way they can (for after all their judgment might not be perfect), the Father of spirits never fails. He has but one settled purpose of goodness about us; He watches and judges for our good, and nothing but our good. He has set His mind upon making us patterns of His holiness. It is what He carries on now. Fully does He allow, as connected with this, that the chastening seems not joyous but grievous. We begin with His love, and shall end in it without end.

He only removes obstructions, and maintains our communion with Himself; surely this ought to settle every question for the believer. If we know His perfect love and the wisdom of it, we have the best answer to silence every murmuring thought or wish of the heart.

There is nothing more serious than to set grace against holiness. Nowhere does the Apostle give the smallest occasion for such a thought. So here he tells them to "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man lack the grace of God." It is not a question of the law which a Jew might naturally conceive to be the standard of the will of God now as of old for Israel. How easily we even forget that we are not Jews but Christians! Reason can appreciate not grace but law; and so people are apt, when things go wrong, to bring in the law. It is quite legitimate to employ it in an a fortiori way, as the Apostle does in Ephesians 6. For assuredly if Jewish children honored their father and mother on legal grounds, much more ought Christian children, on grounds of grace.

Another great call was to beware "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Thus you see, either corrupt passion on the one hand, or profanity on the other, are unsparingly condemned by the grace of God. If the law could show little mercy in such a case, the grace of God views all sin as intolerable.

This leads him, from speaking of Esau's case, to add as a known fact, that afterward, when he desired to have inherited the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it carefully with tears. That is, he sought carefully with tears the blessing given to Jacob; but there was no room left for repentance simply in the sense of change of mind; for, I suppose, the word here has that tense, which sometimes, no doubt, it has. In its ordinary usage it has a much deeper force. Every change of mind is far from being repentance, which doctrinally means that special and profound revolution in the soul when we take God's part against ourselves, judging our past ways, yes, what we are in His sight. This Esau never sought; and there was never one who did seek and failed to find it. Esau would have liked well to get or regain the blessing; but this was given of God otherwise, and he had forfeited it himself. All arranged beforehand, neither Isaac's partiality nor Jacob's deceit was able to divert the channel. His purpose utterly failed to secure the blessing for his profane but favorite son. He saw his error at last, and put his seal on God's original appointment of the matter.

And here we are favored with a magnificent picture of Christianity in contrast with Judaism. We are not come to Sinai, the mountain that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and a voice more terrible than that of the elements. To what then are we come? To mount Zion. And what is its distinctive character as here introduced? If we examine the historical facts as found in the Old Testament story, what rises up before all eyes as to Zion? When does it first appear? After the people had been tried and found wanting; after the priests had wrought, if possible, greater corruption; after the king of Israel's choice had reduced them to the lowest degradation. It was therefore • a crisis after the most painful accumulation of evils that weighed on the heart of Israel. But if people and priest and king were proved thus vain, God was there, and His grace could not fail. Their abject ruin placed them just in the circumstances that suited the God of all grace. At that very moment therefore the tide begins to turn. God brings forward His choice, David, when the miserable end of Saul and Jonathan saw the Philistines triumphant and Israel

disheartened as they had not been before that moment. The hill of Zion up to this time had been the constant menace of the enemy against the people of the Lord; but in due time, when David reigned, it was wrested out of the hands of the Jebusites, and became the stronghold of Jerusalem, the city of the king. Thenceforward, how it figures in the Psalms and prophets! This then is the monument for such as we are. Let blinded Jews turn their sightless eyeballs to the mountain of Sinai. Let men who can see, only look there, and what will be found? Condemnation, darkness, death. But what at Zion? The mighty intervention of God in grace-yes, more than that-forgiveness, deliverance, victory, glory, for the people of God.

For not merely did David receive from Jehovah that throne, but never were the people of God lifted out of such a state of distress and desolation, and placed on such a height of firm and stable triumph as under that one man's reign. He had beyond all mere men known sorrow and rejection in Israel; yet he himself not only mounted the throne of Jehovah, but raised up His people to such power and prosperity as was never reached again. For although outwardly, no doubt, the prosperity lasted in the time of Solomon, it was mainly the fruit of David's suffering, and power, and glory. God honored the son for the father's sake. It remained for a brief Season; but even then it soon began to show rents down to the foundations, which became apparent too, too quickly in Solomon's son. With Zion then the Apostle justly begins. Where is the mountain that could stand out so well against Sinai? What mountain in the Old Testament so much speaks of grace, of God's merciful interference for His people when all was lost?

Rightly then we begin with Zion, and thence may we trace the path of glory up to God Himself, and down to the kingdom here below. Impossible to rise higher than the Highest, whence therefore the Apostle descends to consequences. Indeed we may say that the whole epistle to the Hebrews is just this: we start from the foundation of grace up to God Himself in the heavens; and thence springs the certainty that the stream of grace is not exhausted, and that undoubtedly it will issue in unceasing blessing by-and-by for the earth, and for the people of Israel above all, in the day of Jehovah.

Accordingly, we have a remarkable line of blessing pursued for our instruction here.

"Ye are come unto mount Zion," which was the highest Old Testament point of grace on earth. Others doubtless could speak of their Ararat, their Olympus, their Aetna; but which boasted of the true God that loved His people in the way that Zion could? But would a Jew infer hence that it was only the city of David he was speaking of? Let him learn his error. "And unto the city of the living God [not of dying David), the heavenly Jerusalem" (not the earthly capital of Palestine). This I take to be a general description of the scene of glory for which Abraham looked. He could know nothing of the mystery of the Church, Christ's body, nor of her bridal hopes; but he did look for what is called here the "heavenly Jerusalem," that city "whose maker and builder is God." In this phrase there is no allusion whatever to the Church; nor indeed anywhere in the Hebrews is there any reference to its distinctive portion in union with its Head. When it says that Abraham looked for the city, it means a blessed and ordered scene of glory on high, which eclipsed the Holy Land before his eyes. This, however, does not mean the Church, but rather the future seat of general heavenly bliss for the glorified saints.

Then he adds: "And to myriads of angels, the general assembly"-for such is the true way to divide the verse-"and to the church of the firstborn," etc. This proves that the city of the heavenly

Jerusalem does not mean the Church, because here they are certainly distinguished from each other, which therefore completely settles all the argument that is often founded on Abraham's looking for a heavenly city. It was not the Church, I repeat, but what God prepares above for those who love Him. True, the Apostle John uses this very city as the figure of the bride. But this essential difference separates between the city for which Abraham looked and the bride so symbolized in the Apocalypse. When the Apostle Paul speaks of "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," he means the scene of future heavenly blessedness; whereas, when John speaks of the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, he means not where but what we are to be. The difference is very great. The epistle sets before us the seat of glory prepared on high; the Revelation speaks of the bride represented as a glorious golden city with figures beyond nature. The one is what may be called the objective glory; the other is the subjective condition of those that compose the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Having brought us to see the "church of the firstborn which are written in heaven," the Apostle next can only speak of "God the judge of all." He describes Him thus in His judicial character. The reason appears to be because he is going to tell us of the Old Testament saints. They had known God in His providence and dealings on the earth, though looking for a Messiah and His day. Hence, therefore, he now introduces us "to the spirits of just men made perfect." These evidently are the elders of olden times. None but the Old Testament saints, as a class, can all be in the separate state: not the Church, or New Testament saints, for we shall not all sleep; nor the millennial saints, for none of them will die. The reference is therefore plain and sure.

Then we hear of "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant" -the pledge of Israel's full and changeless blessing. Last, he points "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better than Abel"-the assurance that the earth shall be delivered from its long sorrow and slavery.

Thus the chain of blessedness is complete. He has shown us the symbolic mount of grace in Zion contrasted with Sinai, the mountain of law. If the one figured the imposed measure of man's responsibility, which can only but most justly condemn him, in the other we behold the mountain of God's grace after all was lost. Then follows the heavenly glory, to which grace naturally leads; then the natural inhabitants of the heavenly land; namely, the angels - "and to myriads of angels, the general assembly." Then he shows us others higher than these, by a divine call -"and to the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." They do not belong to heaven like the angels, but God had an eternal purpose which brought them there by an extraordinary favor. And then, in the center of all, we have God Himself. But having looked up to Him who is above all, he speaks of the highest group next to God in His judicial character; namely, the Old Testament saints. Then he descends to a new or fresh covenant - the recently inaugurated covenant for the two houses of the ancient people. Although the blood on which that covenant was founded may now be long shed, when the covenant comes into force for them, will it not be as fresh as the day the precious Victim died and shed His blood? The reference here I cannot but regard as exclusively to the two houses of Israel. And as thus we were shown the people immutably blessed (for salt shall not be wanting to that covenant) in the scene that will soon come, we finally hear of the earth itself joyful in the curse removed forever. It is "the blood that speaketh better than Abel." For the martyred saint's blood, the earth cried to God for vengeance; but Christ's blood proclaims mercy from God, and the millennial day will be the glorious witness of its depth, and extent, and stability before the universe.

The rest of the chapter brings in, accordingly, the dosing scene when the Lord comes to shake everything, and establish that blessed day. But although it will be the shaking of all things, not of earth only but also heaven, yet, marvelous to say, grace gives such confidence of heart that this, which may be regarded as the most awful threat, turns into a blessed promise. Think of the shaking of heaven and earth being a promise! Nothing but absolute establishment of heart in God's grace could have gazed on a destroyed universe, and yet call it a "promise." But it is the language for us to learn and speak, as we are called to rest on God and not on the creature.

(To be continued)

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The last chapter gives us practical exhortations as to brotherly love continuing; then as to kindness to strangers, or hospitality; finally, as to pity for those in bonds. "Be mindful of those in bonds, as bound with them; and of those which suffer adversity." He insists on the honor and purity of the marriage tie, and the abhorrence that God has for those that despise and corrupt it, and the sure judgment that will come upon them. He presses a conversation without covetousness, and a spirit of content, founded on our confidence in the Lord's care.

At the same time he exhorts the believers as to their chiefs; that is, those who guided them spiritually. It is likely that the Hebrew believers were somewhat unruly. And he puts forward their relation to their leaders, in various forms. First, they were to remember those that once ruled them. Those were now gone from the scene of their trials and labors, of "whom, considering the issue of their conversation, imitate the faith."

This naturally leads the Apostle to bring before them One that never ends - "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Why should His saints be carried away with questions about meats and drinks? He is the same unchangingly and evermore, as He has ever been. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established in grace." See how this word, this thought, always predominates in the epistle. Why turn back to "meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein?"

Had they been taunted with having no altar, with possessing nothing so holy and so glorious in its associations? It was only owing to the blindness of Israel. For, says he, "we have an altar," yes, more than that, an altar, "whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." You that go after the tabernacle (as he persists in calling it, even though now the temple) have no title to our altar with its exhaustless supplies. To us Christ is all.

But this becomes the occasion of a remarkable allusion on which I must dwell for a moment. He draws attention to the well-known rites of the atonement day; at any rate, if not of that slay exclusively, wherever there was a beast the body, of which was burned without the camp, and the blood carried within the veil. Do you not discern in this striking combination the distinctive features of Christianity? Alas! it is not the dullness of Jewish prejudice only, but exactly what is denied by every system of which men boast in Christendom. Judaism despised the gospel for these very features. But let not the Gentile boast, no less unbelieving, no less arrogant, against true Christianity. Christendom precisely takes the middle ground of Judaism between these two extremes. The mean looks and sounds well, but is utterly false for the Christian. The two extremes, offensive to every lover of the *via media* of religious rationalism, must be combined in

Christianity and the Christian man if he is to maintain it unimpaired and pure. The first is that in spirit the Christian is now brought, by redemption without spot or guilt, into the presence of God. If you believe in Christ at all, such is your portion- nothing less. If I know what Christ's redemption has accomplished for all who believe, I must know that God has given me this. He honors the work of Christ according to His estimate of its efficacy, as it is only according to His counsels about us for Christ's glory. We saw somewhat of this in chapter 10. And what is the effect of it? As a Christian, I am now free, by God's will, to go in peace and assurance of His love into the holiest of all-yes, now. I speak, of course, of our entrance there only in spirit..

As to the outer man also, we must learn to what we are called now. The Apostle argues that, just as the blood of the beast was brought into the holiest of all, while the body of the same animal was taken outside the camp and burned, so this too must be made good in our portion. If I have an undisputable present title of access into the holiest of all, I must not shrink from the place of ashes outside the camp. He that possesses the one, must not eschew the other. In these consists our double present association by faith, while on the earth. The Apostle earnestly insists on them both. We belong to the holiest of all, and we act upon it, if we act rightly, when we worship God - even when we draw near to God in prayer at all times. Brought nigh to God by the blood of Jesus, we have perfect access so that there is nothing between God and us; for Christ suffered once to bring us to God, as He intercedes that we may have communion with Him in this place of nearness. Our being brought to God supposes, and is founded on the fact, that our sins are gone perfectly by His one offering; otherwise no madness is greater than indulging such a thought. If it be not the truth, it would be the height of presumption indeed. But far from this, it is the simple fact of the gospel. "He suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust," says another apostle, "that He might bring us" - not to pardon, nor to peace, nor to heaven, but-"to God." Compare also Ephesians 2. We are brought then, washed from our sins, to God, and, according to this epistle, into the holiest of all, where He displays Himself. The real presumption, therefore, is to pretend to be a Christian and yet to doubt the primary fundamental truth of Christianity as to this.

But the bodies of those beasts were burned without the camp; my place so far as I in the body am concerned, is one of shame and suffering in this world.

Are those two things true of you? If you have and prize one alone, you have only the half of Christianity-yes, of its foundations. Are they both true of you? Then you may bless God that He has so blessed you, and given you to know as true of yourself that which, if not so known, effectually prevents one from having the full joy and bearing the due witness as an unworldly and simple-hearted servant of Christ here below. It is true, He does not always call at once into the place of reproach and suffering. He first brings us into the joy and nearness of His presence. He satisfies us with the perfection with which Christ has washed us from our sins in His blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. But having done this. He points us to the place of Christ without the camp. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." This was the very thing that these Jewish Christians were shrinking from, if not rebelling against. They had not made up their minds to suffer; to be devised was odious in their eyes. Nor is it pleasant to nature. But the Apostle lets them know that if they understood their true blessing, this was the very part of it that was inseparably bound up with their present nearness to God, as set forth typically by the central and most important rite of the Jewish system. This is the meaning of the blood carried within, and of the body burned without.

Let us then seek to combine these two things perfect nearness to God, and the place of utter scorn in the presence of man. Christendom prefers the middle course; it will have neither the conscious nearness to God, nor the place of Christ's reproach among men. All the effort of Christendom is first to deny the one, and then to escape from the other. I ask my brethren here if they are looking to God strenuously, earnestly, for themselves and for their children, not to allow, but to oppose as their adversary everything that tends to weaken either of these truths, which are our highest privilege and our truest glory as Christians here below. What a surprise to the Hebrew believers to find such truths as these so strikingly shown out in type even in the Jewish system.

But the Apostle goes further, as indeed was due to truth. He proves these characteristics to be really found in Christ Himself. He is evidently gone into the holiest of all in His own Person. But how? What had immediately preceded this? The cross. Thus the cross and heavenly glory must go together. The gracious Lord gives and designs that we should take His own place both in heaven and here. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp." This is just the closing practical word of the epistle to the Hebrews. God was going to set aside openly the Jewish system, as it had already been judged morally in the cross of Christ. When the Messiah was crucified, Judaism was in principle a dead thing; if it was in any sense kept up, it was no more than a decent time before its burial. But now God sends His final summons, founded on their own ritual, to His people who were hankering after the dead instead of seeing the living One on high. He, as it were, repeats, "Let the dead bury the dead." The Romans will do the last sad offices. But as for you who believe in Jesus, wait not for the Romans; let Judaism be nothing but a corpse which does not concern you. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

This was a final call, and how gracious! If God had reserved the epistle to the Hebrews until after He sent forth His armies and burned up their city, destroying their polity, root and branch, it might have been retorted that the Christians valued the Jewish ritual as long as it was available, and only gave it up when earthly temple and sacrifice and priest were gone. But God took care to summon His children outside-to abandon the whole system before it was destroyed. They were to leave the dead to bury their dead, and they did so. But Christendom has wholly failed to profit by the call, and is doomed to perish by a judgment yet more solemn and widespread than that which swept away the ancient temple.

Another point follows, connected with what we have had before us, and demanding our attention. Instead of pining after that which is about to be destroyed, or repining at the call to go out to the place of Christ's shame on earth, Christianity, which replaces Judaism now, may well cause us to offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually." There are two kinds of sacrifice to which we are now called. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing His name But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." That may have a higher character, these a lower; but even the highest is never to supersede or make us forgetful of the lowest.

Then comes a second exhortation as to their guides, or leading men among the brethren. (Compare Acts 15:22.) "Obey your leaders, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as those that shall give account." There is no sanction here, of course, of the vulgar and outrageous error that pastors give an account of the souls of their flock. an idea that superstition

hatched for the purpose of spuriously exalting a clerical order. The meaning is that spiritual guides shall give an account of their own behavior in watching over other souls; for it is a work that calls for much jealousy over self, patience with others, painstaking labor, lowliness of mind, and that hearty love which can bear all, endure all, believe all. There is then the solemn admonition of the account they are to render by-and-by. They watch as those that shall give an account. Now is the time for, self-denying labor, and endurance in grace; by-and-by the account must be given to the Lord that appointed them. And the Apostle would that their work of watching might be done with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for the saints.

But even the Apostle felt his own need of the prayers of the faithful, not because he had gone wrong, but because he was conscious of no hindrance to his work from a bad conscience. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience; in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

Then he commends the saints to God. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for the ages of the ages."

Finally, he beseeches his brethren to bear the word of exhortation. Such is pre-eminently the bearing of this epistle to those who had no such frequent opportunities of profiting by his teaching as the Gentile churches. We can understand, therefore, both the delicacy that thus entreated them, and the meaning of the added words, "for also in few words I have written to you." Nor does it seem so natural for any as the great Apostle to inform them of his child and fellow laborer: "Know that the brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come pretty soon, I will see you. Salute all your leaders, and all the saints. They from Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen."

Thus the Apostle closes this most striking and precious epistle, brimful to overflowing with that which had an especial and very touching interest to a Jew, but nevertheless needed as certainly by us, and as rich in instruction for us in this day as for those at any time that has passed away. For let me say this as a parting word, and I say it advisedly, because of circumstances that might well be before our hearts - no deliverance, however enjoyed, no place of death to law, world, or sin, no privilege of union with Christ, will enable a soul to dispense with the truths contained in this epistle to the Hebrews. We are still walking here below; we are in the place therefore where infirmity is felt, where Satan tempts, where we may fall through unwatchfulness. If we formed our Christian character practically on such epistles as those to the Ephesians and Colossians alone, depend on it there may not be the hard lines of the law, but there will be very far from the fervent affections which become him who feels the grace of Christ. Be assured it is of the deepest possible moment to cherish the activity of Christ's present love and care for us, the activity of that priesthood which is the subject of this epistle. Holding fast the permanence of the blotting out of our guilt, may we, nevertheless and besides, own the need of such a One as Christ to intercede for us and deal in grace with all our feebleness or faults. The Lord forbid that anything should enfeeble our sense of the value and necessity of such daily grace. There may be that which calls for confusion of face in us, but there is unceasing ground also for thanksgiving and praise, however much we have to humble ourselves in the sight of God.

How to Go on Well

Whenever a person boasts, you will in general find that he particularly fails precisely where he boasts most. If you set up for great knowledge, this will be the point in which you may be expected to break down. If you set up for exceeding candor, the next thing we may well dread to hear is that you have played very false. The best thing is to see that we give ourselves credit for nothing. Let Christ be all our boast. The sense of our own littleness and of His perfect grace is the way, and the only way, to go on well.

Jesus of Nazareth Passeth by: Sermon and an Immediate Response

"And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

"And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. "And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. "And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.

"And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." Mark 10:46-52.

We frequently find incidents in the gospels which illustrate very fully the way in which a sinner lays hold of Christ. In this scripture we have a lovely picture of a seeking Savior and a seeking sinner, and how they met. In the Gospel of Luke we find the text that is at the head of this paper, which was, as it were, preached to this blind man. A very short sermon! "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." And Jesus never passed that way again! Bartimaeus had come to the turning point of his history, and had that day passed, he never would have had his eyes opened, for Jesus was then on His way to the cross. And the difference between that day and now, is this: He was then on His way to the cross where He accomplished the work of redemption, shed His precious blood, died, and rose again; He is now on His way to execute judgment and bring in the glory.

It is because of that judgment, which must come, that I would now urge on every unsaved soul who may read these words, that which we find so blessedly characterized Bartimaeus—that is promptness, the deep necessity of seizing the present moment! How often moments like this, in the history of souls, are slighted, and they never return. "I shall have plenty of opportunities; people do not often die as young as I am." Such like excuses are pleaded by those who would procrastinate. But I would warn you. There is one sin more terrible than any in a man's history, and that is his last! Souls float on easily down the stream of time; they go quietly out of the world, perhaps without any fear of hell. Some are exercised, and for a time are in an agony of conviction, but the many slight the warning as to the solemn eternity which lies beyond time; and it comes to a moment when God says, as it were, "Let him alone," and his heart is hardened. It is a solemn, deeply solemn thing, this hardening of the heart. And the more solemn when we think of God's doing so. We have an example of this in Pharaoh. God warned him in nine solemn judgments and then, as it were, gave him one more chance. Pharaoh did not yield his will to God; he hardened his heart against God, and God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he went to destruction.

In the face of such a fact, I would press on every sinner the need of promptness in the matter of salvation. The Lord is long-suffering; He waits on His road to judgment, but at any moment the day of grace may have closed.

Bartimaeus was blind but he heard that Jesus passed by. God's resource for the blind sinner is the "hearing of faith." This was the avenue to his soul. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. Remark the little word "when" (v. 47). Bartimaeus might have said, Here is a golden opportunity; I will get a harvest today from this multitude. Perhaps crowds like this were not often to be seen on the roadside between Jericho and Jerusalem. The great multitudes were following Jesus today; He had many followers, but few friends. Bartimaeus might reason thus: I will speak to Jesus some other time, and gather the silver coins today. Such an opportunity will not come again, and Jesus may be met at any time. But he did not reason thus. How many do so! I will give myself to my gains now-get rich, perhaps at some craft that is not as it should be-and then I will retire. I wish to be saved, but I must attend to other things now; then I will look after my soul.

But Bartimaeus felt that the present was too great an opportunity to lose. "When" Jesus passed by he cried out; he was in earnest, and his promptness to use the moment was lovely to behold. It was his turning point. Saints and sinners all have their turning points. If he had missed his, the opportunity would never come again. We boldly say this, for Jesus never did pass by that way again. He was on His way for His last entry into the City of Solemnities-to Jerusalem, where after a few days He was crucified. He was on the road to the cross that day. He is on His road to execute judgment now, and the cross is past-His work there is done.

But a man with a need in his heart will be prompt, will be in earnest; and "when" Jesus was passing he cried out, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

Have you, my reader, an unsatisfied need in your heart? Then cry out, and Jesus will stop; your cry of need will arrest His steps just where you are this moment. When was there a cry of need on earth which He refused? Will He refuse the cry of need now that He is in the glory? Will He not stay His steps, as it were, as on that day, and meet the need-fill the void of your heart?

"And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called." In three of these gospels we have this tale told in a different way. In Matt. 20:32, it is simply "Jesus... called." This is the sovereign call of mercy through grace. This belongs to God alone. Then in Mark 10:49, it is Jesus "commanded him to be called." This shows the instrumental call- of the preacher, for instance. What a word for those who preach the gospel-for the ambassador of God's grace. In Luke 18:40, Jesus "commanded him to be brought unto Him." This was done by the earnest effectual guiding hands of others. It encourages the believing wife to bring her unbelieving husband under the sound of the gospel; the parent to bring his child; the child the parent, if still unsaved. It is the earnest, seeking, guiding hand and heart of some soul, whose eyes have been opened, to bring those dear to him to hear the word of His grace.

How often has the Lord answered the faith of those who have brought others to hear the word of grace preached, in saving the souls of those who have been brought! It is sad, sad indeed, to see the empty seats in many a meeting room where an earnest preacher, who longs to bring souls to Christ, finds that his heart is chilled by the empty benches and vacant listlessness of those who

are there.

But "many charged him that he should hold his peace." v. 48. They try to hinder his coming to Christ. The devil always finds ready instruments for this service. Those who labor beside one in the factory, in the office, etc., are ready with their scoff for the anxious, seeking soul. But there are many ways of hindering besides the open taunt. I will tell you of one-Christians criticizing the gospel that is preached. I remember reading of one case in point. A Christian lady brought her unconverted husband to hear a preaching of the gospel.

The servant of the Lord who spoke that night was "no great preacher," as people say. On their way home she remarked about the failures-the poverty of the address. She was pulling the whole thing to pieces, but on turning to see why she got no response from her husband, it was to see the tears coursing down his cheeks. On asking him what was the matter, he replied, "Ah, I found Christ tonight in that preaching," or such words. How condemning to her, for what she derided was God's instrument in saving her husband's soul-she, a Christian too. It was God's quickening word to the soul of her husband. Oh take care how you criticize the word preached in the ears of the unsaved! Christians are often thus the greatest hinderers of the gospel by their careless ways, their speech, their lack of wisdom.

In saying this, it does not excuse the sinner in the least; he is responsible to come to Christ, and God will hold him so. He does not come because his will is against God. In the judgment scene of Matthew 25, it is the absence of good, not the commission of evil, for which the sentence is passed. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

And "Jesus stood still"; and thus He waits on you in grace because "He delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7:18). And Bartimaeus, "casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." How many things are allowed to hinder the soul in coming to Jesus? Some garment or other which must be cast aside.

And Jesus answered and said to him, "What wilt thou that / should do unto thee?" Jesus expected nothing from him; and all actions on your part also, as on his, would be working. But hear what Jesus says -"What wilt thou?" Have you a desire? He who came from heaven, died and rose, and went on high, waits (as it were) to serve the poor sinner who comes as a suppliant to Him.

What is the request of Bartimaeus? "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And Luke (chap. 18) tells us of the echoing reply from the heart of God. "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." Faint and tremulous was the request of faith, but clear and blessed the response of the Lord-the echo of heaven- "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." Not a doubt remains; his eyes are opened, and he is saved.

Have you reader, a need to bring to Him? Will you trust Him? and God's heart will bless you to the full. It was so with the poor prodigal (Luke 15); he hoped for a servant's place, and the father's heart exceeded all his expectations; he kissed him and received him as a son. It was more than the echo of the desire; the answer of grace ever exceeds the request of faith. It was so with the thief on the cross. He asked a place in the kingdom, but received one in paradise that day!

And Bartimaeus opened his eyes, and the first object before him was the Lord. The beauty of the Lord was before him- the object for eternity. What will the joy of the most blessed saint be

throughout eternity? Surely the same object-Jesus! Jesus only! And he "followed Jesus in the way." It was then the way to the cross; now it is the path of rejection to the glory. He is on His way to the kingdom and glory. Then follow Jesus in the way; suffer with Him; be true in heart to Him in the day of His rejection, and when He takes His place as "King of Kings," you shall reign with Him.

Just Judgment on Man

The incorrigibleness of man under all persuasions becomes the ground of the necessity and the vindication of the righteousness of God's judgment.

Isaiah says, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." And Jeremiah had to say of the generation in his day, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved"; and again, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Are we then to wonder that the sword of the Chaldean entered the land?

The generation in the day of Christ was tested in every way. John mourned, the Son of man piped; but there was neither lamentation nor dancing (Matt. 11). In His own Person, the Lord assayed Israel in every way, according to their own prophets. He came as the Bethlehemite, according to Micah, but they sought His life (Matt. 2). He came as the light from the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, according to Isaiah; but He was challenged instead of followed (Matt. 4).

He came as the King, meek and lowly, according to Zechariah, but they received Him not (Matt. 21).

Then in the three parables which the Lord delivers at the close of these testings of Israel (see Matt. 21 and 22)-I mean those of the two sons, the husbandman of the vineyard, and the marriage of the king's son -He convicts His people under the law, under the ministry of John Baptist, and under grace.

Are we not, therefore, prepared to see the Master rise up to shut to the door? The need of sovereign grace, as well as the vindication of judgment, is made to appear. "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma." Rom. 9:29. Man is past moral correction. He is incorrigible and incurable.

It has been said of him, Man is prone to evil, and this arises from the impotency of the will which, when it turns to evil, is rather passive than active; through the grace of Christ alone it is free. Very just. Not only has man fallen from God, and become a sinner, but he is the bondman of sin. Having been overcome of Satan, he has been brought into bondage to him (2 Peter 2). He is "sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). And this state of incurableness and incorrigibleness has had a constant illustration in the Book of God, from the beginning to the end. Man has shown himself to be in full bondage to sin so that he will go in the way of it in defiance of every argument and every influence which may be used with him. It is solemn to look at this, but it has its profit for us to do so. We can have no difficulty tracing a line of these illustrations all through Scripture.

Cain went on with the desperate purpose of his heart, though the Lord came and personally pleaded with him to turn him from his purpose (Gen. 4).

Nimrod made Babel the center of his empire, though God's judgment had just before so awfully signaled that place (Gen. 10).

Pharaoh repented not to yield himself under God's hand, though that hand had given witness after witness of its supremacy, and had demonstrated that it was vain to kick against the pricks (Exod. 1 and 14).

Amalek fought with Israel, though the glory in the pillar and the water from the rock were before him, the witnesses of God's wondrous majesty and power (Exod. 17).

Israel murmured and rebelled again and again in the midst of divine marvels and mercies which spoke to them of love and almightiness (Numbers).

Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself after so many witnesses of God's power, and so many gracious, softened movements of his own heart (Dan. 4:30).

Judas betrayed the Lord after years of converse with Him (Matt. 26).

The high priest invented a lie in the face of a rent veil; the Roman soldiers consented to that lie in the face of a rent tomb (Matt. 28).

The Jews stoned Stephen, though his face was shining under their eye like the face of an angel (Acts 7).

These are among the samples or instances of the fact that man, by nature, is under bondage to sin, and that no moral influence is powerful enough to work his deliverance. The creature that has proved itself able to withstand such arguments and persuasives as these cases exhibit has proved itself to be beyond the reach of all moral influence. Hell itself would not cure him or deter him. Man is incorrigible and incurable. Again, we may say with Isaiah, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." Sovereign grace and power must come in. If God have not a seed it will all be Sodom.

The Apocalypse (Revelation), closing the Book of God, closes also this testimony against man. There, in the face of the most awful judgments executed again and again, man refuses to repent, going on the rather to ripen his iniquity like Pharaoh of old, upon whom plague after plague spent itself all in vain. And thus, we may say, this book of the Apocalypse (which is eminently a book of divine judgments-judgments not on Israel only, but on the whole world) is the vindication or justification, as well as the history, of judgment. We read there of judgments; but we learn at the same time the necessity and demand for judgment. For the incorrigibility of man, the desperate hardness of the heart, is fully exposed again. It is Pharaoh refusing to repent, Amalek defying and insulting the glory, or man as well as Israel saying, Where is the "God of judgment"? Man is found to be the same from first to last. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin, nor the leopard his spots.

Are we then, I still ask, to wonder that the Lord's hand is still stretched out? that seals, trumpets, and vials have still to usher forth the judgments of God, and that the sword of Him who sits upon the white horse has still to do its work of death?

Judgment is God's strange work, but it is His needed work likewise. When we have looked at these cases and read the history of the trial of man's heart from the beginning to the end of it, we may surely ask, Is there not a cause? And I am sure it is well for the soul to hold this fact-this truth about man and his incorrigibility - in remembrance; for as I have been observing, it justifies the thought of divine judgment, and tells us of the necessity of sovereign grace and the interference of

divine power.

Judgments are to introduce the kingdom. The earth is to be conducted into a scene of glory by the taking out of it all that offends and does iniquity. For as grace has been despised, and the Lord who made the world has been disowned and cast out of the world, judgment must clear it ere it can be the scene of His glory and joy. But "The Lord... is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. Today is still "the day of salvation."

Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God

"The kingdom of the heavens" - the true rendering - is only named in Matthew. It is a dispensational term, while "the kingdom of God" is a moral thing. You find the terms used are in keeping with each individual Gospel. Matthew groups his subjects together dispensationally; Luke does so morally; both depart from the historic order, to which Mark keeps more than any of the others.

With a Jew the thought of the "kingdom of the heavens" was familiar. (See Deut. 11:21; Psalm 89:29; Dan. 2:44; 4:26-35, and other scriptures.) It is the rule of the heavens owned on earth. It was pronounced as "at hand," not as come, by John the Baptist (Matt. 3); by the Lord (Matt. 4); by the twelve (Matt. 10). The King was rejected; and in chapter 12, which ends the gospel to the Jew, the curse of antichrist is pronounced upon the nation, and a remnant owned who obey His Father's will. Then in chapter 13 the Lord begins a new action, as a sower; and the kingdom of the heavens takes a new character which the prophets did not contemplate: a sphere overrun with evil, and a mingled crop-the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. Instead of the true subjects taking their origin from Abraham, they do so from the word of God, which Christ sows, others accepting the authority of Christ nominally, as professors.

In Luke (Luke is the great moralizer), the term used is "kingdom of God," of which the Lord Jesus could say in answer to the inquiry of the Pharisees (they asked if it came with observation), that it was "in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21; J.N.D. Trans.), for God was there in Christ. Of the "kingdom of the heavens" it could only be said, it is "at hand"; and it did not (and could not) commence until the ascension of Christ. To have come in during His presence it would have been the kingdom of the earth, so to speak. His authority and that of the heavens was owned, even before the coming of the Holy Ghost, during the ten days of interval, by the disciples, who waited by His directions for that coming. It will run on in its present confused state until the Millennium; hence a good margin of time after the Church's history is over, as it had commenced before it.

There are two places where it gets a moral character from Paul-"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17); "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). It is the exhibition or manifestation of the ruling power of God under any circumstances. A man must be born afresh to "see," or "enter in" to it, in the verity of it (John 3); not so of the kingdom of heaven, in which tares and wheat mingle. Souls may profess and submit to God's kingdom, as merely profession. Hence Luke 13:18 uses the term "kingdom of God" where nominal profession is noted in the parable, and where the "kingdom of the heavens" might be used interchangeably. Still, none but the saints would be really of it, as born again.

When the Millennium comes in, the present confused state of the kingdom of the heavens will be set aside by the judgment of the quick (living); and it will then be displayed in its verity in a twofold-heavenly and earthly-state of things. The Son of man gathers out of His kingdom; that is, the earthly part of it (see Psalm 8; Heb. 2), all stumbling blocks, and them that do iniquity. And then

shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; that is, the heavenly sphere of it. (See Matt. 13:41-43.)

The Language of Faith: "We Know"

It is a matter of deepest moment for all of us to be quite sure as to the future. No doubt some will say, It is impossible; no one can be sure as to the future. You will be more right if you say, No one can be sure of the present. You do not know what tomorrow will bring forth; but, thank God, what is unseen and eternal is defined for us with the utmost clearness. The simplest believer knows without a shadow of a doubt.

It is charming how this chapter opens-"We know." What a comfort in a day of doubt, and of infidelity on all hands! What does the Christian know? That if he passes from this scene he goes to be with the Lord. My reader, do you know this?

In this chapter two most solemn things are spoken of- death and judgment-yet the Apostle can say, "We know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is a beautiful possession-the privilege of the veriest babe in Christ-"We know," not "We hope."

This is the present portion of the believer; it is Christian knowledge, the common property of every child of God, not the possession of some exclusive class. It is that which Christ has secured by His death, bought with His blood, and which He gives to every one of His own.

On the other hand, what is the future of the unconverted man? It is a leap in the dark. What a fool a man must be so to leap when he can get light! Look at the thief on the cross. He could say, I know I am going to be with Christ; He told me Himself - "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Do you know that, reader?

Do not say people cannot know it; be honest, and say, I do not. The world says, You may hope; how are you to know? The Lord tells you in His Word. Would it be presumption to believe Christ? No; presumption lies with the one who says he cannot know, when God's Word says, "Ye may know."

I can look into eternity and say, All is perfectly clear before me. You get the basis and ground on which this knowledge rests in the end of this chapter; it is what Christ has done on the cross. He was made sin-He who knew no sin-that sinners, believing in Him, might be forever with Him without their sins.

Lectures on Philemon

Philemon has altogether a different character from the other epistles of Paul. Here the Holy Ghost by the same Apostle takes up a domestic matter and makes it the occasion of the sweetest application of the grace of God.

From his prison he writes to one that evidently was his friend-one at a former day, yes, forever, deeply indebted to him, inasmuch as he was brought to a knowledge of Christ through him Now Paul informs him of another no less indebted to him in the grace of Christ, and this none other than Onesimus, the slave of Philemon. Wonderful ways of God! He had deserted and probably otherwise defrauded (v. 18) his excellent master- an act which even the most worthless lord could not but punish with the utmost severity. Onesimus had left Philemon, we may be sure, for nothing justifiable, and thus proved himself a vile person who could not appreciate goodness. But what is too hard for the Lord who led him into Paul's path, converted him, and turned his heart and steps back to his master?

This circumstance becomes

the occasion of an inspired epistle. The Church throughout all ages has profited, and the grace of Christ is unfolded therein. Oh, what a God is ours! And what a Word is His, delivering from the world, and from the thoughts and feelings of nature. How far have we derived blessing by it? Is this what would commend itself to our souls? Does aught else draw out the admiration and the thankfulness of our hearts?

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ": thus he opens the letter. He would not put his request on the ground of his apostleship, lest he might bring in the force of authority, for all that would meet and reflect Christ in the matter must turn on the state and the willing answer of his heart to whom he was appealing in grace. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother," for the desire was not confined even to Paul, but Timothy gladly joined himself with this most touching communication of Paul, "unto Philemon our dearly beloved." There was no doubt as to right and wrong; Onesimus was inexcusable, but love abides and can never fail. To love and count on love is of faith, and prevails. But Philemon was not only an object of tender affection, but a "fellow laborer," and the nature of the case made it expedient, unlike the usual character of apostolic addresses, to add the household.

Again, observe, his wife is remembered. She would thus feel that she was not left out in the delicate ways of grace, but is included, as in the injury, so now in the good the Apostle wished them to manifest. "And to our beloved Apphia." A mistress might have particular reason to feel the misconduct of a slave. Whatever the special motive, she, at any rate, is addressed, and coupled with her husband in it. She is thus given a direct interest in its new phase, but it was the interest of grace.

The Apostle brings in Archippus also, honored with the title of "our fellow soldier." He is the same individual whom he exhorted at the close of Colossians to take heed to the ministry he had

received in the Lord. Let him not forget to cast in whatever help he could render in this charge of grace. Small or great, let all be done to the Lord. Finally, Paul includes the church in Philemon's house. There were others in the Lord, either of the household or in the habit of meeting there.

How blessed is grace, and how large! And all this movement of heart about a runaway slave. Yet it is defined within the right bounds. The assembly, and only the assembly, in Philemon's house is comprehended in the appeal. The saints at Colosse are not included-why, we can all appreciate. Further, mark the wisdom of it. In any other case the assembly had been the first; but here mark the lovely ways of God who now pursues a different course. After all, the slave is Philemon's, who therefore is put first. There never is a change, not even of order, in the Word of God, but what has some adequate divine motive, and the beauty of grace and truth in it. Never is an insertion or omission of a casual sort; all flows from a wise purpose which would be impaired, though we may not all be spiritual enough to see how, were a single feature of it either left out or superadded. It is all a vital organism; every part of the living body of truth is needed for His own glory.

The formula usually introducing the longest epistle to the greatest assembly follows. "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Then Paul addresses Philemon personally: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always at my prayers, hearing of the love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints," (he was about to be tried whether his love would stand true toward all the saints) "so that the communication of thy faith may become effectual in the acknowledging of every good thing which is [not "in you," which really gives no sense in the passage, but "which is] in us" (according to the best and most ancient authorities) "unto Christ Jesus."

Thus Paul thoroughly acknowledges the grace and faith that was in him generally; but the question remained whether Philemon would answer to that which was in Paul's heart in writing about Onesimus. His participation in the faith was owned, but was it now to operate in practical communion between them? Paul would do nothing as from authority in such a case; this would be to become a director, not an apostle of Christ. Everything here must be of grace. Hence he adds, "For we [or I] had [the best reading] great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." Philemon seems to have been a man habitually given to acts of love, and thus a continual channel of refreshment by grace among God's children. But the most excellent of men have broken down occasionally by the pettiest things that entice or provoke self.

And now there was a matter which might touch Philemon's sense of injury-he might have and retain a keen sense of the wrong Onesimus had done him as a Christian master. How often persons who were amiability itself in all respects that had come to our view prove quite unprepared for something which grates against their feelings in an unexpected quarter. What the Apostle desired was, for others as for himself, that they should live Christ in everything. So he says, "For love's sake I beseech thee, being such an one as Paul" - not merely "the prisoner" which had already been pleaded as to his actual circumstances, and was soon to be repeated with emphasis, but now he takes another ground, Paul - "the aged." Would Paul, "the prisoner" and "the aged," have a feeble ineffectual claim on the heart of Philemon? Not Paul the Apostle in any case; yet was he not a whit behind the chief. And indeed he proves how well he knew - not that he now forgot - the distinctive value of his apostleship by keeping it hidden wherever the assertion of it

might (not to say must) have marred the free exercise of grace. Accordingly, "being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten"; and not this merely, but begotten "in my bonds." This would make him specially an object of interest and affection to one who venerated and delighted in the Apostle. If Philemon loved Paul, he would love his child; and Onesimus was his child, as he says. He names him at least as emphatically his child as either Titus or Timothy; but more than this, he was a son born as neither Titus nor Timothy was--begotten in his bonds--bonds destined in the grace of God to be more fruitful for the instruction of saints than his most free service and world-wide labors, for Paul was never so honored in the service of God for the leading up of the Church of God as when he was bound a prisoner in Rome.

It was at this time and under such circumstances that Onesimus was born in the faith. It is true that once he "was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me"--an allusion to his name [Onesimus means profitable], as is well known, and which becomes yet more evident in verse 20. He had been unserviceable before, but now Paul assures himself that grace will not fail its effectual work- "whom I have sent back: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel; but without thy mind would I do nothing." The Apostle would have Philemon's good to be not of necessity but of willingness. The delicacy of feeling and the sense of propriety that grace forms are truly exquisite. There is nothing that maintains right so much as grace. At the same time it relinquishes its own dues; it maintains those of others. This is of all importance for our souls to heed. The contrary, alas! habitually appears. A person abuses grace in humbling another; the use of grace is to humble oneself, showing all godly respect to every other in our place. I do not deny that there is that which becomes others in their place; surely no saint is exempt from the exercise of grace. But with this I have nothing to do in the way of dictation, whatever one's desires. I have to do with the grace that has reached my own soul, and this ever gladly accords to others that which is their due or more. There is nothing that truly delivers from the spirit of self but the mighty grace of God.

The Apostle so writes to his friend and brother. "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever; not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" There cannot be a more exquisite apology for one whose return might have recalled painful feelings, and who, in fact, was so guilty in law that his master would have been by it justified in the sternest measures. But the grace in Christ, while it makes evil more heinous, changes all, because it brings in that love which met our own yet greater need and guilt, and the mercy that has left no room for blessing, however feebly we enjoy and appreciate it. Onesimus had failed in the very first duty of a slave; he had denied, in fact, his relationship to his master. But now the Apostle takes simply and solely the ground of grace, and appeals to the heart of Philemon in the presence of all Christ had done for him, and through the same instrument who had been used toward his bondman. This he knew would dissipate the smallest cloud of suspicion that might otherwise have hung over Onesimus on his return to his master. As he says here, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides."

The great practical lesson, beloved, we ought all to gather from this is that it is not merely a question of doing the right thing, but of the way in which it should be done. It is too often thought by many that if only the object be right, this is enough. But not so; Christ is as much the way as He is the end. If it is not Christ along every step of the road, the best intentions often turn out productive of very grave disorder; and for this simple reason, that we are incompetent for anything of ourselves; Christ alone can guide us through.

This is just what is taught in the epistle before us. Who but God would have thought of bringing in Christ at every point of that which concerned Onesimus? But now, that He has so spoken, this is precisely the privilege of the Christian. It is the introduction of Christ, not merely for the regulation of elders and young men, widows, households, and the like. It is not merely the regulation of outward order by the application of the same name; the epistle to Titus does this. But the epistle to Philemon lets us into another atmosphere, for it shows us Christ brought in, yes, the name of Christ and the grace of Christ bound up with all the relations of the family, with matters that might seem to belong solely to the domain of human rights or wrongs, wherein it was for a master in his generosity to forgive. Here, too, we are taught how to live Christ.

I am aware that some, enamored of theories, and savoring the things of men rather than of God, would think it dreadful to discuss or deal with the relations of a master and a slave. Why not condemn the whole principle, root and branch? But this is not Christ. The Spirit of God does not establish a mere code of human rights. Christianity is not a system of earthly righteousness; it is the unfolding of the grace of Christ, and of heavenly hopes. It is the bringing of souls to God who by that cross delivers them from all wrongs in spite of their guilt and His most deserved judgment. It elevates them above these rights, not in pride of heart, but bowed down by the rich mercy of the Lord. Nothing so maintains the rights of others; but at the same time it is no question of adhering to their own. It is a question of using the grace of Christ, and thus of glorifying God. "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do also more than I say. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Salutations follow in verses 23-25.

Throughout, the Spirit speaks to the renewed affections. What the effect of this epistle may have been, it is not for us to say, for we do not know. But it appears to me not doubtful. The heart that could stand out against such appeals of grace from such a quarter was far from Philemon. But is it not a call to you and to me, as living, fresh, applicable, and imperiously needed, if we value nothing so much as Christ? The literal circumstances are changed, no doubt; but why is it given here? Why is it that such an epistle should have been inspired? Why was it not a private communication? It is as necessary in its own place as any one of Paul's epistles; I do not mean to the same degree, but as necessary if in truth our object is to glorify our Lord Jesus.

Liberty in Christ

Christianity is a divine power acting in man. It is not a law requiring something from a sinner, though doubtless it does require the believer to walk according to Christ; but this is not its aspect. In Christianity God gives a nature which delights in the thing, and which is the thing that God requires. This is what James calls the perfect law of liberty. For instance, when a child has a strong wish to go somewhere, and his father gives him a command to go, it becomes a law of liberty to the child. It is obedience in the child to go, while at the same time it is the very thing the child wishes to do. On the other hand, if the father forbade the child to go when he wished, that would be no law of liberty, but a law of bondage. Christianity, or the gospel, is not a requirement of something from man in the flesh, but the power of life making the believer free from the law of sin and death. This is expressed in the second verse: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Oh, what a blessed thing it is to be free- free from the law of sin and death, free to holiness, free to live to Christ. We may cheat ourselves out of the blessing of this portion at times through giving way to the old nature, which never alters in its evil character, but this freedom is our place in Christ. I can say to every true Christian, "The Son has made you free; and now you are free indeed." A Christian can never say, when he has sinned, that he could not help it, for he has a life which has made him free from the law of sin and death.

The groundwork of this freedom is laid in the third chapter by forgiveness through the blood-shedding of Christ. When a sinner is brought through grace to know his sins, the blood of Christ meets him and gives him peace about his sins; but then he has also to learn that he not only had sins against him needing forgiveness, but that he is a sinner, and this is a far more terrible discovery. He finds within him a nature that cannot do anything but sin. This exercise of heart is gone through in chapter 7. There we have one who is quickened, but who has not power. He is not free, and therefore he labors. He wants to get peace through victory over himself, but peace never comes through victory; victory comes through deliverance. Therefore, at the end of chapter 7 the question is, "Who shall deliver me?" Mark, it is not, How can I get forgiveness? but, How can I get deliverance? He comes, in chapter 7, to the end of himself. He finds that though the fruit has all been pulled off the bad tree, it will bring forth another crop just as bad as ever. He finds the flesh is too much for Him. He hates what he does, and does what he hates. Now this is a useful lesson, but it is not liberty; it is rather bondage. He has struggled and labored to be free, and cannot get free; well, now he has to learn that deliverance comes in another way altogether. God has condemned sin in the flesh. Why, how is that? says the troubled soul-that is the very thing that is troubling me. Yes, and God has dealt with it in the Person of His own Son. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and [as a sacrifice] for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:3. The very thing you find yourself to be, God has condemned already.

Therefore, says the Apostle, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It does not say here that there is no condemnation to them that are cleansed by the blood, but there is no condemnation to them that are "in Christ Jesus." Here I find that this terrible thing, this body of death which I have been vainly struggling against, God has condemned, and I am no

longer in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He not only died as a sacrifice because of it, but He is risen again, and the very same power by which the Father raised Him from the dead is that by which He quickened me when I was dead in sin. I am free from the law of sin and death through this power, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." Rom. 6:10. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes me free.

Oh, what a blessed thing it is to be free. What a blessed thing for a poor sinner, as I was, after groaning and struggling under this terrible thing -this law of sin in my members-to get a life by which I am altogether free from the law of sin and death, so that before God I am not seen in that condition at all. I have died to that through the body of Christ once for all. So the Apostle says in chapter 7, "When we were in the flesh," and in chapter 8, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." This divine life in a risen Christ has made me free from it altogether. No doubt we have to guard and watch against it, but we are not in it, but in Christ Jesus.

See too how solemn the place is. Am I made free by this divine life of Christ in my soul? Well then, whatever I do must be done in His name, or I am going off my ground as a Christian. This is what James means by being "judged by the law of liberty" (chap. 2). It is not a question of condemnation at all, but if I am free, I must walk according to the law of liberty. If I take up a book to read, I ask myself, Is that according to this spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Can I do this in His name? We have liberty; we are free in Christ Jesus; so we must take care that we practically abide in this liberty. It is liberty to holiness-liberty to live to Christ-liberty to serve God. Therefore in the fifth verse we read, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. All it does is independent of Him, in opposition to His law, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Thus we see that we have a life in Christ which has freed us from the flesh, as a law holding us in bondage to sin, though we shall ever have to guard against its workings in us. We shall now see that the Holy Ghost personally dwells in our bodies as His temple. In verse 9 we read, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." He dwells in us as power. The body is held as dead because of sin. It is our privilege to hold it as dead, and never allow it to act, because its will is enmity against God. If you reply, Do you mean then to say that I am never to do what I like? Do what who likes? I ask, Do you want liberty to do what the old man likes, from which Christ has died to deliver us? Such a question is a practical denial of your being in Christ. "The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." We have this life in a righteous way, God having condemned sin in the flesh in the death of Christ, raised Him from the dead, and in the risen Christ we have the life in us. Thus we are already delivered as to our spiritual condition from the standing of man in nature -from the old Adam condition. And we shall shortly be actually delivered as to our bodies also.

The Living God and a Living Faith: Lessons From Jehoshaphat

There is one grand substantial fact standing prominently forth on every page of the Volume of God, and illustrated in every stage of the history of God's people—a fact of immense weight and moral power at all times, but especially in seasons of darkness, difficulty, and discouragement occasioned by the low condition of things among those who profess to be on the Lord's side. The fact is this, That faith can always count on God, and God will always answer faith.

Such is our fact, such our thesis; and if the reader will turn with us for a few moments to 2 Chronicles 20, he will find a very beautiful and a very striking illustration.

This chapter shows us the good king Jehoshaphat under very heavy pressure indeed; it records a dark moment in his history. "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then"—for people are ever quick to run with evil tidings --"there came some that told

Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria." Here was a difficulty of no ordinary nature. This invading host was made up of the descendants of Lot and of Esau; and this fact might give rise to a thousand conflicting thoughts and distracting questions in the mind of Jehoshaphat. They were not Egyptians or Assyrians, concerning whom there could be no question whatever; but both Esau and Lot stood in certain relations to Israel, and a question might suggest itself as to how far such relations were to be recognized.

Nor this only. The practical state of the entire nation of Israel—the actual condition of God's people—was such as to give rise to the most serious misgivings. Israel no longer presented an unbroken front to an invading foe. Their visible unity was gone. A grievous breach had been made in their battlements. The ten tribes and the two were rent asunder the one from the other. The condition of the former was terrible, and that of the latter, shaky enough.

Thus the circumstances of king Jehoshaphat were dark and discouraging in the extreme; and even as regards himself and his practical course, he was just emerging from the consequences of a very humiliating fall, so that his reminiscences would be quite as cheerless as his surroundings.

But it is just here that our grand substantial fact presents itself to the vision of faith, and flings a mantle of light over the whole scene. Things looked gloomy, no doubt; but God was to be counted upon by faith, and faith could count upon Him. God is a never failing resource—a great reality at all times and under all circumstances. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear' though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm 46:1-3.

Here then was Jehoshaphat's resource in the day of his trouble; and to it he at once betook himself in that earnest faith which never fails to draw down power and blessing from the living and

true God to meet every exigency of the way. "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court., and said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever?"

These are the fine breathings of a lively faith--a faith that always enables the soul to take the very highest possible ground. It mattered not in the smallest degree what unsettled questions there might be between Esau and Jacob; there were none between Abraham and the Almighty God. Now, God had given the land to

Abraham His friend. For how long? Forever. This was enough. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rom. 11:29. God will never cancel His call, or take back a gift. This is a fixed foundation principle; and on this, faith always takes its stand with firm decision. The enemy might throw in a thousand suggestions, and the poor heart might throw up a thousand reasonings.

Now it was on this original ground that Jehoshaphat took his stand, and he was right. It was the only thing for him to do. He had not one hair's breadth of solid standing ground short of these golden words: "Thou... gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever." It was either this or nothing. A living faith always lays hold on the living God. It cannot stop short of Him. It looks not at men or their circumstances. It takes no account of the changes and chances of this mortal life. It lives and moves and has its being in the immediate presence of the living God; it rejoices in the cloudless sunlight of His blessed countenance. It carries on all its artless reasonings in the sanctuary, and draws all its happy conclusions from facts discovered there. It does not lower the standard according to the condition of things around, but boldly and decidedly takes up its position on the very highest ground.

Now these actings of faith are always most grateful to the heart of God. The living God delights in a living faith. We may be quite sure that the bolder the grasp of faith, the more welcome it is to God. We need never suppose that the blessed One is either gratified or glorified by the workings of a legal mind. No, no; He delights to be trusted without a shadow of reserve or misgiving. He delights to be fully counted upon and largely used; and the deeper the need and the darker the surrounding gloom, the more is He glorified by the faith that draws upon Him.

Hence we may assert with perfect confidence that the attitude and the utterances of Jehoshaphat, in the scene before us, were in full accordance with the mind of God. There is something perfectly beautiful to see him, as it were, opening the original lease and laying his finger on that clause in virtue of which Israel held the land as tenants forever under God. Nothing could cancel that clause or break that lease. No flaw there. All was ordered and sure. "Thou... gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever."

This was solid ground--the ground of God--the ground of faith, which no power of the enemy can ever shake. True, the enemy might remind Jehoshaphat of sin and folly, failure and unfaithfulness. He might suggest to him that the very fact of the threatened invasion proved that Israel had fallen,

for had they not done so, there would be neither enemy nor evil.

But for this too grace had provided an answer-an answer which faith knew well how to appropriate. Jehoshaphat reminds Jehovah of the house which Solomon had built to His name. "They... have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence, (for Thy name is in this house,) and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." vv. 8-12.

Here, truly, is a living faith dealing with a living God. It is no mere empty profession-no lifeless creed-no cold uninfluential theory. It is not a man saying he has faith. Such things will never stand in the day of battle. They may do well enough when all is calm, smooth, and bright; but when difficulties have to be grappled with-when the enemy has to be met face to face-all nominal faith, all mere lip profession, will prove like autumn leaves before the blast. Nothing will stand the test of actual conflict but a living personal faith in a living personal Savior God. Faith brings God into the scene, and all is perfect peace.

Thus it was with the king of Judah in the days of 2 Chron. 20 "We have no might...; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." This is the way to occupy God's ground, even with the eyes fixed on God Himself. This is the true secret of stability and peace. The devil will leave no stone unturned to drive us off the true ground which, as Christians, we ought to occupy in these last days; and we, in ourselves, have no might whatever against him. Our only resource is in the living God. If our eyes are upon Him, nothing can harm us. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isa. 26:3.

We are passing through critical moments. Men are taking sides; principles are working and coming to a head. Never was it more needful to be thoroughly and unmistakably on the Lord's side. Jehoshaphat never could have met the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, had he not been persuaded that his feet were on the very ground which God had given to Abraham. If the enemy could have shaken his confidence as to this, he would have had an easy victory. But Jehoshaphat knew where he was; therefore he could fix his eyes with confidence upon the living God. His was a living faith in the living God-the only thing that will stand in the day of trial.

"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Isa. 49:23. Such is the veritable record of the living God-a record made good in the experience of all those who have been enabled, through grace, to exercise a living faith. But then we must remember how much is involved in those three words, "wait for Me." The waiting must be a real thing. It will not do to say we are waiting on God when, in reality, our eye is askance upon some human prop or creature confidence. We must be absolutely "shut up" to God. We must be brought to the end of self, and to the bottom of circumstances, in order to prove fully what the life of faith is, and what God's resources are. God and the creature can never occupy the same platform. It must be God alone. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation." Psalm 62:5, 6.

Thus it was with Jehoshaphat in that scene recorded in 2 Chron. 20 He was wholly cast upon God. "We have no might." But what then? "Our eyes are upon Thee." This was enough. It was well for Jehoshaphat not to have so much as a single atom of might-a single ray of knowledge. He was in the very best possible attitude and condition to prove what God was. It would have been an incalculable loss to him to have been possessed of the very smallest particle of creature strength or creature wisdom, inasmuch as it could only have proved a hindrance to him in leaning exclusively upon the arm and the counsel of the Almighty God. If the eye of faith rests upon the living God-if He fills the entire range of the soul's vision-then what do we want with might or knowledge of our own? Who would think of resting in that which is human when he can have that which is divine? Who would lean on an arm of flesh when he can lean on the arm of the living God?

No sooner had Jehoshaphat cast himself completely upon the Lord, than the divine response fell, with clearness and power, upon his ear. "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you."

What an answer! "The battle is not yours, but God's." Only think of God's having a battle with people! Assuredly, there could be little question as to the issue of such a battle. Jehoshaphat had put the whole matter into God's hands, and God took it up and made it entirely His own. It is always thus. Faith puts the difficulty, the trial, and the burden into God's hands, and leaves Him to act. This is enough. God never refuses to respond to the appeal of faith; no, it is His delight to answer it. Jehoshaphat had made it a question between God and the enemy. He had said, They have "come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit." Nothing could be simpler. God had given Israel the land, and He could keep them in it, in spite of ten thousand foes. Thus faith would reason. It was simply a question of divine power. "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

It is a wonderful point in the history of any soul, to be brought to say, "I have no might." But the moment we take that ground, the word is, "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Human effort in every shape and form can but raise a barrier between our souls and God's salvation. If God has undertaken for us, we may well be still. And has He not? Yes, blessed be His holy name, He has charged Himself with all that concerns us for time and eternity; and hence we have only to let Him act for us in all things. It is our happy privilege to let Him go before us, while we follow on "in wonder, love, and praise."

Thus it was in that interesting and instructive scene on which we have been dwelling. "Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the LORD. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord

God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

Here we have the true attitude and the proper occupation of the believer. Jehoshaphat withdrew his eyes from that great company that had come against him, and fixed them upon the living God. Jehovah had come right in and placed Himself between His people and the enemy, just as He had done in the day of the exodus, at the Red Sea, so that instead of looking at the difficulties, they might look at Him.

This, beloved reader, is the secret of victory at all times and under all circumstances. This it is which fills the heart with praise and thanksgiving, and bows the head in wondering worship. There is something perfectly beautiful in the entire bearing of Jehoshaphat and the congregation on the occasion before us. They were evidently impressed with the thought that they had nothing to do but to praise God. And they were right. Had He not said to them, "Ye shall not need to fight"? What then had they to do? Nothing but praise.

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20.

It is very important that God's Word should ever have its own supreme place in the heart of the Christian. God has spoken. He has given us His Word, and it is for us to lean unshaken thereon. The divine Word is amply sufficient to give confidence, peace, and stability to the soul. We do not need evidences from man to prove the truth of God's Word. That Word carries its own powerful evidences with it. To suppose that we require human testimony to prove that God's Word is true, is to imply that man's word is more valid, more trustworthy, more authoritative than the Word of God. If we need a human voice to interpret, to ratify, to make God's revelation available, then are we virtually deprived of that revelation altogether.

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for His mercy endureth forever." What a strange advance guard for an army! A company of singers! Such is faith's way of ordering the battle.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD sent ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Only think of the Lord setting ambushments! Think of His engaging in the business of military tactics! How wonderful! God will do anything that His people need if only His people will confide in Him, and leave themselves and their affairs absolutely in His hand.

"And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." Such was the end of "that great company"-that formidable host-that terrible foe. All vanished away before the presence of the God of Israel. Yes, and had they been a million times more numerous, and more formidable, the issue would have been the same, for circumstances are nothing to the living God, and nothing to a living faith.

When God fills the vision of the soul, difficulties fade away, and songs of praise break forth from joyful lips.

"And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah (or blessing); for there they blessed the LORD."

Such, beloved reader, must ever be the result of a living faith in the living God. More than two thousand five hundred years have rolled away since the occurrence of the event on which we have been dwelling; but the record is as fresh as ever. No change has come over the living God, or over that living faith which ever takes hold of His strength, and counts on His faithfulness. May we then, through the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, ever be enabled to exercise a living faith in the living God!

The Lord My Shepherd

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1.

Any pious Jew having a renewed nature, in old time, might know and use this psalm, saying, "Jehovah, my Shepherd." The holiness of God was not fully revealed, and therefore the conscience not disquieted, and the distance not felt. They knew the favor of God, and counted on His goodness then; but now we are brought into the light, and see what judgment is. The veil is rent, and God's holiness is manifested, for we are in the light, as He is in the light, through Jesus. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." 1 John 2:8.

Now that sin has been fully shown out-the death of Christ proving what the enmity of the heart was - this matter must be settled. I cannot say, "I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever," if I have not the knowledge of sins forgiven. I cannot talk of confidence if I have a fear of judgment and I see the desert of sin in the light of His holiness. I cannot consistently speak of One who may be my judge, that He is my Shepherd, and I shall dwell with Him. To know Him as our Shepherd, we must not have the matter of sins being forgiven, unsettled. God cannot let sin into His presence. There must be a conscience purged. Christ has been accepted, and He puts us into His place, having made peace through the blood of His cross. He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10:14. He has "entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." Heb. 9:12.

The starting point of Christian experience is God is for us; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" I am the object of His favor, which is better than life. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters." I shall find good everywhere. I shall lie down, no one making me afraid. Though the wolf may prowl in the way, I lie down in green pastures. It is "He leadeth me," and that must be in perfect peace and enjoyment, "beside the still waters."

This is the natural Christian state. We realize all things ours, for God is for us; therefore we may lie down.

We shall have conflict, etc., but amidst it all, is enjoyment. If the sorrow gets between our souls and God, so as to produce distrust, it is sin. Even if sin comes in, sad as it is, He can restore the soul. Whether from trouble or from offending, He can restore. See what thoughts are here given about God! The psalmist does not say, I must get my soul restored and then go to God, but "He restoreth my soul." So "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." 1 John 2:1. Who can restore but He? There may be something to correct in us, if not actually a fall. There may be hardness in my heart, which trouble shows me, and the like. But if He restores, it is "for His name's sake." Whatever I am, God is for me, and not only in this way, but also against enemies. For, "though I walk through the valley," etc. v. 4. Man had reason to quail at death before Christ came, but now in the fullest sense we need "fear no evil." Death is "ours" now. "We had the sentence of

death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." 2 Cor. 1:9. If they took my life, they could not hurt me, for I was trusting to One who could raise me. Paul as good as says, If they take this life, I have lost nothing; no, it is positive gain, for it hastens me on the road. Death is not terrible now. Why? "Thou art with me." It is terrible without this.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." It is not a rod, but Thine, so I shall fear no evil. No one can compete with God. Death is the very thing by which Christ has saved me, and it is that by which He may take me into His presence - "Absent from the body,... present with the Lord." It may come as a trial to exercise my soul. Well, I have to remember, "Thou art with me."

There is not only failure in life and failure in death to meet, but there are mighty enemies (v. 5). Nevertheless, I can sit down among them, and find everything given me for food. In the presence of all, I can sit down and say, I have done with them all, for "Thou art with me." I have found that power by which they are made nothing to me. Then we arrive at further security, joy, and blessedness still: "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Now that Christ has ascended, and the Holy Ghost has been given, there is triumphant peace and abounding joy through the power of the Holy Ghost.

I now find God Himself the source of all, and not only this as a present thing, but seeing what God is, I can say, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." For us it is the Father's house. There are not only blessings conferred, but a place to dwell with the Father forever. Whatever it be we meet with by the way, we know it is all for good, and we shall dwell forever with Him. Wonderful grace!

Love and Obedience: the Correct Order

Love is the spring of obedience. Any obedience that does not spring from love is legality, servility, or selfishness. Christian obedience knows no other spring than love. The Christian obeys because he loves, and because he is loved. "If ye love Me," says the Lord, "keep My commandments"; or, again, the Apostle writes, "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 them, and rose again."

Our love to the Lord is but the response of our hearts to His love for us. "We love Him, because He first loved us." Thus our love is the fruit of His-it is begotten by His, and is the result of it. We do not love Him in order that He may love us. That were impossible. How could these wretched hearts force themselves to love one whom by sin, alas, they hate? Is not the carnal mind enmity against God? and how then could it love Him?

Never; were there not a display of love on His side first of all-were not His love free and spontaneous, acting independently altogether of us- there could be none on ours.

But, blessed be God, this is the very truth unfolded in the gospel of His grace! It was when we "were dead in trespasses and sins" that God loved us. It was when we were "yet sinners" that Christ died for us, and that God found occasion for this display of His own love. It was when we were hateful that the kindness and love of God appeared. And it was when we were lost that the Son of man came to seek and to save us.

Such is the truth of the gospel. The priority of the love of God to man before that of man to God is thus distinctly revealed. For instance, "God so loved the world" is the truth that takes the soul by glad surprise, for that uncalled-for and undeserved love shines forth in all its bright and precious radiance without the least encouragement from man, but the rather in spite of all that man could do to discourage and repel it. Yet that timeless, changeless love beams on like a sun that no cloud can darken-like a fire that no frost can chill because it flows from a heart, the very nature and essence of which is love itself. "God is love" is the grand and full explanation of the fact that "God so loved the world," and the reason too of His suffering long with that world which is day by day and year by year augmenting its mountain load of sin and opposition to Him.

Oh! what a wondrous and soul-delivering truth is this! what a sight to behold the love of God in Christ Jesus bursting in upon this dark and dreary scene of sin and death and sorrow. How sweet to hear the story of that love, or to stand by Calvary's cross and let the proud heart be melted by that triumph of loving - kindness. Truly, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And by such a story is the heart won, the enemy reconciled, and the sinner saved. By such a truth is there kindled in the bosom a spark of love to Him. Thus love begets love, and the enemy becomes a friend and a follower.

There is a striking moral connection between the question asked by the Lord of Peter in John 21:17 and the command given to that Apostle in the 22nd verse of the same chapter. The question

is, "Lovest thou Me"? and the command, "Follow thou Me." The order is correct. Love is to precede obedience, and obedience is none the less to follow love. If the first can be established, the second will be secured. If the Lord can gain the heart, He can count upon getting the feet. And hence with divine wisdom He tests the affections of the Apostle. "Lovest thou Me," who have so loved thee? And what was the answer of poor, heartbroken Peter? "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Beautiful avowal, and deeply grateful to the Lord! "Thou knowest all things," said Peter, as though he would again have shed the bitter tears of penitence, and acknowledged the threefold denial of his loved and loving Lord and Savior. "Thou knowest all things"-my weakness, my folly, my self-confidence, and my sin-my repentance, my anguish, my sorrow, too. "Thou knowest that I love Thee." If none else should know it, Thou dost.

Then, "Follow Me," said the Lord. If the Lord be really loved, He will likewise be really obeyed. Obedience will be proportionate to and commensurate with love. "He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings." As the love, so the obedience. There may and must be different degrees of intelligence as to His will, but the spirit of obedience will characterize all who really love Him. An obedient heart is His delight. Such a one will be trained and nurtured by Him and, as He says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Oh! that these three words, "Follow thou Me," may stand out in bold and clear relief before the grateful and loving gaze of our renewed affections, so that we may practically esteem Him worthy of all our obedience here, to whom we shall gladly bow the knee in the song of eternal adoration by-and-by when forever each blood-bought lip shall say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was

slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And if the crown that shall decorate each saintly brow is to be cast at His feet, shall not His name be honored now by the grateful, complete, and unreserved surrender of these poor hearts and hands and feet, yea, of all that we have and are to the service of the same gracious Savior and Lord. Oh! let Him thus be glorified. He claims us as the purchase of His blood. May our inmost souls hear His question, "Lovest thou Me?" and joyfully obey His command, "Follow thou Me."

The Love of Jesus

Once through this world of sorrows a lonely Stranger trod -
An outcast in a manger - that One the Son of God.
Though Lord of all creation - of earth, and skies above -
For us became incarnate, that we might know His love.
Down from those heights of glory to this dark world of sin,
He trod life's rugged pathway, the sinner's heart to win.
By enemies surrounded, He trod that path alone
From Bethlehem to Calvary, from Calvary to the throne.
He grew from child to manhood; God's will was His delight;
God's word His meditation by day as well as night.
His words were words of kindness; His acts were acts of love;
He glorified His Father who sent Him from above.
But ah, this world despised Him, and nailed Him to a tree,
Rejected, slew, and hanged Him upon Mount Calvary.
And thus His path was ended - that path of doing good -
Begun in Bethlehem's manger, closed on a cross of wood.
O ever blessed Saviour, Thou dearest Friend to me,
I'm longing for that moment when I Thy face shall see,
When with Thee and like Thee ever, at Thy blest feet I fall,
And through eternal ages Thy blessed path recall.
To know in all its fullness Thy wondrous love to me,
Far deeper, deeper, deeper than the deepest, deepest sea,
To hear Thy welcome summons, on earth no more to stay,
To prove Thy love forever through one eternal day.

Marian Congress Celebration: the Editor's Column

Inasmuch as the Roman Church has designated 1954 as a special holy year in which an International Marian Congress - the first of its kind - is to be held in Rome, with many special events and pilgrimages in honor of Mary, it would be well for us to briefly examine the background for this unusual festival.

The year 1954 is the 100th anniversary of the issuance of papal bull "Ineffabilis Deus" by which the Roman doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" finally became an article of faith for all her communicants, the denial of which is accounted to be heresy. Thus since 1854 all Catholics are bound to subscribe to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Now first, what is a dogma? In the sense in which the Roman Church uses the word it is an official decree of the Church which has absolute authority equal to, if not exceeding, that of the Holy Scriptures themselves. Thus it is evident that the Bible is not their sole guide, but they claim the right to teach and add to what has been written for our learning. From the Word of God, however, we learn that the Church is not to teach, but it is taught (Acts 11:26; 13:1; Eph. 4:11-13); while in Rev. 2:20 we read of a woman designated by the name of Jezebel who called herself a prophetess, and she usurped a place and taught moral corruption and evil, for which the church at Thyatira was censured.

Second, what is this dogma of the Immaculate Conception which reaches all Catholics with all the authority of the Church? From its wording some might suppose that it has reference to the Lord Jesus Himself as having been begotten of the Holy Spirit, but this is not the case. This strange doctrine says that Mary, from the time of her conception, was holy and free from all stain of sin - that she was different in this respect from all of the other children of fallen Adam.

Now let us test this doctrine by the inerrant Word of God, for that is our only, but always true, resource. And may we remember that when the Apostle Paul was leaving the elders of Ephesus, he commended them to God and to the Word of His grace (Acts 20:32), not to the Church, nor to any man or group of men. And when the Apostle Peter was about to leave the saints, he wrote so that they would have the precious truth communicated to them always in remembrance. He further said, "Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." (2 Pet. 1:12-15). Peter said nothing of the Church teaching, Church authority to teach, or of any apostolic succession. The beloved Apostle John likewise made no reference to any such innovation, when warning them of the dangers of the last days, but cast the saints back on "that which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:24). So with entire confidence in God and His Word we shall seek to test the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

In Isa. 7:14 we read: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel"; that is, God with us. Now it is evident that this Son of the virgin is God manifest in flesh, and of His holiness there can be no doubt, but not one word is said about the holiness of the virgin. Is this merely an oversight?

Next let us turn to Matthew 1. Joseph was told by the Lord in a dream, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." vv. 20, 21. Here the altogether singular manner of conception of the virgin's Son is told - "is of the Holy Ghost." Certainly no taint of sin ever sullied His blessed Person, for otherwise He never could have saved His people from their sins. Again there is not the slightest hint that Mary herself was "free from original sin."

The Gospel of Luke gives the most detailed account of the birth of the Lord Jesus, and of Mary herself. Here the angel Gabriel informs Mary beforehand that she had found favor with God, for she was that virgin of whom Isaiah spoke. She was the chosen instrument through whom the wondrous purposes of God were to be wrought in bringing into the world Him who would not only save her people but bless the world. Then the manner of His birth was announced, and because of that which was to be by the power of the Spirit of God, He, although taking on Him manhood, was absolutely free from the slightest taint of man's sinful and fallen state. This depended upon the singularity of His conception: "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." v. 35. He was truly the "Holy One of God." Although He had become a man, and gloried in the title "Son of man," yet withal, He was the Son of God, as much so when in manhood as in the past eternity.

But where in all this is there one word about Mary's being holy? where any intimation that her birth distinguished her from all before her of Adam's race? The birth of Jesus was a miracle outside of the sphere of nature, while the birth of John the Baptist (told in the same chapter) was a miracle within the scope of nature.

After the interview with the angel, Mary went to see her cousin Elizabeth, and there gave expression to a remarkable statement: "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Luke 1:46, 47. If Mary had been free from all taint of sin she would not have said that she rejoiced in God her Savior. Yes, blessed as her place was among women, and among her nation, she, just as we, needed and had a Savior through that Holy One who came into the world as the Son of the virgin. Mary then went on to say, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name" - not one word about her holiness. She also said that all generations would call her blessed, but note well - not a blesser, nor a Savior, nor a mediatrix.

The next chapter of Luke adds a detail that should forever settle the question in hand. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called Jesus"; at that time Mary offered a sacrifice for herself according to that which was written in the law, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." By reference to Leviticus 12, concerning a mother's cleansing, we find that where people were too poor to bring a larger offering, the two birds would suffice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So we see that Mary on this occasion offered a sin offering. Such an act would have been altogether out of place if the dogma of the Church of Rome were true.

If then this strange doctrine is unsupported by Scripture, in fact is even in conflict with it, on what does Rome base it? and why did she wait more than 1800 years (according to her claim to antiquity) to decree it? Needless to say, superstition crept into the Church very early, but there is

nothing very definite about a doctrine of Mary's sinlessness until the year 1140. There are indications that such ideas had been growing, and these came into prominence by the remonstrance of the celebrated Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) when he wrote to the clerics of the cathedral at Lyons, for they had introduced a festival in celebration of that doctrine. Bernard argued vigorously against this on the ground of its novelty, its unscripturalness (Psalm 51:5), and its absurdity. He said, "On the same principle you would be obliged to hold that the conception of her ancestors, in an ascending line, was also a holy one, since otherwise she could not have ascended from them worthily, and there would then be festivals without number." The supporters of this new thing claimed a document communicated by the virgin herself.

From the time of Bernard there was intermittent agitation for this new doctrine, but foremost in opposing it were the friars of the Dominican order, and they were the ones who zealously sought to guard against heresy, and who supplied men for the inquisitions. They steadfastly held out against the new doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, while the Franciscans supported it. Pope after pope decreed against it, or against agitation for it, and one against agitation for or against it, until Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) gave several prelates permission to describe her conception as immaculate. Then Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) "was induced to address to his bishops from Gaeta an encyclical, inviting them to state how far the dogmatic definition of the dogma would meet their wishes and the wishes of those under their charge. A large majority declared themselves strongly in favor of the proposal." The outcome was that on December 8, 1854, the thing that had crept up as superstition through a thousand years became an article of faith to the Roman Church, and this year they are celebrating the 100th anniversary of that event.

May we praise God that we know the Lord Jesus, the Son of the virgin, as the only sinless and spotless One, and that He in grace took our place - the Just for the unjust and suffered in our stead. All who so know Him are truly saved, and this includes Mary herself, blessed as she certainly was.

"O Head! once full of bruises,

So full of pain and scorn,

'Mid other sore abuses

Mocked with a crown of thorn;

O Head! e'en now surrounded

With brightest majesty,

In death once bowed and

wounded

On the accursed tree:

"Thou Countenance transcendent!

Thou life-creating Sun!

To worlds on Thee dependent--

Yet bruised and spit upon:
O Lord! what Thee tormented
Was our sin's heavy load,
We had the debt augmented
Which Thou didst pay in blood.
"We give Thee thanks unfeigned,
O Savior! Friend in need,
For what Thy soul sustained
When Thou for us didst bleed;
Grant us to lean unshaken
Upon Thy faithfulness;
Until to glory taken,
We see Thee face to face."

Never Never; No

There is great force in the way the statement of Heb. 13:5 is made in the original text.

"Himself has said, No; never will I leave thee; never, no, never will I forsake thee." Observe how emphatic it is! Himself has said, to thee the individual, not to you, merely in a mass; and then the repetition of the negatives, "No; never"- "never, no, never." Clearly, He would have us to know that there is one thought which neither has nor ever can have any place in His mind-that of forgetting His people down here.

"NO; NEVER will I leave thee; NEVER, NO, NEVER WILL I forsake thee," is the Lord's banner for His saint - a banner that floats over every circumstance.

Not Alive in the World

The death of Christ has annulled my existence before God in the flesh. Supposing there is a man who is a thief, and he is put into prison to be punished, and he dies in prison -what is to be done with him? The life that sinned is no longer there to be punished; the man must be buried and be put out of sight. So, speaking of Christ as taking, in grace, the sinner's place, it is said, "In that He died, He died unto sin once." There is an end of the whole thing. And now, the very principle I get, the thought of being dead and alive again, is this perfect law of liberty in which the flesh has no kind of title in any shape or way. You are not alive in the world; you are dead with Christ. How then can you go on as if you were still alive in the world?

Obedience

Christianity substitutes obedience to a Person for that of obedience to a law. In legal obedience a person fulfills a contract which he has undertaken; Christian obedience is like that of a slave to a master whom he loves. He does what he tells him without a will of his own.

If I bid my child do three things, and he does only two of them which he likes to do, and takes his own way in the third, in subjection of will is as much evinced by his disobeying in one point as if he had in all.

Christ's obedience was perfect and is our pattern. He was put through every trial to see if there were in Him an unwillingness to obey-that is sin-and it could not be found. In the Garden of Gethsemane He chose rather to have God's face hidden than fail to obey. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There is nothing so humble or so unselfish as obedience. It supposes we have no will of our own.

Obey Your Parents in the Lord

As long as children are of the household, actually in relationship with their parents, the duty of obedience remains. If a man is married, he begins a new house, and is the head of it - leaves his father and mother. But as long as children are of the house, obedience is the duty, as the relationship remains. "In the Lord," is the limit and character of obedience. If I had a Jewish or heathen parent who commanded me to deny Christ, I could not do it. It is not "in the Lord." So if I were desired to do anything which practically denied Christ, I could not do it "in the Lord." If the parent be merely unjust in ways, and no duty be compromised, I believe the path of a child to be patience and casting himself on the Lord. I can suppose a child engaged in a positive duty which the parents in such case would have no right to cause the child to break through.

"In the Lord" has nothing to do with the character of the parents, but the character of the child; otherwise it would absolve from all obedience the child of heathen or Jewish parents. The obedience is "in the Lord."

Peace

We find in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is the legacy the Lord has left His people in this world while He has gone to the Father.

"Peace I leave with you." This is peace with God which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. "My peace I give unto you" is the peace He possessed as Man walking down here on earth.

I have seen many who have peace with God, but I have never seen any who had made their peace with God, nor could anyone possibly do so under any circumstances. Nothing but the blood could make peace with God; and we read in Col. 1:20, Christ has "made peace through the blood of His cross."

Peaceful Coexistence: the Editor's Column

With the conclusion of the Indo-China truce, the world was without an international war for the first time in 23 years-years that had witnessed the overthrow of empires, the rise and fall of great leaders, the slaughter of millions, and a revolution in the means of making war. No comparable period in the history of the world had seen such great changes in so short a time.

With the advent of peace, there was a relief from war weariness, but no great rejoicing, for satisfaction was tempered by the stark realization that an even greater catastrophe hovers over the world. Tensions are in almost every quarter of the globe, any one of which might ignite a terrible holocaust. Never before have the arsenals of the nations bulged with munitions of war as at present, and such weapons whose capacity for destruction is frightful to contemplate. Suspicion and mistrust is rife among international leaders.

No, this is not the time for "peace on earth." Real peace will not come until the "Prince of Peace" reigns, but before that glorious day comes there will be more "wars and rumors of wars." The prophecy of Joel is yet to be fulfilled. "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." Joel 3:9, 10.

It is not even the time for the false peace on earth when "they shall say, Peace and safety" just before sudden destruction overtakes them (1 Thess. 5:3). No sensible statesman today would think of proclaiming that an era of "peace and safety" had arrived. They have not even a plan for a strong balance of power that will ensure any international stability. All that is expected now is a time of tension and an uneasy truce while an effort is being made to live peaceably with the communist nations. This is being called a trial at "peaceful coexistence," or a "modus vivendi" way of getting along with each other.

Some of the more hopeful statesmen only say that this should be given a good trial.

This attempt at "peaceful coexistence" is basically an acceptance on the part of the Western world of all the conquests of Russia and the forces of communism. This is a tremendous psychological gain for them, for in the past 15 years they have swallowed up Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, East Germany, East Austria, all of the mainland of China, North Korea, Tibet, and now a substantial part of Indo-China. In all, they have brought 600 million people under their control and 5.5 million square miles of territory in that short span, until today they dominate one fourth of the earth's land surface and one third of its population.

Western acquiescence in this great conquest will give Russia and China an opportunity to absorb and organize their gains before again reaching out for new territory-not that they will cease efforts to infiltrate and conquer nations from within while talking "peaceful coexistence." A few lines from the will of Peter the Great (an ambitious tyrant who laid down many plans for Russian expansion), who died in 1725, will perhaps explain the present experiment: "The Russian nation must be constantly on a war footing, to keep soldiers warlike and in good condition. No rest must be

allowed, except for the purpose of relieving State finances, recruiting the army, or biding the favorable moment for attack. By these means peace is made subservient to war, and war to peace, in the interest of the aggrandizement and increasing prosperity of Russia."

It is certainly most unlikely that acknowledging the right of the great bear to the prey will change the bear's nature, or lessen its voracious appetite. Will it not rather embolden it to try for more spoil at the time of its choosing?

Seventy-five to one hundred years ago, godly men who understood their Bibles applied Isa. 33:1 to Russia. That was long before Russia's greatness, and before communism was more than an idea. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." The reason for the assigning of this portion to Russia is its position in the book of Isaiah, for in the 31st chapter the Assyrian (or head of the Arab world) meets his doom; then in the 32nd chapter, the King reigns in righteousness; then in chapter 33 another foe is mentioned, and the only foe who will come against Israel after Christ reigns is Russia, who will come down against them after they have returned to their land and are "dwelling safely" (see Ezek. 38 and 39).

The present attempt at a "modus vivendi" for living in peace with the Communists will tend to retard the efforts to rebuild the Roman Empire -that Western European alliance. It will seem less urgent when peace is talked; nevertheless, the groundwork has been laid and Western nations more or less conditioned to sacrifice some national sovereignty to a super-state as a matter of self-preservation in a crisis. It will only take an occasion to revive the scheme, and perhaps it may come back with vengeance through some overt act of aggression by Russia or her satellites. At any rate, we know the Word of God is true; everything is in readiness for the revival of that Western power, and the appearance of the Beast to head it up and cause the wonder and admiration of the world. Then will come the time when men will think they have achieved a lasting peace, and will say, "peace and safety," only to find that sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape.

And what about us who belong to Christ? We should neither be disturbed by the commotion of the nations nor deceived by their soft words and assurances. We know that Satan is the god and prince of this world, and that the whole world lies in the wicked one (1 John 5:19; J.N.D. Trans.). If Abraham looked forward to a heavenly city and a portion outside of this world, how much more should we who have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, and are to be His joint heirs when He takes over the dominion that is rightly His.

Soon, very soon, we shall hear His voice and see His face, and be forever with Him. while is to glorify Him, while Our business in the mean- we rejoice in His love.

"Called from above, and heavenly men by birth,

(Who once were but the citizens of earth)

As pilgrims here we seek a heavenly home,

Our portion, in the ages yet to come.

"Where all the saints of every clime shall meet,
And each with all shall all the ransomed greet,
But oh! the height of bliss, my Lord, shall be
To owe it all, and share it all, with Thee.

"We are but strangers here, we do not crave
A home on earth, which gave Thee but a grave;
Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here,
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere."

Perfect Love

The more perfect love is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object, and this will give it at times a very different bearing because its way will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its way, therefore, at times may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew 16, or when He reproved the two disciples in Luke 24, but this is only because the love is perfect, and therefore it is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise. More attractively at times, but far, far intrinsically less true, because imperfect love will not, in this way, unmixedly consider its object, but itself. It will be set upon enjoying its object rather more than on serving it, and this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit; while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blessed and profited.

Where do we see this perfect love but in Jesus-in God? A mother has it not, but will at times enjoy her child. But Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was with them; and He ordered His way with them to their profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age when He need no longer care for them as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will have no occasion then, in the exercise of perfect love, to consider only their profit, for their profit will have been brought to its accomplishment in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

A Personal Interest

We may receive a benefit from a person, and be assured of a hearty welcome to it, and yet feel ourselves ill at ease in his presence. Gratitude is awakened in the heart very deeply, and yet reserve and uneasiness are felt. It calls for something beyond our assurance of his good will, and of our full welcome to his service, to make us at ease in the presence of a benefactor. And this something, I believe, is the discovery that we have an interest in himself as well as in his ability to serve us.

This delineates, as I judge, the experience of the poor woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5). She knew the Lord's ability to relieve her sorrow, and her hearty welcome to avail herself of it. She therefore comes and takes the virtue out of Him without reserve. But she comes behind Him. This expresses her state of mind She knows her welcome to His service, but nothing more. But the Lord trains her heart for more. He lets her know that she is interested in Himself, as well as in His power to oblige her. He calls her "daughter." He owns kindred, or relationship, with her. This was the communication which alone was able to remove her fears and trembling. Her rich and mighty patron is her kinsman. This is what her heart needed to know. Without this in the spirit of her mind she would have been still "behind Him"; but this gives her ease. "Go in peace," may then be said, as well as, "Be whole of thy plague." She need not be reserved. Christ does not deal with her as a patron or benefactor (Luke 22:25). She has an interest in Himself, as well as in His power to bless her.

Pharaoh's Heart Hardened

"Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." Rom. 9:18.

This sets forth God's sovereign right to do as He pleases. Man must bow. It is of no use to reason or reply for God must have the upper hand in the end. As to Pharaoh, the hardening of his heart was judicial. He had set himself to resist God's will, and he was given over to blindness and hardness of heart. No one was ever hardened or blinded who had the faintest or feeblest desire after God or His Christ. Theology makes difficulties in this matter; truth makes none.

The Piltdown Man: the Editor's Column

A notable idol of the evolutionists has been demolished; one supposed evidence of man's ape ancestry called the "Piltdown Man" has been exposed as a "most elaborate and carefully prepared hoax." The fraud was revealed by Dr. K. P. Oakley, of the British Museum, and two Oxford University professors, Dr. J. E. Weiner and Dr. W. E. Le Gros Clark.

Inasmuch as our children in schools and colleges are still being taught that man is not a creature direct from the hand of God, but is merely a product of evolution that has worked its way up from the brute beast, we shall consider the subject of evolution briefly.

Evolution is not new or modern. It is one of the oldest fallacies of fallen man. The late Sir William Dawson of McGill University said, "This evolutionist doctrine is in itself one of the strangest phenomena of humanity. It existed, and most naturally, in the oldest philosophy and poetry in connection with the crudest and most uncritical attempts of the human mind to grasp the system of nature." It was in the world long before Christianity and then was forgotten for a long time. It was resurrected about 100 years ago and offered to the unsuspecting in a new garb as being something modern and scientific.

Some people have tried to reconcile evolution and the Bible, but they are irreconcilable; they are diametrically opposed, the one to the other. Evolution has its roots in atheism and, at the same time, evolution itself is the fertile soil in which atheism, infidelity, modernism, liberalism, materialism, fascism, and Marxism have grown and flourished.

In spite of the fact that evolution is accepted without question or debate in many educational and pseudo Christian circles, it rests on pillars of sand. Though it is often taught as a "fact," it is not a fact but a mere hypothesis- a mere human guess-nevertheless, it has been sought after and welcomed as the most plausible alternative to the Biblical account of the creation, the origin of living beings, and of man in particular. Let us take note of what Prof. D. M. S. Watson of the University of London said when addressing the British Association for the Advancement of Science: "Evolution itself is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or... can be proved by logical coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible." Incredible! Think of it! To whom is it incredible? Not to the Christian. Is it not the fool that says in his heart, "There is no God"? (Psa. 14:1; 53:1).

Charles Darwin, the man who helped exhume the old evolutionary mythology and give it impetus, spent three years at Cambridge studying for the ministry (he was then orthodox in his views, but orthodoxy alone is not faith), but later wrote, "I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation." Orthodoxy and his evolutionary views were clearly incompatible, so he abandoned the former, and since his day the orthodox nominal beliefs of millions have been shipwrecked on the Lorelei rock of evolution.

The hypothesis of evolution is based on five considerations, all of which are subject to scientific contradiction, but when once men have rejected the sublime statement, "God created," as being

"incredible" they will not suffer any refutation of their pet theory. It more severely taxes credulity to believe in an unproved idea of the origin of life and of the various species than to believe that an all-wise and all-powerful Creator brought them into being; but to admit the latter is to accept the premise that man is therefore responsible to that Creator and must give account of himself and all he does. This is what is unacceptable. Then too, those who unquestioningly accept in faith the evolutionist doctrine, rest themselves in the word of MEN, while the true Christian rests in the word of GOD.

It is not our purpose to refute all the claims of evolution, but merely to point out that it is easily assailable, and to call attention to its origin in the evil heart of unbelief in men. We might, however, mention briefly some of the five propositions on which it rests. First, there is the similarity of the anatomy of various creatures, but what does that prove? Certainly the anatomy of each creature is ideally suited to itself, and any similarity of design is but evidence of the handiwork of the same wise Creator. Even structures built by men bear the marks of their designers, though men are great copyists, yet no one supposes for a moment that similarity in the works of men proves that one structure evolved by itself from another one.

There are scientists who have struck deadly blows at this first proposition as well as at the other four; namely, embryonic recapitulation, geological record, blood precipitation, and so-called vestigial organs. This last supposes that creatures in their evolution upward have some leftover organs from their old condition, and that they are no longer needed. Evolutionists at one time had a list of 180 such organs, but as man's knowledge of their uses increased, the list has been constantly revised downward until today it only has about six on it. And who shall say that any organ of the body is vestigial? Those who have done so have but displayed their ignorance.

When Prof. W. E. Le Gros Clark of Oxford University (already mentioned as one of the exposers of the Piltdown fraud) was speaking about the human appendix (often considered vestigial), he said, "The significance of the vermiform appendix is still obscure, but in view of its rich blood supply it is most certainly correct to regard it as a specialized and not a degenerate organ." Further testimony is given by Prof. William L. Straus, Jr., of Johns Hopkins University, in the following words: "There is no longer any justification for regarding the vermiform appendix as a vestigial structure."

Not long ago human tonsils were regarded as useless, but they are now considered very important in performing protective functions against bacterial infection in early childhood. Another man of note, the late Prof. E. S. Goodrich of Oxford University, stated that, "He would be a rash man indeed who would now assert that any part of the human body is useless."

It is difficult for us to see how evolution can even be considered with the sciences, for science is the study and classification of observed facts and rules; whereas the proponents of evolution start with the foregone conclusion that the Biblical account of the creation of life and species by God is incredible, if not impossible. Hence, instead of starting with some known fact, they begin with a preconceived idea, and work desperately to find some proof of their infidel theory. Surely it is an unscientific approach to the problem of life itself. They have often sought to find a trail where one never existed, and then lead their followers into a blind alley, for when they conjecture on the various forms of life on back and down, lower and lower, they finally come up against the same problem with which they started; namely, where did that life come from? Truly, "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Job 11:12.

Another phase in the evolutionist's indefatigable search for proof of his own theory is found in the straining after evidences in the animal and vegetable kingdoms by developing new varieties. Here again reputable scientists have exposed the fallacy of much that is claimed. What constitutes a species is a great question which often goes unanswered, and such changes as are forced by X ray and other drastic means (called mutations), are said by some men of note to be always bad, and down, not up.

Perhaps the best known of the supposed "evidences" of evolution are the often publicized findings of anthropology. Many fantastic claims have been made of finding fossilized skeletons which show a transitional stage between the lower anthropoids and man, but not a single "missing link" has ever been unearthed.

About the time that Darwin propounded his theory (1859), naturalists and geologists conveniently began finding certain parts of human and simian skeletons. With great ingenuity and dexterity they set about placing bones together and making amazing calculations. Then with the air of official authority these leaders in the race to prove that man is but a self-improved beast gave imposing names to their relics. But for all that, many prominent men have given utterances of their own skepticism. Prof. William L. Straus, Jr., in the Quarterly Review of Biology (Sept. 1949), said, "It is noteworthy, moreover, that forms intermediate between the human and any of the other primate groups, forms popularly termed 'missing links,' are as conspicuous by their absence as they were in Darwin's day." And this after almost a century of effort! We can only conclude that the only reason they did not find any such fossils is that there are none. Prof. Rendle Short said that "the further back we look for early man, the more like ourselves he appears to be."

Yes, Christian reader, Adam was the first man, and God created him. If he could stand today beside the human race as we know it, we would only see that man's sin and departure from God have taken a dreadful toll, and that what change there has been has been downward, and not upward.

No Christian should ever waver the slightest in his allegiance to the unerring and infallible Word of God, in spite of such claims of convincing "finds" called by such imposing names as "Pithecanthropus Erectus," or "Java Man." This supposed prehistoric man was constructed from a part of a skull cap, a fragment of a left thigh bone, and three molar teeth! These few fragments of bone were found in 1891 and 1892 in an old river bed over a considerable area, and were mingled with much debris. It would take a lot of credulity to believe that these few bones came from the same creature, or that from them anyone could reconstruct a whole skeleton, much less cover it with an imitation of flesh.

The famous "Neanderthal Man" was but a skull cap, perhaps of an odd shape and size. The same men that because of any peculiarity of that piece of skull judge it to be a pre-human piece of evidence would not have much trouble finding all sorts of odd-shaped skulls on living human beings, but of course that would not help the cause of evolution.

The "Piltdown Man" found in a gravel pit in Sussex, England, in 1911 and later, has now been proved to be a deliberate and carefully prepared hoax. All they had of this "man" was a substantial part of the left half of a mineralized skull, a part of the right half, and the right half of the lower jaw, and two teeth. The Encyclopedia Britannica called the "Piltdown Man" second in importance only to

that of *Pithecanthropus Erectus* (Java Man), but alas, this great "find" was a fraud. The jawbone was that of an ape that died only 50 years ago, and as no apes live in England, it must have been imported and planted. The teeth were canine, and had been pared down to disguise their original shape. Both the teeth and piece of jawbone had been artificially colored with bichromate of potash. Even the tools which that odd fellow was supposed to have used were fakes.

And yet, with only these few fragments of a human skull, a part of an ape's jawbone, and two canine teeth, scientists (?) reconstructed the head and neck of this weird individual, giving it shape, size, eyes, expression, appearance of skin, hair, and all. (That would be impossible to do with any correctness to a whole skeleton of one who died a few years ago.) It is estimated that there are 300 replicas of this "Piltdown Man" in museums and other places around the world. Surely most people want to be fooled, and others prey on their gullibility.

Many other "evidences" of evolution have been made out of a very little material, an unbridled imagination, and a will opposed to God and His revelation. In 1922 the late Prof. H. F. Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History announced the discovery of a molar tooth in the State of Nebraska. The discovery was heralded as the first evidence of prehistoric man in the new world, and the lone tooth soon received the imposing name of "*Hesperopithecus*." Then Sir Grafton Elliott Smith induced the editor of the *Illustrated London News* to publish an article on this ancestor of the human race, illustrated by drawings of *Hesperopithecus*, both male and female. Think of it—two primitive people - male and female—made out of a single tooth! And yet these people who do these things scoff at the faith of a Christian who believes the divine record which cannot lie. Subsequently, Dr. Osborn came to the conclusion that the tooth was that of an extinct pig. Is there any folly too great when the will is set against God? (Rom. 1:22).

Many museums of natural history contain numerous exhibits that are made out of little or nothing, but which the unsuspecting receive as authentic, and are deceived thereby. It is even inferred in many quarters that to disbelieve in evolution is to show signs of being an ignoramus, but "let God be true and every man a liar." It is sad that young people in schools and colleges generally are given only one side of the story and do not learn that evolution has never been proved, that it is but an unscientific guess begotten by pseudo science and atheistic philosophy.

Perhaps the most lamentable feature in all the present-day delusion is that Christendom in general has accepted it, and that many institutions which were once dedicated to the service of God have revised their theology to conform to this atheistic and unsupported hypothesis. Truly men are already being given over to believe a lie because they will not have the truth (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

In all probability the teaching of evolution has been a major underlying factor in precipitating the two great world wars, and also in producing the present world tension over communism, with the attendant increasing lawlessness in all countries.

Prof. Will Durant of the University of California said that "Nietzsche was the child of Darwin." Darwin's famous treatise, "*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, and the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*," laid the groundwork for the atheist Nietzsche's teaching of the need of war, and the survival of a super race of men. It was this that gave strength to German militarism and led to two world wars. Mussolini was also a disciple of the

German Nietzsche.

Nietzsche and Karl Marx were both contemporary with Darwin, and both were influenced by him. The atheist Marx gave the world communism and anarchism which so plagues it today. An appalling crop is being reaped from the seeds sown a century ago, and more are being sown, with more reaping to come. The universal breakdown of law, order, and morality is largely attributable to this same source.

Evolution denies the fall of man and makes his sins virtues. Anything that is bad is charged up to his brute ancestors, and so man is absolved of responsibility. Then too, if man is not the direct creature of God, human responsibility to God disappears; hence the atheistic evolutionary theory encourages a man to feel that he may do as he likes in this world, for there is no fear of judgment to come. But "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Eccles. 12:14. The schools, colleges, and many churches, and the Freudian school of psychology are preparing the way for an era of godless disregard for everything stable and right, and a time of terror for the earth. "GOD IS NOT MOCKED." Gal. 6:7.

It is not surprising that evolutionists are already rallying to support their theory by disclaiming any real importance of the "Piltdown Man." They may be expected to come forward now with more relics and more proofs, but before long the judgment of God will overtake them as the flood did in the days of Noah, and the fire in the days of Lot, "and they shall not escape."

Fellow-Christian, let us remember that God's Word is forever settled in heaven, and soon His will shall be shown on earth when He visits it in judgment.

"Underlying Biological Principles As They Appear To The Paleontologist"

"It follows from the above brief summary that paleontology affords a distinct and highly suggestive field of purely biological research; that is, of the causes of evolution underlying the observable modes which we have been describing. The net result of observation is not favorable to the essentially Darwinian view that the adaptive arises out of the fortuitous by selection, but is favorable to the hypothesis of the existence of some quite unknown law of life which we are at present totally unable to comprehend or even conceive. We have shown that the direct observation of the origin of new characters in paleontology brings them within that domain of natural law and order to which the evolution of the physical universe conforms. The nature of this law, which upon the whole, appears to be purposive or teleological in its operations, is altogether a mystery which may or may not be illumined by further research." -Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition.

Italics are ours.

A Plant of the Lord

You are a plant of the Lord, set by Him in His plantation on earth to have a certain leaf, blossom, and fruit. He knows where He has set you, and He takes into account all the adverse influences which bear on you. He puts the plant where it can best show forth the beauty He has given it. He knows the amount of frost, wind, and sun which suits it.... As the plant of the Lord you are an exotic, and there is no other plant like you.... I think it is a great thing to be assured that I am not only a peculiar plant, but that I am placed in a peculiar spot, and that if I do not express the virtues and qualities of the exotic there, I should do so less in any other circumstances.

The Lord knows the only spot in His plantation where you can or could grow according to His intentions.

Whatever our circumstances may be, dark or bright, they are really the most favorable and the most adapted for growth, and this is an immense comfort.

Power With God

It has been asked, How did Jacob prevail over God? (Gen. 32:24-28.) By earnest weeping and supplication. God suffered Himself, in mercy, to be prevailed over, thus showing His acceptance of Jacob's strong crying and tears; and when the wrestling had reduced Jacob to the sense of powerlessness in himself, he clings to the angel in his weakness, and God suffers him thus to prevail over Him.

This scene is referred to in Hos. 12:4 - "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him " Jacob's history remarkably unfolds that of a saint who did not walk with God; yet he was a saint, and valued the promises of God, but sought to enjoy them by human means which were not upright. We need faith for the means as well as for the end which God has in view. He had halted morally for 21 years, and now the moment came when God brought His controversy to an issue with him. His dividing of the flocks and his present for Esau showed that he had no real faith in God's care, though he prays earnestly enough at the same time. He was a froward man, and we read, "With the froward Thou wilt wrestle" (Psalm 18:26; margin). God meets Jacob alone and wrestles with him to bring him to the sense of weakness and nothingness, but does not prevail. At last He touched the hollow of his thigh, and it was dislocated. Now he is reduced to the extremity of weakness and powerlessness; yet he clings to the angel, conscious of who was there, and with weeping and earnest entreaty he seeks a blessing from Him whose strength is "made perfect in weakness," and he prevails. He is blessed, and for the name "Jacob" (that is, Supplanter) he receives that of "Israel" (that is, a prince with God) who had power with Him and prevailed. God answers now with His blessing, having reduced His servant to the consciousness of entire weakness and inability to do without Him. But Jacob bears the marks of the controversy, and he halts upon his thigh for life.

How often we see this! God's controversy with the souls of His people slighted, at last they are brought to a moment when all is gone but God! Then the blessing flows freely, but the mark of the discipline which was needed to reduce the soul to that point is seen for the rest of his life. Yet the day dawns and the sun rises on one who has had a deep and blessed lesson from a faithful God.

How all this puts us in mind of our perfect Lord and Savior! His weeping and supplications - "strong crying and tears"-mark the perfection of One who felt in its verity the place He had undertaken in love; yet He must go through and drink the cup, and be forsaken of God. Here was perfection perfected. If it must be so, He will have the cup from no hand but His Father's. He goes on to the cross, and "All My bones are out of joint" was His cry at that solemn moment, when God was averting His face from His Son when made sin for us; and He bears the marks of His sufferings in glory, and forever!

The Promised Land: the Editor's Column

God's purpose concerning the children of Israel was to bring them out of the land of bondage and into the glorious land of Canaan (Exod. 3:8). It was but an eleven days' journey from the border of Egypt to the threshold of Canaan (Deut. 1:2), but the journey required forty years in the ways of God with His earthly people. There were lessons for them to learn which could only be learned in the wilderness, for it was there that their faith and obedience was specially tested.

Deuteronomy 8 gives us the secret of the trials of the way. In it God rehearses His ways with them as the trek was coming to an end. He said to them, Thou shall look back and "remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no." v. 2. There they proved what was in them-unfaithfulness, murmurings, turning back in heart to Egypt, and many other sore evils. God knew beforehand what was in their hearts, but they had to prove it by bitter experience.

Then there were other things they learned by the way: He suffered them to hunger so that He might feed them. They proved His bounteous store and the goodness of His heart. Not once in all the forty years did the manna fail in its appointed time. They proved that without a human commissary they could be supplied with food and with' clothing. Their raiment did not wax old in all that time. Their health was also an object of His solicitude, for even their feet did not swell with all their walking. They were also to consider that His chastenings were for their profit as when a man corrects his son.

After God thus recounts to them the lessons of the wilderness, He tells them of the beauty and bountifulness of the land into which they were about to enter: "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass" (copper). vv. 7-9. Could they wish for more? Unbelief kept them from the enjoyment of it years before, but what lessons they learned in the delay!

Later on, after they had taken possession of that "good land," and Joshua had divided the land unto them, he said, "There failed not aught of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." Josh. 21:45. Then as he was about to die he called the elders of Israel and in retrospection said: "And., behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing bath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing bath failed thereof." Chap. 23:14. This was the realization of what faith knew in advance. How could anything fail of all the good which the Lord promised?

Yet, strange as it may seem, men have called in question the accuracy and correctness of God's description of the land, while the people to whom the promise was made, and who should know if anyone would, could affirm after making it their own that it was true in every respect. Perhaps no statement in the description of Deuteronomy 8 has been more challenged than that they could dig copper out of its hills, and that it also contained iron ore. For centuries it was contended that neither copper nor iron was to be found in what is generally spoken of as Palestine. And this was in the face of another account in the Word of God. In 1 Kings 7:45, 46 we read: "And the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, were of bright brass. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan."

Now at long last men are ready to concede that copper and iron are to be found there. Why? Because they are now ready to believe God's unerring Word? because faith is operating more now? Alas, NO. Just because men have now found the copper and iron, while the Christian who believes God never troubled himself about the matter, for he knew that if God said it was so, verily it was.

Prof. Nelson Glueck, an archeologist of the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, found a spot in the plain of Jordan which the Arabs called "Copper Ruin," so he excavated there and found the old smelters of Solomon, with some pottery from his time. There was copper-bearing ore near by. Israeli geologists estimate that there is perhaps enough ore there to yield 300,000 tons of copper, and not far from Beersheba millions of tons of low grade iron ore, and some excellent quality ore. Thus another charge against the unerring Word of God has been proved false, but for all that men will go on still in unbelief. What man needs is to be brought consciously before God where he will discover that he is a guilty sinner "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." When Peter saw the immense draft of fishes, he caught a glimpse of the glory of that Person who stood before him; then he fell down at His feet, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke 5:8.

We are about to enter our own promised land, and God has set before us some vivid pictures of that wondrous scene of glory. The book of Revelation closes with the Bridegroom and the bride in the grand fruition of the hope set before us, and the Lamb is the blessed center of the heavenly Jerusalem.

"The Lamb is there, my soul-

There God Himself doth rest,

In love divine diffused through all

With Him supremely blest.

"God and the Lamb-'tis well,

I know that source divine

Of joy and love no tongue can tell,

Yet know that all is mine.

"God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts forever share
The unveiled mystery."

May the brilliant luster of the coming glory so captivate our poor hearts that the things of this world will grow strangely dim while we earnestly long to be there.

Our experiences in many ways parallel theirs. We have been redeemed from the power of the enemy and are just waiting to be received into the heavenly land of which Canaan is for us but a type. God could have taken us to glory the day we were saved, for we were just as fit for it then as we ever will be, but we had lessons to learn while in transit through this world. Here we discover what poor, failing creatures we are in ourselves, and here we prove a Father's love and care. As the poet has so aptly expressed it:

"At every step afresh we prove
How sure our heavenly Guide;
The faithful and forbearing love
That never turns aside.

"Thou weariest not, most gracious Lord,
Though we may weary grow;
In season, the sustaining word
Thou giv'st our hearts to know."

We may well ask, Why should God, after telling of the coming glory into which we shall soon enter, have said, "And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." "Write: for these words are true and faithful." "These sayings are faithful and true." Rev. 19:9; 21:5; 22:6. Is it not because of the natural incredulity of man? and of the slowness of our hearts to lay hold of these blessed truths? May God graciously grant to us to lay hold of these blessed coming realities in the affections of our hearts, and not in mere intellectual exactness. Our Lord has said, "Surely I come quickly." May our souls respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

A Brief Outline of the Psalms

The Psalms in general exhibit the Lord Jesus and the godly (properly and specifically from among the Jews) in their mutual relations. He is identified with them, and they with Him; brought through darkness, trial, the contradiction of sinners, the often apparent and, in one sense and time, the real desertion of God, into security, peace, and blessing. This furnished the occasion, sometimes offered in the past circumstances of righteous Israelites and of David especially, for the Spirit of Christ in them to launch out into higher scenes and subjects, even the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. At one and the same time there is an intermingling of the particular things and persons of the day in which these strains were written, and there is the anticipation of the latter-day tribulation, through which the Jewish remnant are destined to pass into the wide field of Millennial glory. Thus is drawn out the Holy Ghost's revealed expression of the feelings and experiences suitable to each and all.

The Psalms, consequently, do not bring the Church, as a distinctive body, to light, if we except some indirect allusions which we understand, now that the mystery, hidden from ages and generations, is made manifest. In this respect they resemble the Old Testament prophecies. But there is also this striking difference, that while the prophets, for the most part, narrate the sufferings and triumphs of Christ as the head of Israel and the Gentiles as predicted facts, the Psalms lay bare the inmost privacy of His and their hearts as brought into exercise by these circumstances. Hence, while the prophecies chiefly reveal the feelings of God about Christ and His servants, the Psalms chiefly reveal the feelings of Christ and His servants about God. There are no doubt large and frequent exceptions, but this is, I think, a generally characteristic difference between these portions of the Bible.

But again, the Psalms are, as is familiar to the reader of the Hebrew Bible, divided into five books. Nor are these divisions arbitrary. Various marks are impressed on them by God, which show that this is no rabbinical fancy. Thus, even externally, it is plain that at the end of Psalm 41; 72, and 89, we have "Amen and Amen"; next, at the end of Psalm 106, "Amen. Praise ye the LORD," and thence, to the end of all, another class. These, with other common features in the verses where they occur, define the various books.

But the subjects, internally, differ thus:

Book 1 (Psalm 1-41) embraces Messiah's sympathy with the godly remnant in "the beginning of sorrows." They are not yet driven out, but are outwardly associated with the mass of the people, even in worship. Hence the name of Jehovah is regularly there.

Book 2 (Psalm 42-72) views the remnant as no longer in the land, but the object of hostility, not only of Gentiles, but of Jews united with them. The abomination of desolation is set up, and the tribulation is come. Accordingly, God is spoken of as such, save where hope is expressed.

Book 3 (Psalm 73-89) is occupied, not with Judah only, but with Israel, and also with a wider range of foreign enemies. It is founded on God's ways with the whole people.

Book 4 (Psalm 90-106) celebrates the bringing Christ again into the world, and hence is the book of Millennial blessedness.

Book 5 (Psalm 107-150) reviews all, opens out the principles of God's dealings, and of relationships with Him, and gives the grand result of all the discipline, and the subsequent blessing of God. Its thanksgivings at the end are thus the moral answer to the groanings of the Spirit in book 1.

Reading Ministry Books: the Editor's Column

Many years ago a young Christian spoke to an aged one about the great value of books -books of ministry on the Scriptures-in a way to place undue emphasis on the intellectual side. The other replied, "Young man, the Lord wants truth in boots, not merely in books." A salutary lesson for him and for us all!

Now we hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with reading the good sound ministry which has been handed down to us as a goodly heritage. Would to God that there were more reading of the precious truths that have been preserved for us by means of the printed page; it is sadly neglected in this our day. Such reading and meditation thereon are fast becoming lost arts, while the things of the world (some seemingly good) are read and enjoyed. We greatly fear that the reason many dear children of God do not grow in their souls is the sad neglect in their homes of reading the Word of God and such written ministry as is available.

The enemy of your soul will seek to hinder such reading and meditation by keeping you so occupied with other things that there is little time left; but sometimes it is necessary to set aside time for this most important exercise. We generally find time to eat our meals regardless of how busy we are; shall we be less diligent in seeing that our souls are fed? Perhaps Satan will whisper that you are too weary and cannot take it in, and so encourage spiritual sloth. In this modern age of rush none of us have as much leisure as our forebears, but generally speaking we can make some time for a spiritual meal if we desire. It may be that we have to choose between it and something else, but remember that the Lord approved Mary's choosing that good part of sitting at His feet and hearing His words.

There is also a danger of seeking new and modern writings on the Scriptures, instead of being satisfied with the good things that have been drawn for us from the deep wells by men of God of bygone years. This is dangerous for our souls, for much of the so-called up-to-date written ministry is only a variation of the old with certain additions and alterations to tickle the ears and please the fancy of those who are always seeking for something "new." Every attempt to dress up the truth will introduce something that is foreign to it. The truth does not need dressing up, and the truth which was suitable for souls 100 years ago is just as applicable and precious today as it was then. In fact, the words needed by the saints at Corinth are needed today, and that without alteration. True, as some say, times have changed, but God and His Word have not changed, nor have the hearts and proclivities of men.

God does not duplicate; He had one Abraham, one Moses, one Samuel, one David, one Daniel, one Paul, one Peter, etc., etc. Each in his day served his own generation (Acts 13:36), and in so doing is, by the will and wisdom of God, still serving us. So in the early days of the revival of the truths of the heavenly calling of the Church, the Lord's coming (for and with His saints), the one body, and collateral truths, He used separated (separated from the world as is scarcely known today), God-fearing, spiritual men to unfold these precious things; and in His providence He has ordered that this ministry would be preserved, by printing, for us today. There will no more be a

repetition of C. H. Mackintosh, J. G. Bellett, G. V. Wigram, J. N. Darby, Wm. Kelly, Charles Stanley, et al, than there will be a duplication of those who served at other times.

If there is a hankering with us for "some new thing," as with the Athenians, we need to beware lest we be like the Israelites who wearied of the plain manna as God gave it; they finally loathed it, and then set about to change it by beating it in mortars, baking it in pans, etc. (Numb. 11:4-8). Whenever the simple truth of God has lost its pleasantness to our taste, we are sick spiritually, and the sooner we get before God in self-examination and self-judgment of those things that have perverted our appetite, the better, for if we do not judge ourselves in respect of them, we shall drift farther and farther, and who knows what the end will be?

At this point we might add a few words about the mischievous teaching that the saints of God should read nothing but the Bible. This almost without exception leads its followers into absurdities and grave errors. This theory is a denial that the Lord has given gifts to the Church for its profit, and is also a refusal of such gifts. It is basically pride which makes one feel competent of himself to know all things; there is no man who is in himself a fully and perfectly balanced man. If we set at naught the gifts, we shall develop strange thoughts and ideas, and with no one to correct us we shall become more and more eccentric. Not that these gifts mentioned are absolute authority, not that they were inspired, but we should remember that none of us is self-sufficient, and we would do well to follow the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11) who in their nobility of character "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Let us not forget that those recognized as gifts in ministry have been given as such by Him who is "head over all things to the church," and that the written ministry as well as the oral ministry is valuable to the Church. Read Heb. 13:7-9.

Before we close, however, let us return to the subject of our first paragraph. The words of that aged servant of the Lord are valuable and important; mere knowledge of the truth in our heads is not sufficient, precious as that is in its place. The Lord wants us to get the truth down into our hearts, which means that we enjoy it and appropriate it to ourselves. He never intended that the truth should be something to exercise the intellect only, but that it should guide us in the right ways of the Lord. It should also reach us through our consciences.

Truth that comes to me through the conscience will search me; for instance, if I read, "Do all things without murmurings," and I have been murmuring, it will search and judge me, and lead me to judge myself. It will detect that in me which needs judging.

If then the truth of God is loved in the heart, and allowed to search the conscience in the fear of God, we shall find that it will be in the boots too; that is, we shall then be found walking in it. Another servant of the Lord has said, "We have no truth that we do not walk in"; it is not really our own unless it has that power over us that directs our ways. Another has said, "Nothing but the truth can hold the truth." So if I am not living and walking in the good of the truth, I shall not be able to hold it. How many there are who have lost what they once had, even of the knowledge of the truth, through failure to walk in that which they had in their heads. May the Lord keep us close to Himself, with our consciences alive and healthy, and our hearts full of warmth toward Him; then we shall desire to know more of the truth that we may walk in the good of it to His glory.

Redemption of the Purchased Possession

The earth, as well as man, is the subject of redemption. It is already purchased and, by-and-by, in due season, it shall be rescued or delivered. That is, it is the subject of the twofold redemption known in Scripture -redemption by price, and redemption by power.

The Lord has already purchased the field, for we read in Matthew 13 that the man who found the treasure in the field went and sold all that he had and bought the field, and verse 38 speaks of the field as "the world." He has also purchased everything in it, but the unbeliever does not own the Lord's right of purchase (2 Pet. 2:1. His death and blood-shedding was the price He paid, and it can be called "the purchased possession."

But though purchased, it is not yet delivered. It is still under "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21). It is redeemed by purchase, but not as yet by power. We therefore wait for the "redemption" of that which is already a "purchased possession."

This bright and happy truth, this mystery found among the mysteries of God, has (as well as others) had its pledges and foreshadowings.

The ordinance of the Jubilee seems to set forth this twofold redemption-by price and by power. See Leviticus 25, for that chapter teaches us that at any time during forty-nine years, the alienated possession of an Israelite might have been purchased by the kinsman of the heir, and thus redeemed or brought back to the family to which, under God, it had belonged; but if that were not done, it would return to the heir in the fiftieth year, or the Jubilee, without purchase.

Again I say, these two ordinances seem to set forth the mystery I am speaking of- redemption by money and redemption by power. The kinsman might redeem with money; the Jubilee would redeem without money, by virtue of its own title, by virtue of that force or authority imparted to it by Him who was the God of Israel and the Lord of the soil. We ourselves wait to be redeemed by power. The Lord's coming will do that.

Again, Jeremiah the prophet was commanded to purchase the field of Hanameel, his uncle's son. He did so, in the spirit and obedience of faith, though at that moment the Chaldean army was in the land, and was under commission from the Lord to tread it down and waste it, or possess themselves of it. But when Jeremiah made inquiry respecting this strange thing, that he should be asked to lay out his money upon a piece of land thus devoted to the sword of an invader, the Lord tells him that a day of power was to come, and that in that land there should be redemption, and that the Lord's own people should possess it again, brought back out of the hand of every spoiler. This was the Lord's answer to His servant. And thus Jeremiah had reason to know that the purchase now made, by good money of the merchant, should be made good in a coming day of power. (See Jer. 32.)

And let me add one other notice of this distinguished case, the purchase of Hanameel's field, for it has interested me. On this occasion Jeremiah said to the Lord, "There is nothing too hard for

Thee"; while the Lord challenged Sarah in Gen. 18 with the question, "Isaiah anything too hard for the LORD?" Sarah did not know how she, whose body was then dead, could have a child, for she knew not the resurrection strength of God. Jeremiah did not know how he, who was laying out his money on a piece of ground which was then as in the hand of the enemy, could get its value back again; for, like Sarah, he knew not the resurrection strength of God.

That strength makes all simple. The victory of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, gives us sure rights to our inheritance, under the seal of a title deed easy to be read.

The Reproach of Egypt

The "reproach of Egypt" being rolled away has a typical application to Christians. They are heavenly men, and it is a reproach to such that the ways of Egypt (man in nature and under Satan's power), out of which they have been taken by redemption, should be seen in them. In Jordan (typically considered) we have our being dead and risen with Christ, and introduced into heavenly places in Him. Circumcision then followed (Josh. 5); it never was done in the wilderness. There we may walk in grace and faithfulness, but the moment we are "heavenly," another thing comes in. Thus it should be plainly seen that we are dead and risen with Christ, and that we bear the marks of our heavenly citizenship, every trace of Egyptian bondage having been rolled away.

Suppose you see one who is a Christian running after the world, and the fashions and follies of the town. Well, you say, you may be dead and risen with Christ, but you had better go to Gilgal and have that reproach to His name rolled away by the practical putting to death of your members.

Rest of Heart

It was a sweet reply a woman once made upon her deathbed to a friend who asked whether she was more willing to live or die-"I am pleased with what God pleases." "Yes," said her friend, "but if God should refer it to you, which would you choose?" To this she replied, "If God should refer it to me, I would refer it to Him again." Ah, blessed life, when our own will is swallowed up in the will of God, and the heart is at rest in His care and love, and pleased with all His appointment.

The Righteousness of God

There prevails a notion (unknown to the Bible) that Christ was making out our righteousness when He was here below. Now the life of Christ was, I do not question, necessary to vindicate God and His holy law, as well as to manifest Himself and His love; but the righteousness that we are made in Christ is another thought altogether - not the law fulfilled by Him, but the justifying righteousness of God founded on Christ's death, displayed in His resurrection, and crowned by His glory in heaven. It is not Christ simply doing our duty for us, but God forgiving my trespasses, judging my sin, yea finding such satisfaction in Christ's blood that now He cannot do too much for us; it becomes, if I may so say, a positive debt to Christ because of what Christ has suffered. It is not seen that the law is the strength of sin, n o t of righteousness. Had Christ only kept the law, neither your soul nor mine could have been saved, much less blessed, as we are. Whoever kept the law, it would have been the righteousness of the law, and not God's righteousness which has not the smallest connection with obeying the law. It is never so treated in the Word of God. Because Christ obeyed unto death, God has brought in a new kind of righteousness- not ours, but His own in our favor. Christ has been made a curse upon the tree; God has made Him sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Were the common doctrine on this subject true, we might expect it to be said, He obeyed the law for us, that we might have legal righteousness imputed or transferred to us. Whereas the truth is in all points contrasted with such ideas. Surely Christ's obeying the law was not God's making Him sin. So, in the passage that is so often used, "by His obedience many are made righteous." How is His obedience here connected with the law? The Apostle does introduce the law in the next verse as a new and additional thing coming in by the way.

Further, Adam would not have known the meaning of "the law," though undoubtedly he was under a law which he broke. What, for instance, could Adam in his innocence have made of the word, "Thou shalt not lust," or covet? No such feeling was within his experience. Accordingly, as we see, it was only after man had fallen that the law in due time was given to condemn the out- break of sin. But Christ has died for and under sin-our sin. And what is the consequence? All believers now, whether Jews or Gentiles, in Christ Jesus are brought into an entirely new place. The Gentile is brought out of his distance from God; the Jew out of his dispensational nearness; both enjoy a common blessing in God's presence never possessed before. The old separation dissolves and gives place by grace to oneness in Christ Jesus.

Romanism: the Editor's Column

Scattered bits of information reaching us point up the growing significance of an article in this issue entitled, "Toward the Man or Toward the Woman." Two opposing forces are on the march: religion and materialistic infidelity.

In the field of religion, the growth of Roman Catholicism, in numbers, wealth, and power, is most impressive. True, she has lost much of these behind the so-called Iron Curtain in Europe, but is making progress in Western nations. Those which were formerly considered the strongholds of Protestantism are so no longer, for Rome has expanded her influence in Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and Scandinavian countries.

Even in England the power of Rome is being witnessed; for example, early this year the B.B.C. televised a Roman Catholic mass, from a cathedral in Leeds, for one hour and forty minutes. From the standpoint of public opinion, such a thing would have been unthinkable a generation ago, and all but impossible even a few years back. In itself it is only one sign of the times, but who would have thought that the time would come when members of the royal family of Protestant England would find it expedient to have audience with the Pope at Rome?

The rapid march of Rome in the United States is no less impressive. According to their own figures they have gained more than 10,000,000 members during the last 15 years, which is an increase at the rate of 2 to 1 over population growth.

During the same period they have erected 11,511 churches, and gained 819,174 enrollment in their parochial schools. In less than 10 years they have spent \$10,000,000,000 on new schools and churches.

Perhaps more indicative of the trend is the way in which the pomp and pageantry of Romish ritualism is being displayed and publicized. A definite campaign is in progress to condition the thinking of non-Catholics to the acceptance of the superstition and mysticism of their system. Paid advertising in newspapers and magazines tell the story in its best possible light, while news items carry such stories as that the blood of Saint Januarius, which has been kept in the cathedral in Naples since the year 350 A.D., has softened and melted on a certain day. The cry of "Hail Mary" is being heard louder and louder. Recently 115,000 persons filled the Los Angeles coliseum to honor Mary in the greatest religious assembly ever convened in that city. Spectacles reminiscent of Romish scenes of other days and in other lands were enacted as the "host" was carried across the field, and children stood in formation to spell the name "Mary" before her statue.

Financially the Roman Church in America has become the mainstay of what they call "the church universal."

Protestantism shares the general upsurge of religious fervor in America. Church membership is at an all time high, and new church buildings are going up all over the land. Books with religious themes are best sellers on the book stands, but they drift more and more to Rome and

superstition. Protestants are accepting more of the symbols of Rome as their own, and religiously the Western world drifts closer to "the woman" as the end approaches. Christians, awaken! and shake off the trammels of superstition, ritualism, and all that savors of Babylon-"Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Rev. 18:4.

The trend toward the opposite evil likewise increases. Secularism, materialism, atheism, and communism march on, indicating that an indomitable force is moving them forward notwithstanding all the checks that are placed against them. Lawlessness and violence increase daily in America, and the youth of the land are casting off restraints, while infidelity stalks the school campuses and many pulpits. Nor are these conditions confined to the Western Hemisphere; they are more or less common in all lands.

Italy, the home of Roman-ism, and the nation where 98% of the people are nominal Catholics, has the largest communist core in Western Europe, and the people are restive under papal control.

The question could well be asked, How can the opposing factions both grow? The answer is that they grow, not so much at the expense of each other, but at that of nominal

Protestantism on the one hand, and cold indifference on the other. As the end approaches, people will take sides more definitely. Everything moves more distinctly in either one direction or the other.

Now as the article before mentioned indicates, these two opposing forces will for a time, after the Lord calls His own home, be found in league- the woman "is seen astride the beast" It will be an alliance of convenience and necessity. The wicked head of the revived Roman Empire will support the vast ecclesiastical system as a means of controlling the minds of men against the thought control of atheistic communism. The corrupt false church will cast in her lot with the vile and wicked beast for self-preservation. Such alliances are by no means uncommon. Even Mussolini started out in an anti-religious materialistic crusade, but soon found it expedient to work hand-in-glove with the Church of Rome.

In the end, the political and military heads will weary of the harlot and her interference, and will utterly destroy her and "eat her flesh" in a sudden burst of violence. Read Revelation 17 and 18 for the account of her destruction. Here the parallel with the Old Testament comes in, for the most wicked woman there is killed and her flesh eaten-see Jezebel; 2 Kings 9.

Before the flood, "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," and it was also "filled with violence." (See Gen. 6.) Corruption and violence were the twin evils which brought on the deluge. And while they have been present among men from then until now, they will appear in gross form at the end-corruption in the debased and debasing ecclesiastical system in all its worldly grandeur (Rev. 17:1-6; 18:2-5), and violence in the wicked and God- defiant head of the revived Roman Empire (Rev. 13:1-8; 17:8-13).

What a cause for sober reflection when we consider that that which started out so brightly as the Church of God on earth (Acts 2 to 4) should become in the end the corruptress of the earth. Need we wonder that the Apostle John was greatly astonished (as it should read) when given the vision of the woman upon the beast (Rev. 17:6)?

We need ever to keep in mind that the Lord will soon come and take every blood- bought person to be with Himself in the Father's house. Then the great profession of Christianity that is left will go on

to even greater heights in the world, with Rome as its center and guiding spirit.

Corruption it surely is, and of the worst form, when that which professes to be Christ's representative on earth prostitutes her professed relationship to Him for worldly aggrandizement. She allows anything and traffics in everything which serves her ends of world power and glory. But as the corruption in Noah's day received its just recompense in the flood, so will the corrupt false church be swept away by the violence of the beast and his ten confederate rulers, for God will put it into their hearts to fulfill His will and exterminate that which is so hateful to Him.

While violence will mark the days after the Church has gone to be with Christ, yet the beast will be the personification of it. He will be the man who destroys cities and makes the earth a wilderness, who makes treaties and breaks them, who recklessly blasphemes God, and persecutes any who witness for Him. The Jewish remnant, as expressed in the Psalms, will cry out because of "the violent man."

This violent man, after he destroys the corrupt woman, will be in league with a false Jew in Jerusalem who will be a lying prophet - even him "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," whereby he will deceive the world. This last form of evil (lying) is particularly connected with Satan who is a liar and "abode, not in the truth" (John 8:44). It will be the direct "working of Satan" who as soon as man came upon the scene, went to him with a lie, inferring that God did not speak the truth, but that He was keeping back something good from man

The violent man and the lying prophet shall meet their doom at the hand of the Lord Himself when He returns to make His enemies His footstool. The end of their wicked course is described in Rev. 19:19, 20:

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

May the Lord graciously keep His own from the growing attractions of ritualism, the infidelity of the violent man, and all falsehood which has its origin in the father of lies. On the other hand, may we who belong to Christ be more true in heart to Him who is so worthy of our unstinted and undivided devotion, and may we be willing to suffer shame for His name

" 'A little while'-'twill soon be past,

Why should we shun the promised cross?

O let us in His footsteps haste,

Counting for Him all else but loss!

For how will recompense His smile,

The sufferings of this 'little while.' "

Thoughts on Romans 6, 7, and 8

In chapter 6, I understand the Apostle to be reasoning with the believer upon the claims which sin has on him. And the Apostle tells us that sin has been disposed of. Sin was once the master or king; holding dominion, it issued its commands through all the members which were thus "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." But sin has now, as such master, paid his wages. Its wages was death; and we have died in or with Christ, and thus sin is disposed of, or we have done with it, for Christ had done with it when He died. "He died unto sin." It is true He had to do with sin in His death which owned the dominion of sin, that being the wages paid. But in resurrection Christ had to do with God and not with sin. He rose by the glory of the Father, and by resurrection lived unto God, as in His death He had died unto sin, so that the believer, now associated with Christ in His death and resurrection, has done with sin and has to do with God. Sin in its wages is disposed of, and so should it be in all its claims; for if we no longer receive its claims, so no longer are we to do its service.

It is as those who are alive from the dead that we should walk, and if that condition be rightly apprehended (alive from the dead, or risen), continuance in the doing or service of sin will be found a thing not to be at all even counted upon. Such indeed have rather to reckon themselves "dead unto sin" and alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

Such truths their baptism sets forth to them. If indeed sin be willingly served, we own that sin is still alive and not thus disposed of, and we deny the whole of this truth and our standing in Christ; for when we died to sin-that is, when sin paid us its wages (in Christ put to death)-then the "old man" or "the body of sin" was destroyed. That is, all our members and faculties, once the sphere and instruments of sin's dominion and service, in that character were put to death also, so that all our members and faculties now should own and assert and exercise themselves in a risen character.

I judge that sin itself must be distinguished here from both the "old man" and "the body of sin." These rather signify the scene of the dominion of sin, or the strength or instruments by which, and in which, he ruled and exercised himself.

In Romans 7, the Apostle entertains the claims of the law upon the believer, and shows that they also have been disposed of. He does this very simply; he says that the authority of the law addresses itself only to a living man; that is, a man in the flesh. It is to the flesh, or man as born of Adam, that the law was given; but the believer has ceased in this sense to be a living man-has ceased to be of Adam-inasmuch as he has died and risen again; and consequently, being a dead and risen man, and not a living man, the law does not address its claims to him-he is not the object for the law.

But in this the law is not spoken of in the same relation to us as sin had been. Sin had been spoken of as a master or being; but the law is here spoken of as a husband. And the result of our being dead to sin, is life to God; but the result of our being now dead to the law, is here shown to be marriage with Christ. You will find these distinctions have their beautiful moral force and

meaning. Then in the close of this chapter (having thus shown how sin and the law have been disposed of or set aside-the one as a master, the other as a husband), the Apostle tells us at the same time that they have been discharged with very different characters: sin with as bad a character, the law with as good a character as even the inspired pen of an apostle could write for them. All evil in us is declared to have come from the one, while nothing flowed from the other but that which was holy, just, and good. And the moment that the real character of the law was understood by the quickened soul, this grievous state of things arose-"The commandment came, sin revived, and I died"-the law was felt to urge one thing upon the conscience-sin was felt to exact another thing in the old man or the members. This state of things drew forth the sense of death in the soul, and the cry for deliverance, and the answer comes in Jesus revealed in the power of His death and resurrection.

The law being good has not been discharged in the way that sin has. It has been discharged as a husband only (as that to which the soul was debtor, and with which it was in union), because we are no longer living, but dead and risen men. Its holy and good words are still delighted in and allowed.

In Romans 8, we get the believer thus escaped from sin as a master, and the law as a husband, in his new place in Christ. Being in Him, the believer has become a spiritual person, no longer in the flesh, and thus the flesh is discharged as well as sin and the law; that is, we are neither under the old master and with the old husband, nor in the old nature; and by the way, the Apostle shows that the flesh, thus discharged, could never (let God do with it what He might) have yielded any fruit or allegiance to Him, so that, as we speak, it was "bad rubbish" in itself, and to be free of it is "good riddance."

Having thus cleared the way to look at the believer in his new place in Christ, the Apostle then with delight traces the holy prerogatives of such a one.

1. He is nothing less than a son, having the spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage as a servant

Being thus a son, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is in him as at home.

Being thus a son, he is also an heir having coheirship of God with Christ Jesus.

4. And as the great principle of this coheirship, 'he is to shine in the same personal glory by-and-by as the Lord Jesus, on the hope of the manifestation of which glory in us the whole creation now waits. And though all this condition of the believer may cause him to groan under the sense of his present state in the body, he is only still in hope, like the whole creation. Yet the Spirit given to him and being in him, groans also, and groans with so pure a groan that God has entire fellowship with it. And even more than this- God, in His sovereign rule of all things, constrains them all to work together for the believer's good.

And, finally, the one great original purpose of conforming the believer to the model or pattern of the glorified Son is that which has been the spring, and is the everlasting and abiding spring, of all the divine procedure and action.

This is the train of glorious privileges which flows forth from the believer's union with Christ. Nothing is too excellent for God to do or to devise for such a one; all the joy that the fullest love

can inspire, all the dignity that the highest glories can put on us, are ours thus according to the counsel of God in Christ Jesus. God is for us; that can easily account for all this train of joys and glories.

But if He is for us, who can be against us? Who can do anything to harm us? Is there an accuser, a judge, or an executioner, still standing out? The first may, go away rebuked by this-that God has justified us. The second may go away rebuked by this-that Christ has died, has already suffered the judgment, and His work has been accepted to the full in heaven itself. The third may go away rebuked by this -that all the malice of earth and hell together' shall never drag us away from the embraces, the firm embraces, of our God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And if there be now neither accuser to charge, nor judge to condemn, nor executioner to punish, the court is cleared. We have left the scene to which as sinners we had been righteously dragged, to meet in other scenes altogether Him who has delivered us-not as the Judge, but as the Bridegroom.

Romans 7: Not Conflict but Experience

Romans 7 is not conflict but experience-not the experience of a person at the time of his feeling its bitterness, but that of a delivered man who narrates what he felt when learning his powerlessness against the sinful nature he had discovered, and the sad evil of the flesh in which dwelt no good thing. As a man who had floundered in a morass, and found every plunge putting him deeper, drops his hands and cries out for a deliverer, who comes and pulls him out and sets him free, the delivered one turns round to thank his deliverer, and tell him, now at peace, what he felt when there. He had too much to think of when there; now he relates it on solid ground. So it is experience before deliverance, told by a delivered man.

Saints: the Editor's Column

The Church of Rome now has 4,399 "saints" in its calendar. Pope Pius X (1903-14) was recently canonized at a colorful ceremony in Rome before an estimated crowd of 500,000 persons, while millions more viewed the proceedings on television. A few days later five more "saints" were created by papal pronouncement. All this suggests the question, What is a saint according to the Word of God? and how does he become one?

First, let us go back from 1954 to the year 60 A.D. We find that there were saints in the city of Rome then-actually living there. The Apostle Paul at that time wrote an inspired epistle to them. He said: "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 1:7. Notice that the words "to be" are in italics in the text which indicates that they were not in the original Greek. They were not called to be saints at some future time, but were saints then by calling; that is, by God's call. They were not saints by birth, nor by some human attainment in life, nor by canonization after death; they became saints by divine call through the operation of the Spirit of God, by the Word of God.

They became saints in the same manner in which the Apostle Paul became an apostle. The first verse of the chapter has the same construction: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." He was an apostle "not of men, neither by man," but by God's sovereign call. He was not called to be an apostle after his death, but was one at the same time that they were saints.

This place of special favor was not confined to the Christians at Rome, for the Apostle likewise addresses the Christians at Corinth as "called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). In Acts 9:13 they are referred to as a class belonging to God: "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem." The same thought is found in Col. 1:26: "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints." The wonderful fact that the Christians on earth were united to Christ the Head in heaven was revealed to those living on earth, called "His saints." 1 Thess. 3:13 and Jude 14 speak of the Lord's coming back to the earth with His saints, after He first comes to receive them to Himself (John 14:3).

All Christians are embraced in this class: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints." Eph. 1:15; 3:17, 18. "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." Col. 1:4. "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." Philem. 1:5 Clearly, then, the Word of God speaks of all Christians living on earth as saints-His saints.

In the New Testament the word *hagios*, which is translated "saints," is also translated "holy"; as, "Holy Ghost," "holy angels," "Holy Father," "holy priesthood," etc. When Christians are called "saints," they are thereby designated as "holy ones." This is the expression of their relationship

with God which is founded on the fact that Christ has purchased them by His death- "purchased to God by Thy blood" (as Rev. 5:9 should read). They belong to Him, and have been set apart from the world for Him. "Saints" is a class designation and includes every true believer on earth. To say that I am a Christian is to profess that I am one of God's holy ones who has been consecrated to Him down here. It is not something achieved after death, but is the present portion of every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are those who profess to be Christians but who are not real; they never had to do with God about their sins, nor had they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. All such deceive themselves, and increase their responsibility by reason of their profession. This blessed relationship with God is formed in the individual by the gift of life. Christ is the life of all such, and their standing before God could not be improved, nor could it ever be lowered. It is as fixed as the throne of God. Inasmuch as the saint possesses Christ as his life, he possesses unchangeable holiness before God. The contemplation of the excellency of our position before God should fill our hearts with wonder and praise.

Now this life which the saint possesses is a perfectly holy life, but Christ Himself was the only perfect expression of it. His absolute perfection shone out at every step of His earthly pathway. Every true child of God will admit that his own life does not come up to that standard, but yet the new man desires that it should do so. The saint has no other pattern or model than Christ. The true heart desires that in everything - in thought, and word, and deed -he may be more like Christ. To use the words of another: "Christ is for him [the saint], from God, the substance of that which he longs for; because Christ, who is his model, is his life already." This is developed by daily communion with Christ. It is by the contemplation of Christ in glory that we are changed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18). Occupation with Him will produce a change into more conformity to Himself. Such progress in practical holiness will be made without effort to be holy. The saint desires to be more like Christ and, instead of seeking it by legal means, he fixes his gaze upon the loveliness of Christ, and the transformation is the result. The full end of being like Christ will never be attained down here, but when we shall see Him, "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2). At that blessed moment when we rise to meet Him in the air, and see Him face to face, the change will be complete.

"No more deferred our hope shall be,
No longer through a glass we'll see,
But see Him face to face."

The chastening which God gives to all of His children has for one of its ends, "that we might be partakers of His holiness." Heb. 12:10. He is not satisfied merely to save us from the judgment to come, but would have His children more like Himself down here; to this end He works with us in discipline.

The canonization of more "saints" also suggests the question, "What about Christians praying to "saints"? It should suffice to say that there is no warrant for such a thought in all Scripture. That one saint may pray for another saint while both are on earth is plainly taught. In fact the Apostle Paul prayed for the saints, and desired that they might pray for him, but nowhere is there the slightest suggestion that prayers should ever be addressed to departed saints or to angels.

It was not until the third century of this era that departed saints were mentioned in prayers, and then it was to pray for them that they might speedily see the face of God. Historians tell us that the virgin Mary and all other departed saints were prayed for, not to. Christ was the only one that was not prayed for. The writer, Hincmar of the ninth century, gives a prayer that was said for Leo (Saint Leo), but by the thirteenth century, as given by Pope Innocent, it was turned into a prayer that "by the intercession of the blessed Leo, this offering may profit us." This briefly gives the progress of this superstition.

And why should any Christian pray to any departed saint? We have access to God Himself, with the assurance that "the Father Himself loveth you." To seek to go to God through any saint is a denial that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The veil was rent when Christ died, and the way into the holiest is open to every saint on earth. He is not at a distance, and does not need any intermediary; to affect to have one is to deny the truth.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus came down into this world and tasted all its bitterness and woe; He entered into the trials and difficulties His saints would encounter so that He might be a "merciful and faithful high priest." He is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of His people and so can succor us in trial, and give timely help.

"With joy we meditate the grace

Of God's High Priest above;

His heart is filled with tenderness,

His very name is Love.

"Touched with a sympathy within,

He knows our feeble frame:

He knows what sorest trials mean

For He has felt the same.

"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,

The great Redeemer stood,

While Satan's fiery darts He bore,

And did resist to blood.

"He, in the days of feeble flesh,

Poured out His cries and tears,

And, though ascended, feels afresh

What every member bears.

"Then boldly let our faith address

The throne of grace and power;

We shall obtain delivering grace

In every needed hour."

To quote the words of another: "He has shrunk from no suffering, no humiliation, that I may have confidence in His love and readiness to help. The invocation of saints and angels comes to deny all this." Then in answer to the suggestion that the Lord Jesus is too high and exalted, and His heart not sufficiently tender, so that the help of some departed saints should be sought, this same writer says, "It is all shameful dishonor put upon Christ's grace and tenderness. I know no one so kind, so condescending, who is come down to the poor sinner, as He. I trust His love more than I do Mary's, or any saint's; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as man—none ever showed such, or had such, or proved it so well. None entered into my sorrows, none took a part in them, as He; none understands my heart so well; none has inspired me with such confidence in His. Let others go to saints and angels; I trust Jesus' kindness more. If it be said, He is too high, I answer, He became a man that we might know His tenderness; and He is not changed. And why go to them? Why, in Jesus' name, not go straight to the Father? The need of all this troop of mediators only shows that men do not believe the gospel. They cannot go to God Himself. Now Christ has brought us to God. Suffering, the just for the unjust, He brought us to a God of love, our Father, having put away our sins. Rome would turn us out again, to leave us trembling at the doors of saints. I would rather go to God Himself. He, I know, loves me; He has given His Son for me. Which of the saints has done that? As to angels, they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. Looking to them is treated as apostasy in Scripture."

In Colossians 2 the Apostle Paul denounced the worshiping of angels as leaving Christ the Head, voluntary humility, and as being vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind. And lest some contend that praying to angels and saints is not worship of them, let it be noted that the word Paul used in the Greek is not the word for worship, but *threskia* which includes any and all religious service or deference whatever. But man has ever been prone to render homage to the creature. Cornelius fell down before Peter, but Peter said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." He would have none of it in his lifetime, nor is it proper to pay homage to him now. (Acts 10.) The Apostle John fell down before the angel in Revelation, but was rebuked with the words, "Worship God."

A church council held in Laodicea forbade the invocation of angels, and called it secret idolatry, and many of the early church fathers condemned it. Scripture, however, should be sufficient answer to the human tendency to place angels between God and His saints, and between the Redeemer and His redeemed. Angels are but the spectators of God's wisdom and ways of grace in bringing fallen human beings into His presence in all the loveliness of Christ. They cannot break forth into singing for they have not been the objects of redeeming grace. We have been brought into an infinitely better place in Christ.

"Though angels praise the heavenly King,

And Him their Lord adoring own,

We can with exultation sing, 'He wears our nature on the throne.' "

May the contemplation of the wondrous place into which we have been brought cause us to exclaim, "What bath God wrought!"

In this column of the September, 1952 issue, we reported that a mock crucifixion had taken place on the campus of Oberlin College. We are now in receipt of a letter from the Director of Public Relations for the college which states that the officials of Oberlin made an exhaustive investigation of the alleged event and could find no evidence to substantiate the story. We would much prefer to believe that this did not take place, and so herewith acknowledge their denial of the account.

We might add, however, that the periodical which first carried the story is considered thoroughly reliable and trustworthy, and to this date it has not retracted it, but we have no desire to be a judge in this matter, and so accept the statement of the Oberlin College official.

Our withdrawal of the account of the mock crucifixion should not be considered an endorsement of the Oberlin College as an orthodox Christian school. Enclosed with the recent communication from the Oberlin College were several mimeographed chapel talks by various members of the faculty. We read these carefully in hope that we might find evidence of sound Christian doctrine, but alas, it was otherwise. While we realize that the spiritual standard of a school cannot be ascertained fully by six chapel talks, nevertheless, we did not discover one single instance of the mention of repentance toward God, faith in the finished work of Christ, the blood of the atonement, judgment to come, or of the absolute inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Instead, we found written: "In any event, the Bible is very complex, and it is my feeling that one can accept it as a record of the progressive revelation of God in human life without being committed to the theory of divine inspiration of every word and every sentence." Is divine revelation only a theory? And if some of it cannot be trusted, then we have no anchor for our souls.

In these talks, references were made to fellowship with God, seeking Him over and over again, practicing His precepts, cooperating with a just and merciful Providence, and "following the footsteps of our greatest teacher, Jesus Christ." Nicodemus called the Lord Jesus a teacher come from God, and that great Jewish leader was willing to be taught, but he had to learn that he "must be born again." Whatever is born of flesh is flesh, and if you teach flesh "Judaean-Christian religion and ethics," it is still only flesh and must needs be born again. In not one of these "talks" was there a word about how a poor, fallen, lost sinner could have his sins forgiven, have peace with God, and receive eternal life. Scripture shows that apart from these fundamental facts, it is utter folly to talk of following His footsteps. We must know Him as the One who suffered for us on Calvary's cross before we can attempt to follow Him. Otherwise, we have just so much religious and moral ethics, and not the Christianity of the Bible.

We are not singling out Oberlin College for this criticism, for this neo-orthodoxy is quite prevalent, and we see in it that condition which was foretold long ago in the Holy Scriptures: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3:5. It is the old story of the "way of Cain" who approached God on the ground of his own works, and was rejected. The Epistle of Jude, which describes the last days, says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."

May God in His grace lead many in this country who are ensnared by the religion of Cain to justify God and not themselves, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul.

The Scriptures

The Scriptures are the permanent expression of God's mind and will, furnished as such with His authority. They are His expression of His own thoughts. Not only is the truth given in them by inspiration, but they are inspired, and are the standard by which every spoken word is to be judged. Does this perfect and supreme authority of the Scriptures set aside ministry? By no means; it is the foundation of ministry. One is a minister of the Word.

The Second Man

In Col. 1:16-18 the Apostle presents the Person of the Son to the hearts and consciences of the saints, in two aspects: as the Creator and sustainer of all things, and as the Head of the body, the Church, the beginning of the new creation of God.

In the Old Testament we have the revelation from God, that in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth; and in the New Testament, where we have the full revelation also of the three Persons of the Godhead, we are taught that God created the worlds by His Son (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2; etc.). Man, the last of His creatures formed on the earth, was placed at the head of the terrestrial creation. But, through his disobedience to God in Eden, all went to ruin under his hand. Tried in various ways during four thousand years, the awful condition of the human race finally expressed itself in the cross of Christ. Man crucified Him, filled his cup of iniquity to the brim, and brought himself under the sure judgment of God. His moral history, in a sense, ended at the cross. He had been fully tried, proved utterly worthless, incorrigibly wicked, and justly deserving of eternal judgment.

Thus the introduction of Christ into the scene fully manifested man's condition, and his utter incapacity to rule for God. And the failure of the first man served as a platform to bring out the purpose and intention of God to fulfill all His plans in the hand of the second Man. Rejected for the moment, and hidden in heaven, God will introduce His Son a second time, in power. "All things were created by Him, and for Him." Col. 1:16. In the future God will make everything good in His hand, when every created intelligence in earth and in heaven will be subject to the Man whom God delights to honor.

But there is more than this. In verse 18 we read, "And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." This wonderful verse brings before us further glories of Christ, into which He has entered as Man raised up from among the dead. Refused on earth, but now glorified on high, God has given Him a new position altogether, as "head of the body, the church: who is the beginning," etc. The Apostle presses this truth upon the consciences of the saints at Colosse because they were in danger of not holding the Head. In Ephesians he states the wonderful fact, according to the counsels of God, that Christ is Head over all things to the Church, which is His body. But here, on account of the danger to which the saints were exposed, he uses different language, pressing upon them the fact that Christ is the Head of the body, the Church. And hence the folly and sin of worshiping angels who, great as they may be, are only creatures. Christ is all, and in all.

Christ then is the Head of the body, the Church, as the glorified Man at God's right hand. The Church, or assembly of God, is composed of sinners saved by grace. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, they are thereby united to Christ in glory, and to one another. This is the "great mystery" (Eph. 5:32), hidden in God during the past ages, and now revealed-set forth more particularly in the epistle to the Ephesians. But here in Colossians this mystery is also further treated of as manifested to His saints, to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this

mystery among the Gentiles (Col. 1:27); that is to say, Christ in us, the hope of glory. Dear reader, what do you know of this precious truth?

All the children of God, having the Holy Ghost, possess the spiritual capacity to enter into these things, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10). It is the privilege of the babes and young men in the knowledge of Christ, as well as the fathers, to search into them. Paul passed through the deepest exercises of soul, and intense physical sufferings, in order that the saints might arrive at the full knowledge of this glorious truth, knowing that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found therein (Col. 2:1-3). Search then the Scriptures which treat of this wonderful secret. God will lead you on. and your soul will be deeply blessed and enriched; the effect of these eternal realities will be to separate you morally from the world and all its vanities.

Following the presentation of Christ in Col. 1:18 as "head of the body, the church," we read, "Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (or, the first place). Christ raised up is the beginning. The history of the race of the first man was judicially ended at the cross. All was sin, ruin, and death. There was (and is) absolutely nothing in the natural man for God. Man was (and is) past all improvement for Him. You may patch him up for the world. The moral restraints of education, Christian teaching, and philanthropic efforts, may make something of him down here, as a better citizen of earth. But if it is a question of God and heaven, and that is the all-important one, there is nothing but sin, which He hates.

Christ risen is a new beginning altogether. He is presented here as the beginning, the first-born from among the dead.

He is "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). This is His glorious position, established eternally as the risen Man. God has begun a new creation, of which Christ is Head and Chief, the firstborn from among the dead ones. All who are in Him are a new creation-"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17. Christians are created anew in Christ unto good works-created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 2:10; 4:24). Satan has never planted his foot, and never can, upon the virgin soil of the new creation of God. He did his utmost at the cross, and man helped him as his willing instrument to destroy the sent One of God. But the superior power came in-the mighty power of God. The resurrection is an open triumph. Satan has never, so to speak, crossed the empty grave of the risen Christ.

Reader, are you a believer in Christ-a Christian? If so, you are in Christ, risen, a new creation in Him, the other side of death, judgment, hell, and all Satan's power! But the flesh is still in you, and if allowed for a moment, Satan can cause you sorrow and, if you do not judge yourself, drag you into the mire of sin. But "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him." Col. 2:6, 7. Then Satan will be utterly powerless against you.

If you are not in Christ, you still form part of the world which lies in the wicked one; you are still identified with the race of the first man, where all is wreck and ruin, and under the judgment of God. But His eye is on the second Man, the last Adam, Christ risen, the beginning; and He sees all believers in Him. Glorious position! Blessed privilege! And all is the fruit of His perfect grace.

God has given Christ this new position as Man, first-born from among the dead, that "in all things He might have the preeminence" (or the first place). He is worthy! And this being so, what utter folly would be the adoration of angels, the reasonings and speculations of the human brain, the

shadows of a bygone age, or anything of man beneath the sun! "Christ is all, and in all." Col. 3:11. Having Him, we have all things; and to allow anything to come in between us and Him, is to dishonor Him, and to put ourselves at a distance. May God in His grace give to each believer who reads these lines to be occupied with Him alone, and the things where He sits at God's right hand, as identified with Him who is the triumphant Savior over all the power of the enemy, the beginning of the creation of God.

The Silences of the Lord Jesus

When the Lord Jesus was before the high priest He was silent (Matt. 26:62, 63). Oh, those silences of Jesus! They are very solemn. He never was silent to a poor sinner; but to men like these, who were going down to the pit, He was silent. The high priest was God's representative on the earth, and the Lord did not answer till asked if He were the Christ. He bore witness to the truth about His own blessed Person, and it cost Him His own blessed life. Then they spat in His face-the most contemptuous thing one can do to a fellow being. He was mocked by both Jews and Gentiles.

He bore witness unto the truth and said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?" (See John 18:33-37.) He was the truth, and He revealed in Himself the truth about the Father.

Sin, Sins, and Transgressions: Scriptural Meanings of Three Words

Generally speaking, the word sin is used for the evil nature from which sins-the actions, the fruit of that nature-spring, coming forth independently of any provocation by or resistance to the law.

Transgressions are sins which become such because of the positive infringement of a known command or prohibition-a stepping over the line laid down. It has often been pointed out how that Rom. 3:1 to 5:11 deals with the question of sins; and Rom. 5:12 to 8:39, with sin. The first is met by Christ's dying for me; the second, by my dying with Him. Adam brought in the state of sin, in which Cain was born; but Cain murdered his brother, which was the fruit of an evil nature in this state. The one was sin (the nature), the other, the sinful deed produced by it. We must have deliverance from the former, and forgiveness for the latter, before we can stand in God's presence in the light and at peace. A sinner is not chargeable before God as a matter of judgment for what he is, but for what he has done.

We who are born in sin, have also sinned against God, and thus our practice and our state are both in ruin. Take a common case to illustrate sin, sins, and transgressions. My child has very evil habits; he throws stones and breaks the windows. His conscience tells him that it is wrong. Where did he get the mischievous nature that liked to do wrong? From his parents. That is sin. But the actions are sins, known too by his natural conscience. I send him a message, forbidding this evil practice. Again he does it. This now is transgression or trespass. This was like the law given to sinners. It added the authority of God to what the natural conscience knows of good and evil, in forbidding the evil. But the law always assumed sin in the nature, though it did not reveal the fact of its existence. You could not forbid a person to do a thing that he had no intention or nature capable of doing. Hence, "By the law is the knowledge of sin"; that is, the nature, which it has discovered. If, when you go out, you tell the children that there is something in that drawer, but that they are not to know what is there, every child in the house is at once eager to know. The command provoked the nature which is opposed to it. This is what the law did. Paul says, "It was added for the sake of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19; J.N.D. Trans.); and "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"; that is, it became transgression. Hence too in Rom. 5:13, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The Single Heart of Grace

When a person is seen pursuing his way or his purpose, undaunted by resistance on the one hand, unseduced by solicitations on the other, we have a full witness of the singleness and devotedness of his soul to the business he has in hand. So likewise, when we see him refusing all occasions either to enrich, or to display, or to gratify himself, intent on the good of others, we have a like witness of the singleness and graciousness of his heart.

I judge that the way of the Lord after His resurrection, as recorded in these chapters, is of this second character. Occasions are used by Him only as serving the blessing and instruction of His saints, though they might naturally and without effort have ministered to Himself in one or other of these different ways.

His first appearing is to Mary. He discovers Himself to her as she was fondly mistaking Him for the gardener. The moment must have been very grateful to Him. He was in company with something that was as dear to Him as the whole range of creation could afford - the affection and desire of a good soul, of one who, at that moment, as He well knew, was counting His dead body more important to her than all the world beside. He does not, however, take up the occasion in this character at all. He does not indulge Himself through it. He does not linger where affection like this was gratifying His heart. He uses the occasion only for others, and sends the loving Mary away on a mission which was to bear light and joy to the hearts of others.

So in the next scene He joins the disciples and shows Himself to them. They are glad-glad with a human or natural joy. They receive Him, as of old, in their midst and, like Mary, were ready to gratify Him with every token and expression of attachment. But no; He will not meet them in such a place or in such a character. He came not to be indulged in the midst of such affections, pleasant as all that would have been to His heart of love. He at once blesses them, and prepares to make them a blessing to others. He causes them to know the peaceful fruit of His own accomplished travail, and bids them go forth and share it with others.

Just in like spirit He deals with Thomas afterward. The material here was different. Mary's fondness was grateful to Him, but it could not detain Him from His purpose of blessing others; Thomas' slowness must have been contrary to Him, unattractive, uninviting. But neither could this hinder Him from doing the same gracious work. Simply to bless Thomas, He pays the disciples another visit; and when He had accomplished that, He leaves them as before.

A fourth occasion only, and perhaps more illustriously, exhibits the same. The disciples go together to their former fishing. They were on the lake where oftentimes their Master had resorted with them. And they are fishermen again. But Jesus is the same Jesus also. He takes them up, as of old, in the midst of their nets and their fishing, and gives them a draft again. And at the end, He pledges them a better service and a richer feast and companionship with Himself in all things.

He waits, however, on His business with wonted singleness of heart. It is not to display, enrich, or gratify Himself that He is now in action. It is for us. For when we find Him here in possession of

Peter's heart, when He gets such a piece of property as that, still He uses it for others. "He saith unto him..., Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" "Yea, Lord," says Peter. "Feed My lambs.... Feed My sheep," says Jesus. He uses His possessions for His poor people.

Such are the bright occasions which illustrate singleness of purpose - this devotedness to His business which marked and animated the mind and path of the Lord in these chapters. And they convince us that the resurrection had made no change in Him!

But further, the style of the Spirit in writing is just the same as this style in the Lord's acting. The Spirit might have recorded many and many a thing beside, had the object been to display the Lord. See chapter 20:30, 31. But this was not the object, and therefore this is not done. All that is done is to record what is enough to lead sinners to the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus to life through His name.

Blessed testimony! blessed warrant for our souls to trust Him altogether! He goes on with His purpose to bless us, never using a single occasion to either enrich, display, or gratify Himself. I speak after the manner of men; but in all this I ask, Can anything more effectually lead the heart into confidence than this?

The Sinner's Responsibility

God's sovereign power in quickening a dead soul to life must never be set over against the sinner's responsibility to receive the grace of God and obey His voice. Men often try to set one against the other in order to evade or reason away the responsibility. But you will generally find that they attach responsibility to power, or the want of it in man, not to that to which God attaches it-to man's will. The Lord, addressing sinners, says, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life"; not, Ye cannot. Yet, speaking abstractly, He also says, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." (John 5:40; 6:44.) Ask a man who speaks of having no power to come to Christ, if he has the will-the desire-and you will soon test where he is.

A Sleepless Night

"On that night could not the king sleep." How was this? What was it that drove sleep from the monarch's eyes, and slumber from his eyelids? Why could not the mighty Ahasuerus enjoy a mercy which doubtless was the portion of the very meanest of his subjects? Some may say, The heavy cares of royalty robbed him of that which a "laboring man" enjoys. This might be so on other nights, but "on that night" we must account for his restlessness in quite another way. The finger of the Almighty was in that sleepless night. "The LORD God of the Hebrews" had a mighty work to accomplish on behalf of His beloved people and, in order to bring that about, He drove sleep from the luxurious couch of the monarch of 127 provinces.

This brings out in a very marked way the character of the book of Esther. The reader will observe that throughout this interesting section of inspiration the name of God is never mentioned, and yet His finger is visibly stamped upon everything. The most trivial circumstance displays His wonderful counsel and excellent working. Nature's vision cannot trace the movement of the wheels of Jehovah's chariot; faith not only traces it but knows the direction in which it tends. The enemy plots, but God is above him. Satan's every movement is seen to be but a link in the marvelous chain of events by which the- God of Israel was bringing about His purposes of grace respecting His people. Thus it has been; thus it is; and thus it shall ever be. Satan's malice, man's pride, the most hostile influences, all are but so many. instruments in the hand of God for the accomplishment of His gracious purposes. This gives the sweetest rest to the heart amid the ceaseless tossings and fluctuations of human affairs. "The end of the Lord" shall assuredly be seen. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Blessed be His name for this soul-sustaining assurance! It quiets the heart at all times. Jehovah is behind the scenes. Every wheel, every screw, every pivot, in the vast machine of human affairs is under His control. Though His name be not known or acknowledged by the children of earth,

His finger is seen, His word is trusted, and His end is expected by the children of faith.

How clearly is all this seen in the book of Esther. Vashti's beauty-the king's pride therein-his unseemly command- her indignant refusal-the advice of the king's counselors- all, in short, is but the unfolding of Jehovah's ripening purposes. Of "all the fair young virgins" gathered at "Shushan the palace," not one must be allowed to win the king's heart save Esther-the daughter of an obscure Jewish house - a desolate orphan. Again, of all the officers, ministers, and attendants, about the palace, not one must be allowed to discover the conspiracy against the king's life, save "a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai." And on that sleepless night nothing must be brought to while away the monarch's weary hours save "the book of records of the chronicles." Strange recreation for a voluptuous king! But God was at the back of all this. There was a certain record in that book, about "a certain Jew," which must be brought immediately under the eye of the restless monarch. Mordecai must come into notice. He must be rewarded for his fidelity, and so rewarded as to cover with overwhelming confusion the face of the proud Amalekite. At the very moment that this record was passing under review, none other than the haughty and wicked Haman must be

seen in the court of the king's house. He had come in order to compass the death of Mordecai; but, lo! he is forced, by the providence of God, to plan for Mordecai's triumph and display. He had come to get him hanged on a gallows; but, lo! he is made to clothe him with the king's robe, to set him on the king's horse, and, like a footman, to conduct him through the street of the city; and, like a mere herald, to announce his triumph.

"Oh! scenes surpassing fable, and yet true."

Who could have imagined that the noblest lord in all the dominions of Ahasuerus, a descendant of the house of Agag, should be compelled thus to wait upon a poor Jew-and that, too, such a lord, such a Jew, and at such a moment! Surely, the finger of the Almighty was in all this. Who but an infidel, an atheist, or a skeptic, could question a truth so obvious?

This much as to the providence of God. Let us now look for a moment at the pride of Haman. Despite all his dignity, wealth, and splendor, his wretched heart was wounded by one little matter not worth a thought in the judgment of a really great mind or well regulated heart. He was rendered miserable by the simple fact that Mordecai would not bow to him! Albeit he occupied the nearest place to the throne -although entrusted with the king's ring - although possessed of princely wealth and placed in a princely station- "Yet," he says, "all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (chap. 5:13). Miserable man! The highest position-the greatest wealth-the most extensive influence - the most flattering tokens of royal favor - all availed nothing just because a poor Jew refused to bow to him Such is the human heart! such is man! such is the world!

But, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Haman proved this. At the very moment when he seemed to be about to plant his foot on the loftiest summit of his ambition, a just and retributive Providence had so brought it about that he was, in a most marvelous manner, compelled to prepare a triumph for Mordecai-a gallows for himself. The man whose very presence embittered a life of magnificence and splendor, he is obliged to wait upon; and the very gallows which he had ordered to be prepared for his intended victim, was made use of for his own execution!

And here, let us ask, why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? Did it not seem like a blind obstinacy to refuse the customary honor to the king's noblest lord-his highest officer? Assuredly not. Haman, it is true, was the highest officer of Ahasuerus; but he was the greatest enemy of Jehovah, being the greatest enemy of the Jews. He was an Amalekite, and Jehovah had sworn that He would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exod. 17:16). How then could a true son of Abraham bow to one with whom Jehovah was at war? Impossible. Mordecai could save the life of an Ahasuerus, but he could never bow to an Amalekite. As a faithful Jew, he walked too closely with the God of his fathers to admit of his paying court to one of the seed of Amalek.

Hence, then, Mordecai's stern refusal to bow to Haman was not the fruit of a blind obstinacy and senseless pride, but of lovely faith in, and high communion with, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He could never relinquish the dignity which belonged to the Israel of God. He would abide, by faith, under Jehovah's banner; and while so abiding, he could never do obeisance to an Amalekite. 'What though his people were "scattered and peeled"-though their "beautiful house"

was in ruins though Jerusalem's ancient glory was departed-was faith, therefore, to abandon the high position assigned by God's counsels to His people? By no means. Faith would recognize the ruin, and walk softly; while, at the same time, it laid hold of God's promise, and occupied, in holy dignity, the platform which that promise had opened for all who believed it. Mordecai was made to feel deeply the ruin. He clothed himself in sackcloth, but he would never bow to an Amalekite.

And what was the result? His sackcloth was exchanged for royal apparel. His place at the king's gate was exchanged for a place next to the throne. He realized, in his own happy experience, the truth of that ancient promise that Israel should be "the head, and not the tail." Thus it was with this faithful Jew of old. He took his stand on that elevated ground where faith ever places the soul. He shaped his way not according to nature's view of things around, but according to faith's view of the Word of God. Nature might say, Why not lower your standard of action to the level of your circumstances? Why not suit yourself to your outward condition? Had you not better acknowledge the Amalekite, seeing the Amalekite is in the place of power? Nature might speak thus, but faith's answer was simple: "The LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Thus it is ever. Faith lays hold of THE LIVING GOD AND HIS ETERNAL WORD, and abides in peace and walks in holy elevation.

Christian reader, may the hallowed instruction of the book of Esther be brought home to our souls in the power of the Holy Ghost. In it we see the providence of God- the pride of man-the power of faith. Moreover, we are furnished with a striking picture of the actings of Jehovah on behalf of His people Israel- the sudden overthrow of their last proud oppressor-and their final restoration, and everlasting blessedness, rest, and glory.

Solemn Matter

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." Heb. 2:3.

It is a serious thing for men to neglect their own salvation, and it is a legitimate thing to reason with them on the hopelessness of the condition which such a neglect involves. But there is something deeper than this presented here; it is the neglect of God's salvation-the neglect of that intervention of mercy which can alone render it possible for any sinner to appear in the presence of God. This is another idea than the neglect of my own well-being. It is the neglect of God, of His glory, of His holiness, of His authority, of His grace, of His love, of the provisions of His mercy, the neglect of the salvation accomplished in sorrow and suffering by His only begotten Son, which is now proclaimed through the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent down from above.

The Source of Blessing

Can you trace the gospel to the heart of God? If not, you have not reached the source. Is the cross the source of blessing? No, the cross stands a long way down the story. If you had not the love of God, you could never have had the cross of Christ. The blood is your only title to blessing. But how did you get the blood?

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Your response to the gospel should be, "Out of Thine own heart Thou didst it. Thy bosom was the birthplace of this grace, the birthplace of all blessing."

Strength in Weakness

As to the thorn in the flesh, the Lord was dealing with Paul in grace, and had apprehended him for glory. Paul was now to walk with the Lord on this new ground; but he did not know his own weakness, nor the power of the flesh in him, that would boast itself of the revelations made in grace. The Lord therefore gives him the thorn in the flesh-an aid from Himself to keep the flesh in its right place. Paul did not at first apprehend this, and three times prayed for its removal; then the Lord tells him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses" (J.N.D. Trans.). Through grace he ranges himself on the side of the Lord's grace and strength, and takes pleasure in the thorn-that which shows his infirmity-instead of struggling against it, and praying for its removal

A Thorn for the Flesh: Discipline Suited and Adapted to Each Soul

All speculations as to what was the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh end in nothing God has wisely seen fit to leave it untold. Were it made known, we would have perhaps settled that it was not ours, and then have left it there. To have left it untold gives us to see that there was a great principle of God's dealings seen in this man's case, but applicable to all. Each would have his suited "thorn," the very thing that would counteract his natural tendency, and so act as to strip him of every pretension to power, and break any fancied strength of man.

We see this on every hand; we see it better in our own soul's history. For it is not always that another is permitted to know the secret thorn which rankles in the breast, such as that we would like to remove, ere we know the "end of the Lord." He presses home the "stake" (skolops) which pins us to the earth, as it were, in very powerlessness. You see this at times, for instance, in incongruous marriages. The soul is worn away, especially in a sensitive, spiritual mind; and there is no earthly power which can change the sorrow, and heavenly deliverance is withheld. Again, there is a child whose conduct breaks the heart of a parent; every measure fails to deal with him, and the "thorn" rankles deeply in the wounded heart. It may be that some disgrace is permitted, as to which the soul feels that death were easier to bear. It may be that slander has stung the soul with deeper pain. There may be too some human weakness which renders the afflicted one an object of pain to those who love him, or of ridicule to others. Such as these, and the many sorrows of the way, are used of God as the "thorn" to curb the energy, to break the strength of "man." Circumstances, friends, relations, health, good name, all are touched by Wisdom in this holy discipline of the soul. These things in the hand of God are like the river banks which on either side guide the stream of waters which flow between them, rendering the waters useful and fructifying; which, if flowing onward without these guides, would devastate all around, instead of bearing a blessing on their bosom. How often have we not thought what good Christians we might have been if circumstances were different; in short, if the banks which carry the river were broken down. No, these are the wise dealings of our God to keep us just in the channel and path where we are, to shine and glorify Him.

Like Paul of old, when the "stake" was driven home, we may cry to God, even thrice, as he: Take away this thorn, this terrible hindrance to the work of Christ, this feebleness of the vessel, this sapping of energy, this hindrance to service, this cruel "stake" from which the soul struggles in vain to be free. But no; there it remains until we find, in the acceptance of its bitterness, the occasion of a strength which is not of man, but the emptying us of fancied human power. We learn our powerlessness; we feel that struggling is but in vain. Yet here the secret of strength is found, but not of man, not our own. The Lord comes in. He finds the vessel bereft of strength, prepared for that power with which He can wield it. He finds that condition which it is His to use. "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses [it is not infirmities but weaknesses in which he glories], that the power of Christ may rest [tabernacle over] upon me." "The surpassingness of the power is of God, and not from us."

Those who serve the Lord outwardly in the Word, know in measure these things They know well, much as they may be blessed and valued too, what bitter lessons they have to learn in secret with the Lord. Never could they be explained to another; yet they are but the emptying of fancied strength in man. No true servant but will find this out for himself; he will recall those moments, when death was working in the fragile vessel, that life might work in those to whom he ministered. Yes, he begins to find how good these lessons are, that made room for a power working which he is conscious is not of himself, not of man; and that when, outwardly calm, he felt the abject weakness of his own heart, his Lord might step in and give him the victory.

Thus then is the vessel brought by the hand of the potter, often through bruising and breakings and crushings on the wheel, to its true and blessed form in which God Himself can work alone, when the vessel would say, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." And again, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not from us." Forcible and striking this is: he does not allow that the power would be from God, as something apart from Him, and conferred or imparted to us. No, but it is divine, and yet inseparable from Him who works; it is "of God," and yet not of us, as not only negating the thought that it might be so; but the word he uses still more emphasizes this, that the power is of God and not from us.

There is a threefold cord which must be found in the saint if he would serve his Lord aright: the motive, the energy, and the end. At times the motive may be right, and the end also, but the energy may be but the human vessel working out (as it supposes) the things of the Lord. All three must go together, and this is the object of this disciplinary process, that all may be of God, and not of man.

F. G. P.

The Three Raisings of the Dead

Three times only, as far as we know, did the Lord Jesus, while upon earth, raise the dead to life; namely, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. Each of these cases has its special characteristics and instruction. The daughter of Jairus had but just expired when the Lord entered the chamber and turned the weeping of the night into the joy of the morning. The son of the widow of Nain was being carried to his grave when the procession of death was arrested by the Prince of Life. Lazarus was in his tomb-had been dead four days-ere, at the bidding of Him who was the Resurrection and the Life, he came forth again into the light of day. Thus did Christ vindicate His power as the Son to quicken whom He would, for "The hour," said He, "is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." John 5:25.

There was a divine reason too for the selection of these cases. Had the Lord raised only the child of the Jewish ruler of the synagogue, infidelity, in its shameless presumption, might have questioned the reality of the death; and so also in the instance of the son of the widow. The case of Lazarus, therefore, was of another kind-one whom death had claimed and retained for four days, so that even his sister exclaimed, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." But He who stood by the grave had "life in Himself" (John 5:26), and was about to die and rise again that He might be Lord both of the dead and living (Rom. 14:9). Death therefore had no power, no, could not exist, in His presence; and He, in His condescension and grace, has proved it for us by meeting and overcoming death in every stage of decay and corruption. He will prove it again in a still more wondrous and victorious way, at a later time, when "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (judgment). John 5:28, 29.

The motives also, it may be remarked, of the Lord's action in these respective instances were different; that is to say, His motives as revealed in the several scriptures. He went to the house of Jairus at the earnest request of the sorrowing father. "He fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." Mark 5:22, 23. It was faith, so to speak, laying hold of the heart of Christ, and constraining Him to answer its appeal. It was the heart of Christ delighting to meet the need of one who in all confidence was casting his burden of sorrow upon Him. What consolation! yes, what encouragement to every poor burdened soul- burdened with whatever grief or anguish-to come to Christ and evoke the sympathy and succor of His unfailing and inexhaustible grace and love! Truly all such shall find that He has a heart for every woe.

But there was no appeal from the widow of Nain. Whatever her sorrows, exercises, and desolation, they are all unrevealed, save in her circumstances. They are left to be gathered from that one pathetic word, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." But this one word is enough. It is a living picture of unequalled sorrow and heartbreaking grief. Divine sustainments there may have been but, if we speak after the manner of men, it is a picture of dark and hopeless

desolation. Knowing therefore something of the heart of Christ, we do not wonder that it says, "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." Luke 7:13.

We have said that this poor widow made no appeal to Christ. No, her hopeless sorrow, her total bereavement, constituted her appeal. The Lord saw her, estimated as no other could the depth of her need, and thus, moved by His own heart, He went to her relief. We do not sufficiently understand this. All can comprehend that the Lord should listen to the cries of His people, but how many of us live in the power of the blessed remembrance of the fact that our own griefs and sorrows find an answering response in His heart? "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Isa. 63:9. "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (sin apart). Heb. 4:15.

If a parent bends over his suffering child with yearning pity, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him." Psalm 103:13. Some who read these lines may be lying on beds of pain and affliction; others, bereaved, may be weeping over their dead; and others again may be mourning over those who are dead in sins. Surely then it will be a comfort to all such to remember that He who, when He saw the widow of Nain following the bier of her only son, had compassion on her, has the same heart for their griefs-that He stands by them with infinite tenderness, waiting both to succor and to console.

"His heart is filled with tenderness,

His very name is Love."

The case of Lazarus differs from both. There was not the faith in the heart of Martha, or even in Mary, that characterized Jairus. They had faith, but it only embraced the power of Christ to raise up from sickness. Both alike said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (John 11:21-32.) Nor did the Lord, as in the case of the widow of Nain, act from His own heart. On the other hand, He refused the appeal to His affections. The message of the sisters was, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." John 11:3. No doubt they concluded that this constituted the most effectual entreaty they could make, believing that they were laying hold of those strong cords of love that bound Him to Lazarus.

They made no mistake as to the fact of His affection, for the Spirit of God carefully adds, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." v. 5. But still the Lord refused the motive presented. It says, "When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Wherefore this delay? It was not, as we have seen, that He had no heart for Lazarus, nor that His heart would not prompt Him to speed to the succor of the one He had honored with His love, but it was because the sickness of Lazarus was "not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." v. 4.

Every word He spoke, and every act He performed, was for the glory of God; for it was His meat to do His Father's will, and to finish His work. But it has pleased God to unfold to us the different ways in which the Lord acted for that glory, and thus to display the manifold perfections and the varied moral glories of His beloved Son. Here therefore we see Him losing sight, as it were, even of those He loved, that it might be known that He was actuated in this wondrous exhibition of resurrection power solely by the glory of God. Hence it was that He abode two days still in the place where He was, after the cry of these sorrowing hearts had reached Him; for though He was

the eternal Son, the Word that was with God, and was God, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And in coming down to this scene, He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him (John 6:38). He would not therefore act at the promptings of His own heart, because He had taken the place of obedience, and thus waited for the Father's word before He responded to the appeal. Cold must be the heart that is not moved by this outshining of His moral glory, this combination of infinite greatness with the lowliest grace and humility. It is, in fact, the revelation of what He was.

What needed lessons are thereby conveyed! Human affection would have prompted to instant succor; but allowing death to come in first, brought, in raising Lazarus, as nothing else could do, not only glory to God, but also to Christ Himself; for if this sickness was for the glory of God, it was also "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." How then it should still our hearts in the presence of God when He seems to delay to answer our cries! Urgent need or pressing danger is generally importunate and impatient. Has not God said, we repeat at such times, that He will hear our prayers? How then is it that we have cried in vain? Ah, no! we never cry to Him in vain; "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." 1 Pet. 3:12. If the Lord waits, He waits only for His own glory and our fuller blessing.

Martha and Mary would naturally conclude that if Lazarus died the case was hopeless, for they had not counted upon resurrection power. In like manner we often limit God, and thus it is that He leaves us, like Paul, to have "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." 2 Cor. 1:9. We should challenge our hearts as to how far we have thus learned God as the God of resurrection. Martha and Mary needed and learned the lesson and, on the evening of the day on which their brother had been raised up from death, would thank God that He had permitted him to die ere the Lord came upon the scene. What was thus for the glory of God, and glorified the Son of God, secured at the same time for His people unspeakable blessings.

These three different motives for the Lord's action may in another way be connected. If we begin from man's side, as presented in Jairus, we see that it is faith which lays hold and secures the intervention of His power on our behalf. If we look at His side in relation to ourselves, we learn that it is His heart which moves His arm of power in answer to our cries. And then if we inquire what is the object He has before Himself in all the exercise of His grace and power, we find that it is solely the glory of God. Thus, ere He came to earth, in the past eternity, foreseeing man's condition and the failure of everything to satisfy God's claims, He presented Himself, saying, "Lo, I come... to do Thy will, O God"; and before He returned to the Father, but taking a place in spirit beyond the cross, He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." John 17:4.

A few words may be added upon the dispensational teaching of these three cases, leaving for the present the more general instruction. All symbolize Israel in different ways. But it must be remembered, as another has said, "that while dispensationally Israel has a great importance as the center of God's government of this world, morally Israel was just man where all the ways and dealings of God had been carried out so as to bring to light what he was. The Gentile was man left to himself as regards God's special ways, and so unrevealed." Christ was a light "to reveal the Gentiles" (as the Greek puts it). The daughter of Jairus sets forth the condition of Israel on the

Lord's return. Christ was on His way to heal the nation, but while on His way, the poor woman who had been afflicted with an issue of blood twelve years (Mark 5:25), and had come to the end of all resources, whether in herself or in others, in vainly seeking for cure, comes in the energy of faith to Christ, and at once obtains relief. This is what has happened. The nation of Israel refused their Messiah, but faith, even while He was on earth, proved His ability to save, and still proves it now that He is on high. The present dispensation, therefore, comes between His mission to Israel and His actual restoration of the nation to life. The son of the widow of Nain also speaks of Israel's moral condition. Remarkably enough too the incident comes after a striking exhibition of faith-faith in Christ as having the power of God-and such faith as the Lord had not found in Israel (Luke 7:9). But in this case it was a Gentile, and not one of the chosen people. He was a Roman centurion. Luke, however, presents Christ as the Son of man, revealing God in grace outside of all dispensations, although, as a matter of fact, He was in the midst of Israel. Hence the prominence given to the faith of the centurion who was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenant of promise. It is in contrast with this that the son of the widow of Nain is introduced. Morally Israel was dead and, as such, beyond hope, save for the intervention in grace of resurrection power -a power unknown to the ordinances of the law. Israel then must be the object of sovereign grace and mercy equally with t h e Gentile. (Compare Rom. 11:30-32.)

Lazarus typifies, in like manner, the state of Israel, as indeed the state of man as displayed in Israel. In John 8 the Jews reject the word of Christ; in chapter 9, His work; in chapter 10, He, as the Good Shepherd, calls His sheep out of the Jewish fold. This excites the enmity of the Jews, and they take up stones again to stone Him (10:31). They had done this before (8:59). Not only, therefore, had they rejected Him, but they had also displayed the murderous enmity of their hearts against Him as the Son of God (10:33-36). It was consequently all over with them as a nation, and in the next chapter their state in death, as the fruit of their sin, is displayed in Lazarus. They had sought to stone Christ as the Son of God; God testifies to Him in this character in the resurrection of Lazarus. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Moreover, if Israel is dead, the question is, Can these dry bones live? If so, it can only be by the sovereign exercise of resurrection power in grace. And this is what will take place, for "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." Eze. 37:12. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom. 11:33-36.

To a Saint at Marah: a Personal Letter

Beloved in the Lord: And so you have come to Marah, and found the waters thereof bitter. You had learned already that the world was now but a wilderness—a dry and thirsty land, with a "mighty famine," and "no water." But it seemed as if the Lord was leading you beside some desert stream, and you longed more than ever to drink. As you followed the pillar of cloud, it glistened before you and, I trust, awakened gratitude to Him who "turneth the wilderness into a standing water." But now you taste its waters and find them bitter; you cannot drink of them, and you cry unto the Lord. Moses did so in Exodus 15, and allow me to remind you how the Lord answered his cry. "The LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." He did not create some fresh thing for the occasion, meeting the new difficulty by some new interposition of miraculous power; but He directed the eye of Moses to something there already, on the banks of the very waters of Marah, which had the property of making the bitter sweet.

Now my beloved fellow pilgrim, what do you ask the Lord to do for you in this new trial? To create some new thing in the earth to meet your case? To bring back the darling object of which He has bereaved you, or remove at once in some other way the heavy trial that burdens your spirit and weighs you down? Is this His way? For "The LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm." Nah. 1:3. No, I will ask the Lord for you, that if they be bitter waters to which He leads you (Exod. 13:21), He will "show" you the Blessed One whose presence in love and sympathy can sweeten every bitter cup and gild the bed of death with light. No new Savior, but "Him that is from the beginning"—the "same" today as He was yesterday, and will be forever. As no new thing came down from heaven, or grew up from earth, to sweeten Marah's waters for the poor thirsty wanderers, but a tree, there before the waters were tasted, which, in answer to his cry, the Lord showed unto Moses, so may the Holy Ghost, who is with you and in you, magnify His blessed office by taking of the things of the Lord Jesus and showing them to you (John 16:14, 15), leading you to see and enjoy what He is to you; so that instead of Naomi becoming Marah (Ruth 1:20), Marah may become Naomi— that is, "pleasant."

Remember for your joy, "It is the Lord" who has led you beside the bitter waters—the same Shepherd who has led you, in the Person of your substitute, the Lord Jesus, clean through the Red Sea waters of death and judgment, now behind you forever — the same One who, when He sees fit, will lead you beside the still, sweet waters of Elim, an oasis in the desert, and precious foretaste of the promised rest. And if He guides you now to Marah, He has gone before you there, and planted a sweetening tree within easy reach. The world may have tasted something of the bitterness of the water, and given it a name; no name is given to the healing tree, for its value they have not discovered, but the Spirit of the Lord is with you, to show you not only "things to come," but also the present sufficiency and preciousness of the Lord Jesus, more than equal to your deepest need. To bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever He has said unto you, how He foretold you of Marah—"In the world ye shall have tribulation"— but is Himself ever near and available as the great soother of sorrow, saying, "That in Me ye might have peace." Do not then dear..., be looking for some new token or revelation from the Lord, but that He may by His Spirit

"show" you more of Him who is "with you alway, even unto the end." Ever yours in Him

Toward the Man or Toward the Woman: Address on Present Trends

In the second chapter of Colossians you get everything moving in one of two directions: toward the man or toward the woman. Does that sound like an enigma? Let us elucidate. In the 13th chapter of Revelation, verses 1-8, we have the man. He is the coming infidel head of the revived Roman Empire. Next, in the 17th chapter, verses 1-6 and 16-18, is the woman, the corrupt ecclesiastical system of the end time. Now we shall seek to make clear the connection which this man and this woman bear to the warnings given us in Colossians 2.

This address is primarily for Christians. We are here as those professing to know the Lord Jesus Christ, come into this world in grace, and gone back in power, to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high. From His exalted position there, He has sent down the Holy Spirit, and thus formed into one body all those on earth who know their sins forgiven through faith in His blood. Christ the Head in heaven together with the members here below form the mystical Christ of 1 Cor. 12:12-"So also is the Christ" (J.N.D. Trans.). This is that to which the Apostle refers in such glowing terms in verses 2 and 3 of Colossians 2-"The mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge" (J.N.D. Trans.).

The Apostle Paul was never satisfied with merely getting souls across the line into salvation; his desire was that they might go on to perfection. So I would suggest to every child of God here this afternoon that if you are under the impression that the chief thing is to get people saved, you need to rethink the whole matter. In the ministry of the Apostle, the burden was not primarily to get men saved, but to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." That goes far beyond the salvation of the soul from destruction. When the sinner steps across the threshold to receive salvation, he becomes a new creature in Christ. Still, he is but a babe. How much there is for him to learn and to enjoy! He will never be a true worshiper unless he is led on in the knowledge of what God has for him in Christ.

In my childhood I attended a certain Sunday school. We spent six months studying the Old Testament, and six, the New Testament. But in our study of the latter, we rarely got beyond the gospels and The Acts. Yet it is in the fourteen epistles of Paul that we discover our proper portion as believers in this present period of God's dealings in grace. To neglect these precious communications is to remain "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

When the Lord Jesus led the twelve out to the mount of ascension, He there instructed them as to His desire for them after His departure. They were to return to Jerusalem and there wait till they should be endued with power from on high. While the twelve watched the gradual ascension of their Lord into heaven, angelic visitors said to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Let me suggest that up to this point, neither the twelve, nor any other of the saints of God were yet in true Christian position. CHRISTIANITY STARTS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLOUD! "A cloud received Him out of their sight." We now have something which had

never been before; we have a glorified Man at God's right hand. As there, He receives from God the second time the gift of the Spirit-this time that He might send Him upon the waiting believers here on the earth. This He does on the day of Pentecost, and thus the Church is brought into being. To put it into other words, Pentecost was the birthday of the Church.

The Church formed at Pentecost stands in need of much instruction in the privileges that properly appertain to her as the body of Christ. For this service the ascended Head provides prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Many of the instructions given to the early Church have come on down to us in the form of the inspired epistles of Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude. God expects us to become intelligent as to what is our proper Christian standing in this present period of His dealings with us. These communications are not meant merely for a learned few; they are the necessary food for all the members of Christ. We have a special place of nearness and privilege never accorded in any other period, nor will any of God's dealings with man in the days to come equal His bounty to us, the Church of God.

The Apostle Paul is here expressing his longing desire that these saints at Laodicea and Colosse may have their hearts "united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge" (J.N.D. Trans.). This is the burden of his heart. So we today should have a burden on our hearts to help the saints of God to find their way into the knowledge of all their proper portion in this most blessed time of God's dealings with man on the earth. Each individual child of God should possess this holy desire to delve into this storehouse of truth thus committed to us. God has told out to us the fullness of His heart that we in turn might be made glad. God desires that we share His joys, but we can do this only as we become intelligent as to our proper place in the scheme of God's present dealings.

Some few years back I met a Roman Catholic "brother" on the train. I felt led of the Lord to open a conversation with him which soon led into some discussion of what were our hopes as the professed children of God. I asked him if he had ever read the New Testament. He replied that he had read the four gospels, but never any of the epistles. I then asked him if he possessed a copy of the New Testament, and he said he did not. I offered to send him a Testament, a promise which I was soon to be able to fulfill. This was the beginning of a friendship which has lasted for seven years. He informs me now that he has read and enjoyed the epistles, and his intelligence in the truth of God has manifestly increased. You might challenge me with, But this ignorance of the epistles is among Catholics. I reply, Protestants are not far in arrears in their avoidance of the latter half of their Testaments. What the Apostle Paul calls "my gospel" is almost as much of an unexplored mystery to Protestantism as it is to Rome. They are like the two and a half tribes of Israel as they approached the borders of Canaan; they do not care to cross over; they are quite satisfied to settle down over on the wilderness side of Jordan: they are not interested in the conquest of Canaan; they do not care to claim those things to which they have title as being the citizens of heaven. But the burden of the Apostle Paul in this second of Colossians is that we might be in the good of what is properly ours, and not be betrayed into letting it slip away.

I would not like to be misunderstood here this afternoon. Please do not think that I am discouraging the preaching of the gospel. Dear gospel preacher, may God bless you! keep it up. But let us not fall into the error of thinking that this is the end of what God has in view for us. He

desires that we enter into all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. See in this connection the warning of verse 4: "This I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." We live in dangerous days, and harder ones lie ahead. The nearer we get to the end, the more need we shall have of keeping close to the side of the blessed Lord. It is easy to miss the path. May God deliver us from self-confidence. Only in the path of dependence can we expect to be kept.

The burden of my heart here today is that the young Christians present may be thoroughly warned of the double danger that threatens our path. Greek historians often wrote of those two dangerous threats to the sailors who would navigate the straits of Messina. On the one hand lay the jagged threat of the rock Scylla, while on the other there raged the hungry vortex of Charybdis. He only was safe who steered carefully according to the charted course between the two. The twin dangers which threaten the saints of God today are brought together in this second of Colossians. I refer to rationalism and ritualism. The first will finally head up in that infidel dictator of the revived Roman Empire of the last days; the second will be arrayed under the scarlet banner of the Jezebel of Rev. 17:4. Let us be prayerfully on our guard lest we be moved in the direction of either this "man" or this "woman." While they seem to represent diametrically different attitudes, yet, strangely enough, we find them working in close collaboration here in Revelation 17. The reason for this is that they are basically anti-Christian. What then is our protection from these sinister threats? Our safety lies in the Word of God and prayer. Like the two great pillars in the porch of Solomon's temple, Jacin (he shall establish) and Boaz (in it is strength), the Word of God and prayer will show us the path in these critical days.

I recently interviewed a young woman who had been drawn into the vortex of the Jehovah Witness delusion. She had grown up in one of our Sunday schools, used to repeat the lovely scripture verses, and seemed to be coming along nicely. Then her family stopped coming to the meetings, and soon the girl was seen no more at the Sunday school. I suppose the two mighty pillars of Jacin and Boaz no longer guarded the porch (entrance) of her home. The result was worse than death: her faith was wrecked by the infidelity of the Witness blasphemies, and she dared say that Christ was a creature. O how unspeakably sad! Had she heeded the warnings that are given in this chapter, she would never have been led astray. Perhaps you are saying that such fancies have no attraction for you. Remember, we are no match for Satan. He has had six thousand years of experience in dealing with such as we, and he has succeeded in leading millions astray. Let us not play with the things against which God has so faithfully warned us.

Now the sixth verse-"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." As a brother and I were driving to Los Angeles, we came over some treacherous territory. There were sharp winding curves, steep hills, rugged mountains, deep drop-offs. Now and again we saw warning signs. On one especially bad descent there was a huge sign at the top which read, "FIRST WARNING." We were thankful for the sign. We went slowly down for about a half mile when we encountered another similar sign, "SECOND WARNING." This caused us to move with greater care. A half mile further on the tortuous decline we came upon still another large sign, "THIRD WARNING." How faithful the highway department had been in giving us due counsel. If we failed to heed their advice, we could not complain if we ran into serious trouble. Thank God for the warnings. Dear saint of God, whether you are betrayed to follow the infidel "man" or whether you become a disciple of the bedecked harlot, you will have to ignore God's warning signs in order to fall into their clutches. God has guarded the way, and you cannot miss the path if the warnings

are observed.

See verse 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Philosophy means the love of knowledge, or the love of wisdom, but whose wisdom? The wisdom of the natural man. Religious philosophy is man as man searching after God, if haply he might find Him. The greatest philosophers of all time lived back in the days of the Greeks and the Romans. We have had our share of them in the last century. But man absolutely cannot rise higher than man. The homely illustration of a man trying to lift himself by his boot straps was never more applicable than to the situation of fallen man seeking to fathom the mystery of the Divine. So God has given us this faithful warning, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy."

As we read the 9th verse, let us do it with all reverence. In all the Word of God no higher peak of truth is reached than what we have here. Listen: "In Him [that is, in Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." It is a most noteworthy fact that this is the only place in the New Testament where we get the proper word for Godhead. This solemn term is applied here to the Person of Christ, and to Christ in manhood, for that is the force of the word "bodily." The Man Christ Jesus was at the same time GOD in the most absolute sense. The heart bows in worship at such a revelation. I beseech you, dear young believer, surrender yourself, body, soul, and spirit, to the conviction that Jesus is God. Adore Him as God incarnate, and you will be kept from the subtle philosophies of the day. We are living in days when the tempter is whispering that science knows more than revelation. That is the voice of the man, the infidel, the antichrist. He is questioning everything that God has revealed to us of the mystery of Christ. Our only safety is to refuse to listen to his overtures. The simplicity of faith alone can keep us.

We can have confidence that God will, in His own time, vindicate all His revelation. How otherwise it is with the pronouncements of men. An illustration of this is the recent exposure of the Piltdown man hoax. For fifty years grave scientists had spoken in ponderous terms of this relic of prehistoric man. Now they find they have been the proved victims of a pseudoscientific prankster. The so-called human bones are those of a man, an ape, and a dog. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. But those of us who believed our Bibles, were never deceived by the so-called "evidence" of the Piltdown man, any more than we are by similar evidence of the Neanderthal man or of the Java man. All are the result of the wishful thinking of infidel scientists who have set aside the majestic account of the creation of man at the hand of God.

I suppose the leading infidel of our day is the minister, Mr. Harry Emerson Fosdick. He coolly states that he does not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, or in the resurrection or the ascension. Then he further ventures the remarkable statement that he does not know of any other intelligent person who does believe in these revelations. What hopeless blindness! One wonders at the patience of God who suffers such a man to continue his course of blasphemy. Yet is it not a fact that there are many churches in this city today who would feel flattered to have this same Harry Emerson Fosdick occupy their pulpit this next Lord's day? Small wonder that the Apostle, out of a burdened heart, wrote the Corinthians of the misgivings that filled his mind- "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11:3. Our only safety then, dear saints, is in the surrender of our souls to the full conviction of the majesty and deity of His Person. Thus shall we be kept,

adoring HIM.

The second danger brought before us in the chapter is that which leads toward the woman. What do we mean? Substituting religion for Christ. In other words, RITUALISM. As I have driven about the streets of this great city during the so-called holiday season, I have been impressed by the extravagance of the Christmas displays. I have never seen them so elaborate. Does that prove that this city is nearer God than it has ever been? No, emphatically, No; it proves that it is moving nearer the woman, nearer the mother of harlots. Jezebel substitutes saints for Christ, and dogma for revelation. We may look upon these paper mache figures as innocent attempts to visualize the historical events of the gospels. But did you ever stop to think of how short is the step from imagery to worship of the image?

From the prophetic word we learn that terrible days of darkness lie ahead. The world is soon to be plunged into the darkness of the most awful idolatry. 'Whether it is the worship of the image of the Christ child, or of the mother of the child; the worship of angels or saints; it is the same spirit as the worship of the image of the man, "And they worshipped the beast [the man], saying,... who is able to make war with him?" Our Lord in speaking of these dreadful days said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." We are drawing very, very near to those days; the tribulation is just ahead. But thanks be to God, before the real storm can break on the scene we shall hear the shout in the air, and shall be caught up to meet our blessed Lord.

Christian friend, are you satisfied with the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, or have you begun to hunger for a bit of ritualism? Has the woman succeeded in arousing in your heart a discontent with Jesus only? Is Christ Himself enough, or would you prefer Christ AND -? Would you be better pleased if the speaker were clad in ecclesiastical robes? Do you crave the thrill of pomp and pageantry of worship? Would you like special days of feasts and fasts? Do you crave the bondage of "Touch not; taste not; handle not"? The woman is beckoning; her hand is outstretched; many are rallying to her standard. But let us never forget those awful words of the seer, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for STRONG IS THE LORD GOD WHO JUDGETH HER." Rev. 18:8.

We are amazed as we search the Word to find that there is to be a close affinity between the infidel man and the ritualistic woman. One would wonder how the beast in his open infidelity could work with the ultra-religious woman. But he will! The one, clad in all her splendor, is seen astride the beast. They work in close collaboration. Together they march on in triumph through the world. All the world shall wonder after the beast. I used to puzzle as to how the whole world could be astonished at the sight of the beast. I knew the beast was not to be omnipresent. But now I am no longer puzzled. Man has found a way to make himself virtually omnipresent. So now we understand how the beast will be able to appear daily before the eyes of his wondering subjects. Yes, they will be able to sit in their homes and see and hear the great infidel dictator. In close association with the beast will be the pomp and splendor of the woman.

Now that God has so graciously unveiled the future to us, shall we not profit by His warnings? We shall turn our faces neither toward the man nor toward the woman, but toward CHRIST. And who is HE? Hear again those wonderful words, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead." Now join to this statement that in the 10th verse, "And ye are complete in Him." Glorious truth!

Occasionally I am guest in a brand new home. The young couple have recently moved in. All is gleaming, resplendent in its newness. This young man and wife do not expect me to bring my hammer, saw, and chisel, and start to work. If I do, I can only spoil this lovely home. It is all finished. It is complete. So, dear saint of God, you are complete in Christ. In Him you possess all that God has for you. Who is this Christ? Let us read together a verse in Romans 9. We shall read it just as Paul wrote it. Remember, there are no punctuation marks in the original Greek. Latter part of verse 5: "Christ who is over all God blessed forever Amen." Isn't that magnificent? Does that not thrill your soul? Who is the One over all? He is God, blessed forever.

When our Lord was born into the world, His name was given at the direction of the Spirit of God. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." Again, in the 7th of Isaiah, verse 14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Not God's messenger to us, but God Himself with us.

Another title of God we find in the 3rd chapter of Exodus, 14th verse. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." this is one of the grandest titles that God ever took. It gives us the idea of God as the ever existing ONE, the ETERNAL. Turn now to the New Testament and observe how the blessed Lord took this title to Himself. See John's Gospel, 8th chapter, verse 53: "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?" Then verses 57 and 58: "Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Notice it is this very name of Exodus 3. He does not say, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "Before Abraham was, I am." Further, see John 8:23, 24: "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." This, beloved, is the crucial test of all our thinking and believing. "What think ye of Christ?" will be the decisive factor in our attaining heaven, or being left in outer darkness forever. With that little man Zacchaeus the consuming desire was to "see Jesus who He was." That made all the difference-who He was.

Read the incident of the healing of the ten lepers. They were all cleansed. One was a Samaritan. As he journeyed he discovered he was already cleansed. Immediately he turned back to seek the One who had cleansed him. Notice the wording: "He... glorified God, and fell... at His feet, giving Him thanks." That blessed I AM accepted the worship, and in connection with it raised the query, Where are the nine? Only this Samaritan has returned to give glory to God. You remember the young man who came to Jesus with the request that He would tell him how to attain eternal life. He addressed the Lord as "good." Immediately Jesus reminds him that there is none good but God. If he would call Jesus good, he must give Him the rest of the title, and own that He was God. Absolute goodness is found only in God.

It is noticeable that our Lord never went about advertising His deity. He quietly assumed it, and allowed the serene dignity of His Person to convict His hearers as to who He was. Blessed are those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. In John 18:4, 5, when they came out to arrest the Lord just before His crucifixion, He challenged them, "Whom seek ye?" "They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth." In verse 6 Jesus answers, "I am," and they fell backward to the ground. One ray of His personal Godhead glory was allowed for a moment to shine through. The I AM was

there. Then again in the same Gospel He is called before Pilate to answer as to who He is. So He answers, "Thou sayest that I am."

In view of all these divine revelations as to the glories of the Person of the Son of God, shall we not surrender completely all our reasonings, and fall at His blessed feet in adoration? In 2 Cor. 10:5 we read, "Casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." If we do this we will be kept, and not only so, but we will be happy. Many are going to say in that coming day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out demons?" But He will say, "I never knew you." It is not lip service to philosophy or religion; it is knowing Him as the I Am. We surrender ourselves, our lips our eyes to Him; we hail Him as God; we fall at His feet and worship. May the Lord Himself keep us until that day.

"O Jesus! everlasting God!

Who didst for sinners shed Thy blood

Upon th' accursed tree; And, finishing redemption's toil,

Didst win for us the happy spoil,

All praise we give to Thee."

True Christianity

When the world and the saints are mixed together, the will of man soon takes the upper hand; and as the saint cannot elevate the world to his standing, he must sink to that which he holds in common with the world; and thus both meet once more on Jewish ground as if the cross of Christ had never been, and the Holy Ghost were not sent down from heaven to gather believers out of a mixed condition into the assembly of God apart from the world. Even for the individual Christian, as well as for the Church, and most of all for God's truth, grace, and glory, the loss has been incalculable. For the ordinary walk has been reduced to a string of negatives, save in public acts of philanthropy, religious activity, or ritual observances which the Christian shares with any and everybody that will join him. Their walk is not occupation with good according to God's will; still less is it suffering for the sake of Christ and of righteousness from a world which knows them not. This is not Christianity, though it is the state and the system of most Christians.

Types in Chronicles

In the first book of Chronicles we see David in a light different from that in which we see him in the books of Samuel. In the books of Samuel we get his history generally, but in the first book of Chronicles, we see him not in all the events of his life as in Samuel, but in those scenes and actions which constituted him a type of the Lord who is David's Son. And so, in the second book of Chronicles, as to Solomon. We do not get his full history there, as in the first book of Kings. All his sins are passed by. For it was not as his historian that the Spirit of God was employing the pen of the scribe, while tracing Solomon in the Chronicles, but rather setting him forth as the type of the Son of David, the king of Israel, in His full beauty, the boast of His own people, and the object of the whole earth's desire.

Under the Surface: Beware of Covetousness

When the young man in the Gospel came to Jesus and said, "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," He replied, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" He leaves the question of right according to man (for it was right that he should have that which belonged to him), and shows what is under the surface: "Beware of covetousness." The Lord is our pattern in everything, and when the Lord is the pattern. it detects the motives of the heart; so He said, "Beware of covetousness." The one desired to have it, the other desired not to give it up. Take care that the motive and spring of conduct is God, and not self. There He strikes at the principles of covetousness; there must be that state of heart in which God is the spring of the will.

Useful

Why is the Christian left in the world at all? If a man makes a clock, it is for a purpose. It has hands to show the time, and they are like the living members of Christ here -made for use, for service to Christ. Why were you not converted until just before you were going to die? It would have saved God a great deal of trouble and much dishonor if He had not converted people till just before they died. God meant to get honor to Himself down here. As the clock is made to show the time, so God's people were intended to show forth His praises. A clock is never kept in order if it is not kept going; and you will never find a body in health if not in action; and in spiritual things you will never find a Christian in a healthy state who does not keep his body a living sacrifice for God (Rom. 12:1). A Christian ought to be full of joy and of the Holy Ghost.

Utterances of the Lord While Upon the Cross

1. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. (The perfect Man as intercessor.)
2. "Woman, behold thy son! ... Behold thy mother!" John 19:26-27. (The perfect Man in human relationships.)
3. "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Luke 23:43. (The perfect Man as shepherd.)
4. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Psa. 22:1. (Inwardly, "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Psa. 22:3.) (The perfect Man as sin bearer.)
5. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." John 19:28. (The perfect Man as servant.)
6. "It is finished." John 19:30. (The perfect Man as author and finisher of faith.)
7. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Luke 23:46. (The perfect Man in His divine relationship after atoning for sin.)

The Value of Meditation

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." 1 Tim. 4:15.

We lose considerable, both in reading and hearing, by not conferring with our souls about the truth we may have received and at the time felt to be applicable to us. The ant is set before us as an example of one who prepares for the winter. Now we find that God provides us with provisions for some dreary time that is coming; but instead of being like the ant when winter comes, want comes on us "as an armed man." It is not only winter, but we have no food, and all because we have merely enjoyed ourselves during the summer. Nothing reveals this (even to ourselves, if we at all judge ourselves) so much as the great difference between us in summer and in winter. In summer we seem to enjoy everything; we could almost imitate the lark; but when winter comes, the frost and pitiless blast supervene. All the supposed spiritual joy of the summer's day is gone, and we talk and think only of the inclemency of the air which surrounds us. This painful discrepancy, or exposure of our want, would not occur if we really had stored provisions for the exigencies to which we are exposed. The Apostle could say he had learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content. He knew how to be abased and how to abound. (Phil. 4:11, 12.)

I believe the soul, when it takes in any truth, ought to say, Well, some day I shall want it; let me now see how it fits me and whether I have it from God - in a word, whether I have made it as much my own as any other acquisition of which I have real possession.

Receiving and not pondering, only leaves the soul more barren in the end, simply for the reason that you lose your appreciation of anything if you find that it only charmed you, but had no place of abiding use or benefit to you. A clean animal must be also a ruminating one! Good feeding alone will not do; the other must follow. Meditate and find the true applicability to yourself of all you hear or learn; and what you really learn (certainly in divine things), you never forget

The Vine

The vine, as the symbol of a fruit bearing system on the earth, is used in a remarkable manner, and runs through a large body of Scripture. We read in Psalm 80:8 that the nation of Israel is likened to a vine which the Lord brought out of Egypt, casting out the heathen from Canaan, and planting it there to bring forth fruit. Then in Isa. 5:1-7 we learn all the care and culture He bestowed on His vine, that it might bring forth grapes - fruit meet for Him by whom it was dressed. The result was that instead of answering His culture, it brought forth "wild grapes." And He says in Jer. 2:21, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?" And so the Lord permitted the wild "boar out of the wood" to waste it. He also says, "I will take away the hedge thereof"; "I will lay it waste"; "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." It was only fruitful in iniquity, and false to Jehovah. "Israel," He says, "is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Hos. 10:1.

So the Lord gave him up to the Gentile king, Nebuchadnezzar, to rule over him, commanding him to submit to this punishment, as of the Lord (read Jer. 27:1-12, especially v. 12). Under their last king, Zedekiah, they might have remained tributary, as we read in Ezekiel 17; the kingdom might have remained "a spreading vine of low stature" under the Gentile king, who took an oath from Zedekiah and allowed him to remain in his land. But this "vine of low stature," instead of observing the oath which Nebuchadnezzar accepted of Zedekiah, and remaining tributary, he sent his ambassadors to Egypt. Or, as the parable in Ezekiel 17 says, "This vine did bend her roots toward him"; and so the king of Babylon took him captive, and broke down his city and laid it waste, and so it ceased to be the "vine" of God in the earth; it ceased to be fit for anything but fuel for the fire (see Ezek. 15).

And into this vineyard which had been laid waste, at last came the Lord Jesus. Israel, as Jehovah's vine, had been brought out of Egypt. So Jesus replaces and recommences morally the history of that people, and we read, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15.) The Lord then replaces Israel which had been set aside as a fruit bearing system on the earth. He presents Himself not as the best branch of that vine, but "I am the true vine." He was the root of the new fruit bearing system on earth, and the disciples then became the branches. Abiding in Christ, and Christ in them, they would be fruit bearing branches - the Father glorified in them - and so they would practically be Jesus' disciples. This lasts in principle all through the time of the calling out of the Church, but the point is fruit bearing on the earth-not as raised and seated together in Christ in heaven where there is no purging, or pruning, nor fruit bearing.

When the present time of the heavenly calling shall have passed, and the Church shall be taken away, Israel comes before God again, not yet as owned, but previous to the kingdom being established in the world. We find their state in Isaiah 18 aptly described as a "vine," returned to their land by the help of some great maritime power, but not yet owned of God. "More the harvest [the harvest and vintage are figures of the last acts of judgment which take place before the kingdom is set up in glory],

when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower," when all seems to man's eye to go on well, the Lord does not interfere, but considers apart in His dwelling, and then suffers the apparently re-established, fruit bearing vine to be again trodden down and destroyed by the Gentile powers. And the end of what is again a corrupt fruit bearing system in the world, finds its judgment at the hand of the Lord in Rev. 14:15-20, as the "vine of the earth" whose grapes were fully ripe, and which are then cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The Lord Jesus-Jehovah is seen in Isa. 63:1-6, coming from this judgment of the vine

of the earth and winepress of the wrath of God in which the nations of the world share (see Isa. 34), His garments red with judgment; and He comes to renew His relationship with the spared remnant of Israel, for the year of His redeemed is come. And the result of all this is that Israel again becomes His fruit bearing "vine" in the world. "A vineyard of red wine," which the Lord Himself (now that they had failed under the old covenant) will keep night and day, watering it every moment; and "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. 27:2-6.)

The Violent

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. 11:12.

This expression is found in that chapter in Matthew which specially declares the rejection of the blessed Lord in His mission to Israel; "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11. The sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7) followed the display of the powers of the kingdom as seen in Him, and detailed in a few striking verses at the close of chapter 4, verses 23-25. The fame of Jesus had spread throughout all the land. This "sermon," as it has been called, enunciated the character of the kingdom, so different from what the carnal multitude expected and sought for; it supposes His rejection, and His followers a spectacle to the world, and governed by heavenly principles, and that they should look for a heavenly reward.

Chapter 10 then details the mission of the "twelve" to Israel, and its rejection; they would go forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Then follows chapter 11 in which is found the passage in question. The kingdom of heaven had suffered "violence" from the days of John Baptist; he had preached it (chap. 3:2, etc.) and had been cast into prison (chap. 4:12). Nationally then from that moment, the kingdom had been refused; thenceforth as it was only received individually, the individual had to struggle against everything in order to enter it; he thus became, in point of fact, "the violent." He had to undergo the disruption of national, religious, and family ties. If he loved father or mother more than Jesus, he was not worthy of Him. Instead then of an entry into the kingdom, established under divine auspices, which brought the person blessed into the blessing with gentle steps, and apart from difficulties or hindrances to be overcome, it "suffered violence," to use the Lord's words, and "the violent" (as He terms those who entered it) "take it by force"; that is, they were obliged to force their way through every barrier, and count all things but loss that the goal might thus, at any cost, be won.

Weapons of Destruction: the Editor's Column

The frequency with which greater and greater weapons of destruction are being developed should remind us of the sway which Satan exercises in the affairs of men. He is at present the god and prince of this world, and is called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children [sons] of disobedience." Eph. 2:2. He is truly "Apollyon," the destroyer. The Lord Jesus came to save men's lives, not to destroy them, but Him they refused and crucified. They preferred a murderer and a robber - Barabbas - Satan's counterfeit at the time, for his name meant, "son of the father." Satan moved the world against Christ, and now he is moving the world to the brink of its own destruction.

The tremendous increase in the means of wholesale slaughter, within only a decade, is truly astounding - surely a sign that we are living in the last moments of the last hour of this dispensation. And if we compare the destructive force of the weapons used in the first world war with those now being produced, it makes the former seem like bows and arrows. Even the second world war began without a great increase in weapon power.

In the first world war, TNT was developed and hailed as the great destroyer, but not until the second war was well advanced, was this packed into huge bombs, called blockbusters, and rained from the skies in large quantities. The following figures will give some idea of the rapid increase: the blockbuster of only 12 years ago contained TNT to the amount of

20 tons;

the Hiroshima A-bomb of 1945 contained a comparative explosive force of

20,000 tons;

the H-bomb of 1952,

5,000,000 tons;

the calculated power of the 1954 H-bomb,

40,000,000 tons.

Man, a comparatively very small creature in the universe, has been able to understand many of its mysteries, and to set off H-bomb explosions similar to the great burning within the sun. Truly the scientific mind is magnificent Man forgets that he was endowed with this great faculty by his Creator, and glories as though he had not received it. What must the Creator be who could form such a being! or who could make such an intricate creation containing all these wonders! What would man have been, had he not fallen and been debased!

There is another sober reflection here, in that the men of science have taken the lead in seeking to discredit the Bible, and have overthrown the faith of many. Not that all scientific men are infidels or atheists, as we have pointed out in this column on other occasions, but they as a class have been

in the forefront of attackers of divine revelation. Is it any wonder if God in His ways of government should allow the same men to perfect ways and means of their own destruction, and that of their whole system of civilization? The mind of man set against his Creator shall surely reap just recompense. When God gave instruction regarding leprosy, so that the priest in Israel could detect it, He said of leprosy in the forehead, "The priest shall pronounce him UTTERLY unclean; his plague is in his head." Lev. 13:44. Is not this figuratively significant?

Scientists have also developed a most deadly gas, one quart of which can kill every living thing within a cubic mile, and one drop on a man's hand would kill him within 30 seconds. Another invention is a crop-killing germ that can be spread from the air to destroy all the crops of a country, and so produce starvation. Do these things speak of the "Prince of Peace," or of "the destroyer"?

Now the problem is to save man from his own ingenuity. The imminence of another war would bring on paralyzing fear - "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26. There is coming "distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke 21:25).

The world is engaged in the greatest armaments race of all times, and great armaments races have always preceded wars. But the Scripture foretold of "wars and rumors of wars," and there is a man coming who will make the earth a wilderness and destroy the cities thereof. He will be "the beast" who will head up the revived Roman Empire - see Isaiah 14 and Revelation 13 and 17. He is called the "king of Babylon" in Isaiah because he will be the last holder of that Gentile supremacy that began with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Scoffers are inclined to view the Bible as old-fashioned and outmoded, but it is thoroughly in keeping with what man has just now developed. These late awful explosions release energy that produces heat to melt everything within a considerable radius, but long ago the Word of God spoke of a time that is coming, called the "day of the Lord," which "will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.... The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Pet. 3:10, 12.

Today there is speculation on whether or not man can set off a chain reaction by an H-bomb explosion that will ignite the atmosphere and sea. This is most unlikely, but God who stored all these forces in the earth, and who lights the earth with the burning of the sun, can surely completely destroy all the works of men, and He has said that He will.

While the Bible is not a scientific textbook, it is never made obsolete by any discovery of science-it is always up-to- date. And in all ages and in all conditions it has faithfully exposed the evil heart of man, and been a voice to his conscience.

Christian reader, there is no reason for fear or alarm on our part. We know what is coming on the earth, for God has treated us as friends; that is, He has told us the secrets of what is coming (Gen. 18:17; Isa. 41:8; John 15:15), but we have a blessed hope-"We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior." Phil. 3:20; J.N.D. Trans. Soon we shall hear that shout and be called up to meet Him in the air. The developments of these days point with unmistakable evidence to the close proximity of the "great tribulation" and the "day of vengeance of our God," and if these are near, just so much nearer is the call of the heavenly Bridegroom, for it will precede the time of trouble that is coming

on all the earth.

The anticipation of seeing Him should cause us to trim our lamps, so that in the last moments of the darkness our lamps may give a clear and true light. It was the awakening by the call at midnight, "Behold, the bridegroom," that caused all the virgins to trim their lamps (Matt. 25). The wicks of old lamps used to become covered with carbon, and dim the light; so the taint of the world will form a crust on us that will hinder our testimony. Such needs to be trimmed away.

Then the realization of the doom that is soon to overtake the unsuspecting worldlings, should cause us to warn them to flee from the wrath to come.

The Apostle Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." 2 Cor. 5:11.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Pet. 3:11, 13, 14.

He Who Knew All Covered All

The very God before whom all things are naked and open, who knows us thoroughly, and has taught us to see ourselves in measure as He sees us, is the One who has covered up our sin-yes, He has covered up all the sin which His omniscience knows to be in us, for He has not acted toward us on our estimate of sin, but on His own. None can condemn, since God Himself justifies. God has not put us in the place of justifying ourselves; He does that Himself. And He takes our part much more effectually than we could take our own. Hence there is no guile in the spirit. So to speak, it is not needed. All anxiety about making out a case for ourselves is removed, since God Himself declares His righteousness in covering our sins, and making us His righteousness. If we search ever so deeply (and it is well to do so) as to what sin is, God knows it more deeply, and has dealt with it in judgment on the cross of Christ according to His own estimate of it.

The Woman Who Was a Sinner

The case of the woman of the city that was a sinner, in Luke 7, is peculiar. It stands alone in the midst of all the illustrations we get in the gospel narrations of poor sinners and their communion with Jesus.

We know not who she was. Her name is not recorded. No memorial of her whatever remains either in the world or in the Church, beyond this one notice of her in the Pharisee's house. The story serves the uses of the Spirit of God with our souls, and that is all.

She crosses the path of her blessed Savior only this once, and that but for a moment, and then retires to be heard of and seen no more. But this once is enough. More, I am bold to say, would have rather lowered the impression which the Spirit, as I judge, purposed to make.

She comes forth with the treasures of her heart and her house to worship the Lord. She comes behind Him as He sat at meat with Simon the Pharisee, and worships at His feet. Whether He would heed her or no, she inquires not- whether the Pharisee might upbraid her or no, she cares not. She was a true worshiper in the only sanctuary of God. She came as a heart-attracted sinner into the presence of her redeemer, with all that she either had or was, to lay them at His feet.

But what did she learn from Him? That she could be at home there-a sinner in enjoyment of assured and settled forgiveness. She came to Jesus with the expression of what her heart felt about Him; the life of her spirit shone out in her gift, and she was at home in His blessed presence, whoever or whatever might be there. Her tears and her kisses and her ointment belonged to Jesus; and she brought Him, on this occasion, just what her "love" the fruit of her "faith," had already dedicated to Him, expressing in His presence the liberty and joy she was experiencing; and He sets her conscience at rest by the forgiveness of her sins.

This blessed woman came forth just on this one occasion to tell the secrets of her heart. She reminds one of Melchisedec, though that may sound strange. But her action reminds one of his. He came forth just on one great occasion to greet the conquering servant of God in the name of God, and to receive from Abram tithes of all. She comes forth just on one occasion to worship the Lord God of Abraham, and of all pardoned sinners, with the fruits of faith and love, and to receive from Him some fresh token of His most precious peace and favor. Melchisedec presents God to the believing sinner, and this poor woman presents the believing sinner to God; but each of them just (on two several occasions) came forth to tell the secrets of their different sanctuaries-he, the secrets of the house and priesthood which God had appointed -she, the secrets of a trusting heart which the Holy Ghost had filled with treasure for Jesus!

Be Ye Steadfast, Unmoveable

If our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way.

All is a vain show around us, but that which is inside abides and is true, being the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, who performs the duties well, but passes through instead of living in the circumstances. To Israel, the cloud came down, and they stayed; it lifted up, and on they went. It was all the same to them. Why? Because had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord. One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ the desk is only the circumstance; it is the doing God's will, making manifest the savor of Christ, which is the simple and great thing. Whether I go or you go-I stay or you stay-may that one word be realized in each of us-"steadfast, unmovable." In whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we may be found, let the divine life be manifested. This abides; all else changes; but the life remains and abides forever; yes, forever.

Not a single thing in which we have served Christ, shall be forgotten. Lazy alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that is real, and what is real is Christ in us, and this only. The appearance now may be very little-not much even in a religious view-but what is real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another in the body of Christ. The love of Christ shall hold the whole together, Christ being everything, and we content to be nothing, helping one another, praying one for the other. I ask not the prayers of the saints; I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then "shall every man have praise of God" -praise of God! Be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

Ziklag: 1 Samuel 27-30

In no place, save in the matter of Bathsheba, is David so morally low as in 1 Samuel 27. His loss of confidence in the Lord, and his consequent lies and artifices in the court of the king of Gath, are sad indeed. His heart, it is true, was not turned away from Israel. He was Israel's champion still, in all the desires and purposes of his soul, and had his eye toward Israel's prosperity and honor. But for present circumstances he had lost all faith in God.

It is not at once or speedily that the Lord begins the discipline of His saints. At least it is not commonly so. Our sin may find us out years and years after it is committed. The Lord may call our ways to remembrance long after we have left those ways and turned to better. The sin of Saul against the Gibeonites, which was visited in the distant, closing days of David, may illustrate this for us (2 Sam. 21). "God moves in a mysterious way." He takes methods which are all His own in the exercises of His hand with His people. But He "is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We have to bow now; we shall justify Him forever.

At the water of Meribah Moses and Aaron grievously sinned. They committed a very high offense in smiting the rock and challenging the congregation. But the water came forth, and this at once and abundantly, as though all were right. The whole congregation and their cattle drank of it., and to all present or immediate appearances the Lord had no controversy with anyone. But afterward the Lord lets them know that their offense had not been overlooked, for by reason of it they should come short of the land of Canaan and die on the wilderness side of Jordan.

And how did the Lord Jesus, in the day of His ministry here, quiet the fears of unbelief before He rebuked them? "Peace, be still" was said to the waves of the sea before "How is it that ye have no faith?" was said to the fears of the disciples.

We find another sample of this way of God in this scripture on which we are now meditating. David, as we have said, was morally very low in 1 Samuel 27. But he meets with no present resentment. He goes with his 600 men against the people of the south, and victory and spoils are his, and he returns to the king of Gath, and at Ziklag enriches and secures himself.

What shall we say to all this? We may well remember, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And we may also remember, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

David, however, is loved - surely he is and, in the great sense, as dearly as ever-but his sin has not been slighted by the Lord. He is loved, and a gracious witness of that is shortly afterward given him, for the Lord interposes to save him from the tremendous results of his unbelief and lies. Through the jealousy of the princes he is hindered from being found in the Philistine army, which was then gathering at Aphek to march against Israel. It was the Lord who put that into their hearts to preserve His child and servant from this terrible catastrophe. He once gave Joseph favor in the eyes of his master; He now gives David disfavor in the eyes of the princes of the Philistines. This was a most gracious interference. But the burning of Ziklag and the captivity of all that was in it are

before him to let him know, and know it with a vengeance too, that the Lord has not overlooked his sin.

But again I may say, very marked indeed is the grace of God toward him in thus withholding him from the battle which was soon to be fought between Israel and the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. What would he have done, had he been there? How could he have escaped the snare and mischief which his unbelief and sin had so awfully prepared for him? But God can turn the hearts of the children of men as seems best to His wisdom, and now the envy of the Philistine princes is used for David to keep him back from the slaughter on Gilboa, as Abigail had been used before to keep him back from the blood of Nebel.

But how low had David fallen! He was another man when his own spirit had told him not to touch the Lord's anointed, and when his heart smote him because he had done even so little as to cut off the skirt of the king. Such moral or spiritual changes we find in the progress of Christian life, and they warn us to draw upon the Lord, and not to think that we shall stand tomorrow because we have not fallen today. But though the Lord pardons, He chastens. He forgives the sin, but He takes vengeance on the inventions.

David had received Ziklag as his wages for going over to the uncircumcised. Was it not "the wages of unrighteousness"? But the Lord can cut holes in the bags (Hag. 1:6) where we put such money as this. And so He does here. Ziklag had been visited while David was in the camp of the Philistines, and Ziklag had been burned, and all therein had been taken captive - wives, children, cattle, and all - by the people of the south whom David had afore beaten and slaughtered. (And to add to his affliction, his own men blame him for their loss, and even speak of stoning him.)

Terrible! Nothing could exceed this but death. That, however, the good hand of God had hindered, as we read on this occasion, "They slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away." But life was spared because of God's purpose of goodness toward the offending culprit, David. And so indeed in all the chastisement of the saints. That is always spared and preserved which is needed for God's abounding grace at the last.

And now we find moral recovery leading the way to another piece of history altogether. How right! It is a bitter thing to depart from Him-a blessed thing to return to Him.

David is enabled, as we read, after all this terrible catastrophe, to encourage himself in the Lord his God (30:6). What can be more blessed? save indeed the answer which grace gives to his faith. Jonah looked afresh to the temple when he was in the whale's belly; David encouraged himself in God in the sight of the ruins of Ziklag. This was all the bitterness of his own way, but he was "strong in faith," and I know not that faith was ever more bold; and the God of all grace vindicates its boldness to the full.

If the former sight were terrible, this is precious. David now begins in faith, as he had begun in unbelief in chapter 27. Ziklag in flames was the end of that course; trophies, and spoils, the honor and the wealth of victory, crown this.

After encouraging himself in God, he acts with bravery and earnestness. The Lord puts helps and opportunities in his way, and makes circumstances to favor him, and at the end crowns him with success, giving him not only to regain all that he had lost, but to enrich himself with the spoils of

the enemy.

What a witness is all this of the pleasure the Lord takes in the bold faith of His saints! David was under sore displeasure for a highhanded offense. But in spite of all that (enough to make a coward of any man) his encouraging of himself in God is thus crowned and honored of God.

Now let us go further in this fruitful scripture. The heart of man, we know, is a deceiver- "deceitful above all things"- so that "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." But it is a vagrant likewise. It is as famous for its wanderings and uncertainties as it is for its deceits. And happy indeed is the prospect of its being delivered from its wretched condition, when in the presence of His glory we are free, as I may say, from ourselves.

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