

PRESENT TESTIMONY VOLUME 4, 1852

by G.V. Wigram

A collection of articles and writings by G.V. Wigram from Present Testimony Volume 4, 1852, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

55 Chapters

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1 Chronicles

The Books of Kings have given us the general and public history of God's government in Israel; and, from Rehoboam to Hezekiah, the history of the kings of Israel—a history in which the result of the fall of the kingly power is manifested in the presence of God's long-suffering. That which is said in these books respecting Judah, only extends to the correction of Judah with the house of Israel, during this period.

The Books of Chronicles give us the history of the same period under another aspect, i.e. that of blessing and of the grace of God; and, more particularly, they give us the history of the house of David, with respect to which this grace was manifested. We shall see this verified in a multitude of instances. These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see 2 Chron. 6:15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace. He records, at the same time, the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history, without being blotted out of the Book. Here, indeed, it is but the outward figure of this; but, in fact, this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy, from Adam, of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly, or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it apparent, the part owned in grace, which externally existed in relationship with it; putting always that which is natural first, as the Apostle tells us.

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then come the families of Japheth and of Ham, one of whose descendants began to be mighty on the earth; and finally that of Shem, whose God was the Lord, and whose line is followed down to Abraham. Abraham becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity, after the flesh, is first given us; then Israel, the child of promise, a fresh stock, whose children, after the flesh, are exhibited with their kings and their chiefs, before the child of election.

At length, in the second chapter, we shall find Israel, all of whose sons were, more or less, under the care of God who had loved Jacob. Judah is then introduced to lead us to the royal race of David, the object also of the promises according to the election of God. Besides this, we find a picture of the prosperity of Judah's family in general, and that of Caleb's family in particular, who was faithful to God in his generation. God has preserved the memorial of it in this place. Thus, also, the way in which the land was peopled and its internal history, are vividly presented to the reader. The genealogy of David's family is next given us, as far as several generations after the return from the captivity; and then that of the tribes in succession; but in relationship with their position in Israel, and with the addition of certain notices of possessions acquired either by families or by an entire tribe. Dan and Zebulun are wanting. Judah is found (chap. 4:1). Simeon (chap. 4:24) had had his lot within the territory of Judah, but he had enlarged his domain: and some of this tribe, having gone beyond the borders of the land, had escaped the captivity. Reuben (chap.

5:1), Gad (chap. 5:11), and the half-tribe of Manasseh (chap. 5:23) had remained eastward of Jordan. These tribes, together, had also much extended their territory, and had enriched themselves at the expense of their enemies. In the genealogies of Levi (chap. 6) we see, first of all, the line of high-priests until the captivity; and then the Levites, their services and their cities. After Levi come Issachar (chap. 7:1), Benjamin (chap. 7:6), Naphtali (chap. 7:13), few in number; the other half-tribe of Manasseh (chap. 7:14), Ephraim (chap. 7:20), and Asher (chap. 7:30). Then we find Benjamin again (chap. 8) first of all with reference to Jerusalem, and afterward in connection with the family of Saul.

But that which has been preserved here of the genealogies of the people-an affecting remnant (through grace) of those who had fallen under the sorrowful condemnation of "Lo-Ammi"-reveals to us another circumstance, namely, that wherever there has been faith, God has blessed His people individually. Jabez (chap. 4:9, 10), the son of affliction, seeking blessing in the presence of the God of Israel, failed not to find it. The Lord enlarged his borders, and so kept him from evil, that it grieved him not. Simeon, although dispersed in Israel, was able to drive out the enemy and possess their land, even unto Mount Seir. The two tribes and a half beyond Jordan enlarged their territories also, and possessed the gates of their enemies; "because they cried unto God." Afterward, they were carried away captives, because they forsook God. Thus, although there was neither the power of the King nor the order of the kingdom, yet wherever there was faith, God blessed those of His people who trusted in Him.

These genealogies were imperfect. The condition of Israel bore the impress of the ruin which had befallen them; but also that of the goodness of God who had brought back a remnant, and who had preserved all that was needful to place those who formed it in the record of His people. If these were wanting the people ceased to enjoy their proper privileges, and the priests their sacerdotal position, until a priest stood up with Trim and with Thummim. For these genealogies served as a means to recognize the people. Happy he who had preserved his own, and who had so appreciated the heritage of the Lord as to attach value to it! It was a proof of faith; for, it might have been said, Of what use are these genealogies in Babylon?

As to the Levites-for it is good to serve the Lord-their genealogies, their cities, and their services were known with sufficient certainty, even with respect to those that dwelt at Jerusalem. The mercy of God has not forgotten either to preserve a lamp in the house of Saul; for, in judgment, God remembers mercy. The ninth chapter teaches us the use which they made of their genealogies; for, those mentioned in it, are persons who had returned from the captivity, as may be seen in Neh. 11. This portion of the Book closes at chap. 9:34. The 35th verse begins the narrative.

A brief recital of the ruin of Saul's house, introduces the Lord's establishment of the house of David. All that took place before the people gathered themselves to David at Hebron, and before the kingdom was established in his house over all Israel, at Jerusalem, is passed over in silence.

After this we find, as a general subject, the order of the kingly power, and of the kingdom as established in the house of David-the kingdom, looked at as ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took place;-excepting so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are, consequently, passed over

in silence.

After having mentioned the king himself, anointed by Samuel, according to the word of the Lord, to rule over all Israel, this history begins with that which constituted the strength and glory of David's kingdom. The high-priest no longer occupies the foreground. The Lord's anointed is essentially a man of war, although it is not always to be so. Joab and the mighty men who had been David's companions in arms, come immediately after the king.

The first place next to the king is his who delivered Sion out of the enemy's hands; and this spot, chosen of the Lord, becoming the city of David, and the seat of royal power. We are then told how David's companions in arms successively joined him, though, yet, for a long time rejected and pursued by Saul, mean as yet in appearance, a fugitive, and without power to resist. The first who are pointed out as having come to him—a proof that God and the knowledge of His will had more value in their eyes than parentage, and the advantages which flow from thence—are from among the brethren of Saul, i.e. of the tribe of Benjamin, and men of the greatest skill in handling the bow and the sling, the weapons with which Saul was slain in the battle in which he was overthrown.

There were some who came from beyond Jordan to David, while he was still concealed in this wilderness; for faith and the manifestation of God's power tend to bring into play the energy and strength of those who connect themselves with it. He with whom God is, attracts those with whom God is working; and their energy develops itself in proportion to the manifestation of His presence and favor. Many of these had been with Saul, but when with him they were not mighty men; many also had never been with him. Yet, even in Saul's camp, David was able to slay the Philistines when all Israel was in terror. After that, similar achievements became almost common. At the beginning, such things required immediate communion with God, so as to shut out the influence of all that surrounded the man who enjoyed this communion. Afterward, the surrounding influence was favorable, and, in this sense, faith propagates itself. These were not the chief of the mighty men whom David had. When God acts in power, He gives strength to the weak; and produces, by the energy of faith and of His Spirit, an army of heroes. In those who came from Benjamin and Judah, we see that there was this link of faith (12:16). They knew that David's God helped him. David committed himself to God with respect to those who joined him, for he was in a very difficult position towards the end of his career of trial and affliction. Those to whom God had given energy and strength came to him in great numbers; for everything was ripe for his elevation to the throne of Israel, and for the transfer of Saul's kingdom to him. There were various characteristics in this army of God. All famous for their valor, some among them had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, and, in this case, all their brethren were at David's command; others were armed for battle; others had all instruments for war, and were not of a double heart; and these things were according to the gift of God, and they all came with one heart to make David king; their brethren had prepared everything in abundance, for there was joy in Israel. It is always thus when Christ is really magnified by upright hearts who only seek His glory.

David immediately thinks of the ark (see Psa. 132). He consults with the captains of the thousands of Israel, in order to bring it back amongst them. Loving the people, and beloved by them, he acts with and for them; but his zeal was still too much connected with his warlike spirit; and, while giving himself up to joy, he did not sufficiently consider the Lord's ways. He imitates, no doubt, the means by which God had glorified Himself, when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines.

These were quite right in having nothing to do with it, and in leaving God to act, and to testify of Himself that He was the God of all creation, exercising a power that overrules nature in His creatures. This was faith in the Philistines; but it was not faith in Uzza, to touch the ark. Amongst God's people, it is His Word that must direct. God may act in sovereignty outside of all this; but here, the Word rules. Perez-uzza is a witness that it cannot be neglected with impunity, and that the order of His house in the midst of His people is a thing which He will cause them to reverence. It was through having failed in this reverence, that David's joy way turned into sorrow and fear; but the house of Obed-edom was, nevertheless, a proof that the presence of God assuredly brings blessing.

The history of the royalty continues. David establishes himself at Jerusalem, and the Lord confirms the kingdom in his hands, and it is lifted up on high because of His people. Having inquired of God, and exactly followed His directions, David twice gains a complete victory over the Philistines. Being thus blessed of the Lord, his fame goes out into all lands.

He makes himself houses in Jerusalem, and prepares a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it.

Warned by the calamity which his neglect had brought upon Uzza, the first time he undertook to bring back the ark, David now gathers not only all Israel together, but also the Levites, and the children of Aaron. This gives occasion to a setting forth of the whole order of Levitical service as it had been appointed by David, and of the relation between the priesthood and royalty-that is, that the former is subordinated to the latter, the king being the Lord's anointed, although the service of the sanctuary belonged to the priesthood. As the head, David orders everything, and appoints psalmody for the service of God. Then, by the help of God, the ark is brought from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for it in Zion; with offerings to God, who helped the Levites by His power; end with joy and songs of triumph. David himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen and an ephod, dances and plays before the ark of the Lord, who was going up to His place in Zion. This action -unintelligible to the unbelieving Michal, to whom the king's behavior was therefore unintelligible also was of very great importance. It identified kingly power in Zion (that is to say, the power of Christ in grace), with the token of the Lord's covenant with Israel- a token established there in grace, when Israel had already failed entirely under the law, and even after their rejection of God as their king. The Aaronic priesthood was not able to maintain the people's relationship with their God, and, consequently, the outward order had completely failed. The altar at which the priests were to sacrifice was elsewhere (at Gibeon), and not before the tent which contained the ark. And the ark, which was the sign of the covenant and the throne of the Lord, was at a distance from the altar at which the priests ministered. The covenant of the Lord is connected with the kingly power, and that in Zion, the place which he had chosen for His rest. David himself assumes a little of the Melchisedec character; but only in testimony and by anticipation (16:1-3). In these verses the priests do not appear.

In order to apprehend more clearly the import of the removal of the ark to Zion, it will be well to consider Psalm 78:60-72, and Psa. 132, and to compare verse 8 of the latter with what Moses said during Israel's journey in the wilderness (Num. 10:35, 36). It is interesting to see that each petition, in the earlier part of Psa. 132, is exceeded by its fulfillment at the close.

The circumstance of the ark not being taken to the tabernacle at Gibeon, was also of deep significance. It was completely judging the whole system connected with this tabernacle. The tabernacle was still in being, as well as the altar, and the priests offered sacrifices there; but the ark of the covenant of the Lord had been taken away from it. The king disposed of the latter by his authority, placing it elsewhere. Ever since the ruin of Shiloh, this judgment had continued as a chastisement executed by the enemy; but now that God interposes by means of David and acts in power, this power places the visible sign of His covenant with His people elsewhere. The kingly power is established at Jerusalem, and the sign of God's covenant is taken away from the tabernacle of the congregation to be placed on Mount Zion, the seat of the kingly power. When the people were to journey, Moses said, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." This was when the ark went before them to search out a resting-place for them. When it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel." But when God had, up to a certain point, given rest to Israel, they knew not how to enjoy it. They took the ark out of its place to carry it into the camp of Israel, when defeated on account of their unfaithfulness, by their enemies; but this was not now the place for the ark. Neither the one nor the other of Moses' expressions were suitable to this transfer of the ark to the midst of the camp. The ark was taken, and, as we have seen elsewhere, Ichabod was pronounced upon the people. But the faithfulness of God is abiding, and now that He has interposed in grace and power, and that the throne is established as the vessel of this power and grace, another word is given: "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength " (Psa. 132:8). Israel, the camp and the priesthood, were no longer the rest of God.

Let us now consider the import of this establishment of the ark and of the throne in Zion, as set before us in the psalm which David wrote on this occasion.

It is true that, so far as it was entrusted to man, the kingly power failed; but it is not, therefore, the less true that it has been placed in the house of David, according to the counsels, the gift, and the calling of God, and that all the promises connected with it-the sure mercies of David-will be fulfilled in Christ. In that which we read here (chap. 16), the throne is considered in the light of God's thoughts, and of the blessing which, according to those thoughts, is linked with it. David, having offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and having blessed the people, deals to every one, both to man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine, for God will " abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread." Then David gives the Levites a psalm, to sing praises unto the Lord.

This psalm is composed of a part of Psa. 105, of Psa. 96, with some alterations, of the beginning of 106, 107, 118, and 137 Psalms, which is an important form of words; and of the 47th and 48th verses of Psa. 106

The following are its subjects in the order which the psalm follows:-

The deeds of the Lord are celebrated, as well as His marvelous works and the judgments of his mouth. Israel, as His people, and the assembly of his chosen ones, are commanded to remember these things, for He is the Lord their God, and His judgments are in all the earth. Israel is called to remember, not Moses and the conditional promises given to the people through Him, but the covenant made with Abraham-an everlasting covenant to give the land to his seed, unconditionally. Israel is reminded of the way in which God preserved those heirs of promise when

they went from nation to nation. The remainder of the psalm is omitted: it speaks historically of the ways of God with respect to the preservation of His people in Egypt, and of their deliverance thence to be established in Canaan, that they might observe the statutes of the Lord; and this part of the psalm would have been unsuitable here, where grace is celebrated in the establishment of the people in power after those statutes had been broken. The beginning of the psalm celebrates grace towards Israel according to the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when the judgments of God are in all the earth. This is the first thing founded upon the presence of the ark, and the establishment of the throne in Zion.

The verses 23-33 are almost the words of the 96 Psalm. It is a call to the heathen to acknowledge the Lord whose glory should be declared among all nations. This psalm belongs to a series of psalms, which, from the first cry of the people until the universal joy of the nations, relate in order all that refers to the bringing again the first-born into the world. Only, in the 96 Psalm the words, " Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth," have a place which gives them a more prophetic character. Here, the joy of the heavens and the earth precedes this message to the heathen, and instead of saying, " His courts," it is said, " before Him." The words, " He shall judge the people with righteousness," are also omitted, as well as the second half of the last verse, which applies this judgment to the world. Apart from these alterations, which appear to me to give this Psalm more of the character of a present joy, these verses correspond with Psa. 96 The omission of the judgment of the nations in righteousness is remarkable. It is because the subject, here is joy, and the nations are called up to Jerusalem to present themselves there before the Lord. This is the leading thought. We have, then, in these two parts, the fulfillment, in Israel's joy before the Lord, of the covenant made with the fathers, following after His mighty works; and the call addressed to the nations to come up to the place of His glory. We have next this form of words, "His mercy endureth forever," declaring that in spite of all the faults, all the sins, and all the unfaithfulness of Israel, His mercy has stood firm. It will be when the Lamb, the true ark of the covenant and the real David, shall be upon Mount Zion, even before He assumes the character of Solomon, that this will be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, since David, this has been sung. (Comp. ver. 41; 2 Chron. chap 5:13; Ezra chap. 3:11; Jer. chap. 33:11). Psa. 106, which concludes the fourth Book of Psalms, opens at length the proofs of this precious declaration, which the Psalm we are considering, after giving the promises made to Abraham, passes over the whole history (omitting the after part of Psa. 105 which speaks of it and which places Israel under responsibility in Canaan) unto the end, going on with the first verse of Psa. 106, which declares that the mercy of God has continued in spite of everything. Psa. 107 treats the same subject, but in connection with the deliverance and the return of Israel at the end of the age. Psa. 118 brings out this truth in connection with the person of the Messiah, suffering with His people, but at last known and accepted in the day which the Lord hath made. Finally, in Psa. 136, this doxology is sung in connection with the full blessing of Israel and of all creation beginning with the creation itself, and celebrating the proofs of this mercy throughout all things, until the blessing of the earth, resulting in the redemption of Israel. Here we may remark, that from Psa. 132, which we have already noticed as celebrating the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the Psalms are consecutive until the 136. Only they go beyond our present subject and introduce us into the restored temple, although still speaking of Zion as the place of blessing (comp. Psa. 133;134;135, and finally 136, of which we are speaking, and which, as a chorus, concludes the series). Finally, we have the two concluding verses of Psa. 106, the first of which prays that God would gather Israel from among the heathen, which will be the result of the throne

of Jesus being set up in Zion; and the second of which concludes the Psalm (as we find at the close of each Book of Psalms) by blessing forever the Lord God of Israel. This song of praise contains, then, every subject which the presence of Christ in Zion will give the effects of His presence have been felt all around.

At the close of chap. 16 we see that the king regulates everything that was to be done before the ark and before the altar which was in the high place at Gibeon, that is to say, for the service of every day before the ark, and for the sacrifices upon the altar; and that he also appointed Levites to praise the Lord and to sing that His mercy endureth forever.

It is touching to see that the testimony to this precious faithfulness on God's part is not only found in the place where power had set the ark, but there, also, where the heart of the people needed it meantime, namely, at the altar, which, although the place where the people drew nigh to God, had become, after all, a testimony to the fallen condition of the people, a tabernacle without the ark. Faith, apprehending the counsels and the work of God, could see in the establishment of the ark in Zion (an act which, according to the old order, was thorough disorder), the progress of God's power and intervention towards the peaceful and glorious reign of the Son of David. The sure mercies of David were as bright to the eye of faith as the dawn of day, in that the ark of the covenant had been set up by David, the king, in the mountain which God had chosen for His everlasting rest.

But all did not apprehend this intervention and these ways of God, so precious to those who understood them; and the condescending mercy of God stooped at Gibeon to the low estate of the people whom He loved, and He still spoke to them after His own heart. There, at the altar where this people could draw near to God in an ignorance perhaps which saw no farther; but where, as in- as this ignorance allowed, they were faithful to Him who had brought them out of Egypt; there God spoke to them, telling them that His mercy endured forever. This was, in fact, a touching proof of it. David returns to bless his house, always a distinct thing, for David as for Solomon, from the people and from the glory connected with them.

But although David was to connect kingly power in Zion with the ark of the covenant, and thus to secure blessing by the power of the king whom God had chosen; yet the warrior king was not to build the Lord's house. The energy which was victorious over the enemies of God and of His people, was not yet the peaceful and glorious power which would bring the people into the enjoyment of all God's blessing, when the enemy should be no more, and all should yield implicit obedience to the throne of God upon the earth. Like Abraham, David was to be in his own person the depository of the promises; but he was not himself to enjoy the result of the promises on the earth. When the people had been redeemed, their first spiritual desire was to build a habitation in which God should dwell among them (Ex. chap. 15:2), and this desire was according to the mind of God (Ex. chap. 29:44-46).

But if God had accompanied his people in their wanderings, if He had borne with their unfaithfulness, when he had entrusted to them His glory in the earth which He had promised them, and if the song, "His mercy endureth forever," echoed around His altar in the midst of the ruin; if, for the deliverance of His people, He had set up a king after His own heart, and placed the ark (rescued from the enemy), upon Mount Zion, the place which He had chosen for His rest; nevertheless it was still true that there remained a rest for the people of God. The victory which

obtained it, was not this rest, neither was the grace which bestowed the victory this rest. When God should give His people full and entire rest, then the house in which He would dwell among them should be built; for God comes into the midst of His people according to their condition and their need. But the holy desire to build it for the glory of God becomes the occasion of revealing to David all the counsels of God with respect to himself. Grace had chosen him when in a low estate, and had set him up to rule the people of God, who had Himself been with David wherever he went, who had cut off David's enemies and who had exalted him. And this was not all. He had ordained a rest for His people which should no more be disturbed as it had been afore-time, and during all the days of the judges. Moreover God would subdue all his enemies and would build him a house. It should no longer be saviors occasionally raised up to deliver a people from the miseries into

which their unfaithfulness had plunged them; but the counsels of God on their behalf should be accomplished, and blessing established for evermore in the house and family of the king. The son of David should sit upon his throne; he should be a son unto the Lord, and the Lord should be his father, and the Lord's mercy should not be taken away from him. He should also be settled in the house and in the kingdom of the Lord forever, and his throne should be established for evermore. It will be remarked here that all question of the responsibility of David's seed is left out, and that the whole refers to the fulfillment of God's purposes in Christ, the true son of David according to the promise. God takes the

matter in hand. While His people are still deprived of rest, He is pleased to go with them from tent to tent, and desires not that they should build Him a house. At length He will Himself raise up the one who shall build up a house, and under whose reign the people, established in power forever, shall enjoy the rest which God Himself shall have procured them. David, with overflowing heart, makes answer to the Lord who, for His servant's sake, and according to His own heart, had done all these great things, and had revealed them, to make His servant know them. Whilst acknowledging Israel's glorious privilege in being the people of such a God, the only true God, he prays that the God of Israel will in fact be a God to Israel, and that He will fulfill all that He had spoken to him concerning his posterity.

In chapters, 18, 19, and 20, David, already delivered from all internal conflict in Israel, triumphs over the heathen, and spreads the glory of Israel and of his reign on every side. These are the events which occasioned Psa. 18, although it has a more extended meaning (compare verses 36-45).

It will also be remarked that all David's faults are passed over in silence. Faithfully recounted elsewhere, they have no place here, because it is the fulfillment of the ways and thoughts of God in the house of the elect king that is here depicted.

The children of the giant fall with the Philistines before the children of Israel.

But prosperity exposes David to the temptations of the enemy: Head over Israel and conqueror of all his enemies, he wishes to know the strength of Israel, which was his glory, forgetting the strength of God who had given him all this and had multiplied Israel. This sin, always a great one, and still more so in David's case; did not fail to bring chastisement from God; a chastisement, however, which was the occasion of a fresh development of His grace, and of the accomplishment of His purposes. David in his heart knew God, although for a moment he had forgotten Him, and

he commits himself to Him, choosing rather to fall into the hands of God than to hope anything from man; and the pestilence is sent by God. This, by the grace of God, gives occasion for another element of David's glory-for the honor which God gave him of being the instrument to fix the spot where the altar of God was to be the means of the daily connection between the people and Himself. Jerusalem was beloved of God. This election on His part is now manifested. The spot of ground in question was the threshing floor of a stranger; the moment was one in which the people was suffering under the consequences of sin. But here all is grace; and God stays the angel's hand when stretched out to smite Jerusalem. Grace anticipates all movement in David's heart; for it acts and has its source in the heart of God. Moved by this same grace, David, on his part, intercedes for the people, taking the sin on himself; and God hears his prayer, and sends His prophet to direct him in offering the atoning victim which, in fact, formed the foundation of all subsequent relationship between the people and God. One cannot but feel-defective as the type is in comparison with the reality-how much this calls Him to mind who took upon Himself, and even in behalf of this very people, the sin which was not His own. David having offered the sacrifice according to God's ordinance, God marks His acceptance of it by sending fire from heaven; and at God's command the angel sheathes his sword.

Here, all is evidently grace. It is not the kingly power which interposes to deliver Israel from their enemies, and gives them rest. The ark of the covenant being there, through the energy of faith, out of its regular place which is now desolate in consequence of the people's sin, it is Israel's own sin (for all depends upon the king) which is in question. God acts in grace, ordains and accepts the atoning sacrifice, David, in sackcloth with his elders, presenting himself before Him in intercession. In the place where God has heard his prayer, David offers his sacrifices; and of this place it is said, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." In the presence of the sin, God acts in grace, and institutes by means of sacrifice, the regular order of the religious relations between Himself and His people, who are accepted in grace, and the place of His own habitation, in which they were to draw nigh unto Him. It was a new order of things. The former presented no resource against the judgment of God; on the contrary, David himself feared to go to the tabernacle: it was all over with it as a means of approach to God. David's sin became the occasion of putting an end to it, by showing the impossibility of using it in such a case, and by being thus made the occasion of founding everything upon sovereign grace.

From this chapter to the end of chap. 27, all refers to the house which is to be built. We see that the provision. that David made of everything necessary for its construction, the order of the Levites' service who were appointed for song, of those among them who were porters, of the priests in their classes, all being ordered and arranged by David; then, the royal appointments of his house, his officers and guard; finally, the chief among the people, the number of whom is mentioned. As to the numbering of the people, it had not been finished, because of the wrath of God. The thing of interest here is, that all is ordered and arranged by David, even for the doors of the house which was not yet built. Thu, in Christ, all is appointed, before it is manifested in glory. We see too that David had it always at heart, and what immense preparations he had made. For whatever the warfare may be, the glory of God in peace among His people, is always in the heart which is in unison with the spirit of Christ, in the heart of Christ Himself. It is David who places Solomon on the throne, who commands the princes to aid him, and who appoints prophecy in inspired psalms. He ordains the age at which the Levites' service should commence-a different

age from that ordained by Moses. It is the whole order of the house of God and of the king which is appointed under his hand; a new system which is established, founded upon grace as its principle. Solomon only puts in execution the orders and plans of Divine wisdom in David. Glory is but the fruit of grace. It is the Christ who has suffered, who is the wisdom and the power of God, unto whom all the order of the house belongs. All the rest is glorious, but it is only a result. Only, we have already seen that it is in peace, and by Christ, as Prince of Peace, that this house must be built. It did not become the habitual manifestation of the glory of God, that there should be enemies to combat; neither was it suitable to the character of His people's joy. The character of such a state of things should be that of blessing, flowing without obstacle from God.

It is very important to observe how everything here is ruled by David; it is important, in the first place, morally. The intelligence-the right of ordering all things-the energy which grasps the whole thought of God-the fellowship with Him in His counsels-the germ and moral foundation of all these counsels, as well as the power of maintaining them-are connected with the sufferings which Christ underwent for the glory of His Father. This is true of us, also, in our measure. It is the humbled, suffering Christ, who is morally on a level with all this glory. It is important, in the second place, as to intelligence in the ways of God; for I doubt not that Christ, at the commencement of His reign, will act in the character of David.

We may also remark here, that the extent of authority which David exercised, was very great and of wide bearing. The whole religious order was reconstructed. Everything, even to the age of the Levites' service, depends on the authority and regulations of David, as formerly on those of Moses. All the pattern of the temple and of its vessels is given him by inspiration, as that of the tabernacle and all belonging to it had been given to Moses. He also introduced singing and divers musical instruments, which are even called the "musical instruments of the Lord," and which, as well as the singing, had previously formed no part of the public service. With the exception of the ark, even the various vessels were different from those of the tabernacle; and for each thing, the precise weight in gold, or in silver, was determined by David. God would also associate the people with David in this willing service of the day of His power, and, even as they had been associated with him in his wars and conflicts, there are those who shall be so likewise in the liberality which he manifests towards the house of His God. They are at a great distance from him, it is true-it is, so to say, a superfluous thing. They have nothing to do with the wisdom that arranges and prepares, but they are allowed to share in the work. This favor is granted them, and their good-will is acceptable to God, as it is also the fruit of His grace.

David here (29:18) again acknowledges God according to the promises made unto the fathers, and according to the memorial of God forever- " God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers;" he seeks that which will be accomplished under the new covenant, and directs the thanksgivings of the whole assembly. Sacrifices of righteousness are offered, and they eat before the Lord with great gladness. Solomon is made king the second time (see 23:1). The first time was when grace, being fully established in the altar built on the threshing floor of Oman, where the son of David, as the prince of peace, was to build the temple, Solomon is introduced as the head of all that was being established, and as holding the first and supreme place in the mind of God-the one on whom all the rest depended, which could not even exist now without him. The house, the whole order of the house and its government, all referred to Solomon, and thus his identification with David, in that both were on the throne at the same time, makes it much easier to understand the type of

Christ in this. It is one person, whom his sufferings and victories place on the throne of glory and of peace. For, at this moment, although the result of the glory was not yet manifested, God had given rest unto His people, that they might dwell at Jerusalem (23:25). David now disappears, although it is he who puts Solomon in this position. That which we see, as filling the whole scene of royal glory, is Solomon himself reigning in peace over a willing people, who can offer these sacrifices of righteousness. The son of David is seen in his own true character, and in this character alone, namely, that of the Lord's anointed, the governor of the people; and Zadok, the faithful priest (not Abiathar), walks before the anointed one; all the counsel of God, according to Hannah's song, and the words of the man of God in 1 Sam. 2, being thus fulfilled-" And Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord," a remarkable expression; everything is subject to him. The attentive reader cannot fail to observe the prominent place given to the counsels of God respecting Christ the Lord, and the contrast there is between this and the history of Adonijah in Kings, a history which, by the contrast it presents with the narrative in Chronicles, so fully proves that the thought and intention of the Spirit of God in this Book was to give us, in type, the expression of God's purposes with regard to the true Son of David, and the position He is to occupy, and to show what will be the character in those days of the throne at Jerusalem, when Christ shall be seated upon it. It will be the throne of the Lord, and the royal majesty in Israel shall be such as has never yet been known. With reference to this, the Book of Chronicles is full of instruction.

2 Chronicles

This Second Book of Chronicles unfolds the reign of the son of David, and of the family of David. It does not commence with the faith of David at the ark, but with the tabernacle that Moses, the servant of the Lord, had set up, and the brazen altar, at which the king and the congregation worshipped. The kingly power is, in fact, connected with Israel, the people of God, whom Moses brought out of Egypt. It is the means by which the purposes of God with respect to them are accomplished; it is not, assuredly, a new covenant by a new power, but the object of blessing is Israel. If it is Boaz and Ruth who raise up the family, it is to Naomi that a son is born. At the altar, which was before the Lord in the tabernacle of the congregation, Solomon recognizes His position. He is to judge the people of God. This shall take place.

This book presents us also with kingly power in connection with the earth, and the government of the people on the earth. Glory and riches are added to that which Solomon requests. Neither enemies nor the energy of faith are in question. The king's position is the result of the victory which that faith had obtained. He reigns, and is established in glory and in riches. He begins to build the house. Hiram acknowledges the Lord as the Creator of heaven and earth, and the strangers who dwell in Israel are the king's servants to do his work. In the temple the cherubims have their faces towards the house, that is, outwards. The attributes of God do not look only at the covenant, to maintain it in spite of everything, but they also look outwards, in order to bless. It is the time of the millennium; but the veil is here found again in the temple. Whatever may be the blessing of the true Solomon's reign, Israel and the earth have not immediate and direct access to Him who is hidden in the heavens. That is our portion, even to enter boldly through the rent veil, and to find no veil in heaven; blessed be God! There is no temple there. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The stability of a divine government is granted to the earth, and the blessing of a God, whose face is turned towards it; but those who are blessed do not behold that face, do not draw nigh unto it. There is also an altar adapted for worship in a time of such blessing. The altar and the veil are not mentioned in the Book of Kings, where the construction of the temple is the figure of things not seen, and where, as a whole, it is presented to us as the dwelling-place and manifestation of God. We are told of a golden door, opening with two leaves, before the oracle, and nothing is said about the altar. In Chronicles the order is arranged also according to the state of things which this book sets before us, that is to say, according to the state of Christ's glorious kingdom. There is a court for the priests, and the large outer court with doors. All was arranged (4:6) for the relationships of which we speak. So also, as to the manifestation of the glory, nothing is said in the Book of Kings of the public acceptance of the sacrifice; but, when the ark had been carried into the holy place, and the priests were gone out, and the staves of the ark had been drawn out, so that the dwelling of the Lord was definitively established there, the glory of the Lord filled the house. That which is set before us in the Book of Chronicles, is God's connection with the people in the last days, prefigured by that which happened to Solomon. It was when the trumpeters and singers lifted up their voices with one accord to praise the Lord, saying, " His mercy endureth forever," that the house was filled with a cloud. As we have seen, when all shall be

accomplished for Israel, these words will celebrate the untiring mercy of which Israel's blessing will be the proof in that day. It is the deliverance and blessing of that people which demonstrate the truth of those words.

We have seen that there was a second part of grace: the acceptance of Israel as worshippers after their sin. Solomon having prayed, and entreated the Lord that His eyes should be open, and His ears attent to the prayers that should be offered to Him in that place; quoting David's petition in Psa. 132, and using His mercies to David as a plea-the fire comes down and consumes the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord fills the house. And now, it is not only that the priests cannot enter, but the Children of Israel behold the glory which rests upon the house; they fall upon their faces and worship. It is the public acceptance of the sacrifice which sets the people in public connection with God, and makes them confess that "the Lord is good, and that His mercy endureth forever." (Comp. Lev. 9:24. only in this passage the acknowledgment of God's unwearied mercy was not the point).

There is also another element in the scene we are considering, and that is, the public and joyful assembly of the whole people; the feast of Tabernacles, the great congregation (Psa. 22:25), and also the dedication of the altar.

These are the two things which mark Israel's participation in the blessing, namely, the altar and the feast of Tabernacles; worship subsequent to their fall and ruin, founded on the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the realized effect of the promises, the people being no longer in distress.

We find again, here, the musical instruments of the Lord, which David had made to praise the Lord, "because His mercy endureth forever;" when David himself "praised by their ministry" (7:6); blessed thought! The people saw themselves blest and happy, in all the goodness of the Lord. After this, the Lord sets before Solomon the conditions under which He places him, as well as the people, for the enjoyment, or for the recovery, of these blessings. He had chosen this house of prayer. If there was chastening, and the people humbled themselves, there was respite; the eyes and the heart of the Lord should be there perpetually. Then, with respect to Solomon and the seed of David generally, on their faithfulness the blessing of the whole people was to depend. If the house of David should turn away from God, Israel should be rooted out of the land; and the house which had been sanctified by the worship of the Lord, should become a by-word among all nations, and a witness to the just judgment of God.

Chapter 8 gives us a few more details of the state of Israel-a state which prefigures that of the last days. Solomon brings everything into subjection that could have hindered the full enjoyment of the promised land in its whole extent; whether on the side of Tiro or of Syria. The strangers in the land continue to pay tribute, and the children of Israel are captains and men of war. Zion is entirely sanctified, and the worship of the Lord maintained and honored by the king. The service of the house of God, the praises, and the whole order connected therewith, were appointed according to the ordinance of David. The king's commandment was the absolute rule for everything. Edom itself was his possession; and, as far as the Red Sea, all were the king's subjects. The king of Tiro supplied all that he needed to accomplish his designs.

But it is not only within the borders of the land that the power and glory of Solomon are known. His fame spreads among the heathen, even to distant lands, and the queen of Sheba comes to bring

him her tribute of admiration, and the precious things of the Gentiles, who thus contribute to the splendor and glory of the place chosen by God, whose light had come, and upon which the glory of the Lord had risen; in type, doubtless, for the moment, but according to the principle of grace, and by the power that will fully accomplish it according to the counsels of God. It is a glory, the report of which attracts the nations, but which, when seen, surpasses all that could be said of it; and which, to be appreciated, must be closely known. It is a glory that excels all that the world had seen, a wisdom never equaled; a wisdom that attracted all the kings of the earth, who, each year, brought their offerings and their gifts to the king, who sat upon the throne of the Lord on earth. Thus, ruling even to the farthest limits of the promised land, he causes all Israel to enjoy the abundance and the blessing which God poured out upon His people.

But soon the picture changes.

Solomon's faults are not related here, for reasons which we have already pointed out; but the history of Rehoboam shows us the immediate fall of the kingly power which God had established. The king's folly occasioned it, but it was only the fulfillment of the Lord's word by Abijah. The war which Rehoboam began against the revolted tribes, was prevented. Rehoboam submits to the man of God's prohibition. He is blessed, and fortifies himself in Judah. The Levites repair to Jerusalem, as well as a great number of the faithful, who would not forsake the true worship of the Lord, to bow down before golden calves, to which His name had been attached. Thus Judah was strengthened; for, during three years, the king walked in the ways of David and Solomon. But soon he forsook the law of the Lord, and, secure against revolted Israel, he is chastised by unexpected enemies, and all the riches amassed by Solomon fall into their hands. Nevertheless, he humbled himself, and the wrath of the Lord was turned from him.

In the history which we are about to consider we shall find the ways of God more immediate and direct with those who were in direct and avowed relationship with Him, according to His grace towards David, and in connection with the house that had been dedicated to His name. When their kings were faithful, all went on well.

In his wars with Jeroboam, Abijah stands entirely upon this ground, and he is blessed.

Asa follows his steps; and, whether at peace, or while at war with the Ethiopians, Israel prospers in his reign.

He takes away the strange gods for we continually find them again. Energy is required to cast them out and prevent their return. Even the king's mother is deprived of her royal position, on account of her idolatry. Nevertheless, "the high places were not taken away." But although Asa's faithfulness continued, his trust in God failed afterward. Jealous of the Israelites resorting to Judah, Baasha builds a city to prevent it; and Asa, instead of looking to the Lord, allies himself with Syria; an alliance which produced the desired effect, but which stirred up Gentiles against Israel. And this was not all: alliance with the world, prevents our overcoming the world. Had he not done this, the Syrians would have fallen into the hands of Asa; for "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him." Solemn and precious word! Wounded in his self-love, and irritated at having thus missed so good an opportunity, Asa puts the Seer, who gave this testimony, in prison; and he oppresses the people. He is chastened of God, and, alas! he does not seek God in the

chastening. Nevertheless, except in this instance, Asa continued faithful and was honored.

Jehoshaphat, his son, succeeds him, and begins his reign by walking faithfully with God. He strengthened his kingdom against Israel, an enemy more dangerous by their example than by their strength. When anything pretends to be in connection with God, and to acknowledge Him, there is no safety except in judging it with a spiritual judgment-which can only be formed through a just sense of God's honor-making no terms with that which pretends to be connected with Him, and treating it as an enemy. - This is what Jehoshaphat did at first; and, as he did not walk in the ways of Israel, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. Blessed of the Lord, he takes away the high places and the groves, and seeks, with much faithfulness and zeal, to instruct the people in the true knowledge of the Lord; the Lord Preserves him from war, and some of the nations even become tributary to him on account of his power. In many respects, this is a more beautiful picture than anything we have yet read in the history of the kings. But this prosperity becomes a snare to him; and it bore most bitter fruits when his real piety failed. The prosperity with which God had blessed him, in consequence of his faithfulness, made it worth while to seek alliance with him, and rendered it more difficult to attack him. Thus at ease, Jehoshaphat, on his part, joins affinity with Israel. His prosperity put him in a condition to do so in a manner which made the alliance honorable. The human heart, when it is not kept by God, can act generously with respect to the evil which it fears not; but this is not charity. Outwardly, Jehoshaphat is faithful to the Lord, but the wrath of the Lord is upon him.

Nevertheless, when he had returned to his house, the king sets himself to bring back the people to the fear of the Lord, and to cause judgment and righteousness to be executed in Israel. But war begins. He could no longer be blessed in having to do with God alone without trial. The intervention of the enemy was now needful for his good, according to God's government, although, in the trial through which he passes, he may have full blessing. His piety was genuine; the trial proves it. He appeals to the relationship of God with Abraham, and to His promises to Solomon, when the latter had built the house. Jehoshaphat understood also the relation in which the enemy stood to Israel-looked at in connection with God's dealings (20:10-11). God answers him, and the king encourages the people by acknowledging the voice of the prophets, and by singing the praises of God before the blessing came; singing, in faith, that His mercy endureth forever. God abundantly granted his prayer. Israel, whose enemies had slain each other, had only to carry away the spoil; and God gave rest to the king, and his realm was quiet. Still, if Jehoshaphat no longer united himself with the king of Israel to make war, he joined him in a matter of commerce. But God put a stop to his undertakings. In spite of some faults, the character of Jehoshaphat is a fine one, and refreshes the heart. But soon the sorrowful fruit of his league with Ahab ripen, and bring Judah into distress. Jehoram, his son, Ahab's son-in-law, walks in the way of the king of Israel. The Edomites revolt, and Libnah, a city of Judah, does the same. The king makes high places, and compels Judah to worship at them. The judgment of God is soon manifested. He whom God had raised up as a witness against the sins of the house of Ahab, had foreseen their fruits in Judah; and a writing of Elijah's is brought to the king, threatening him with the terrible judgments of God. Judah also is attacked by their enemies, who pillage the land, laying waste even the king's house, and slaying all his sons excepting one. This was of the Lord-it is His government which we see here; for He rules over those who are in covenant with Him, those who are His house.

Finally, the king perishes, according to Elijah's prediction. Disaster upon disaster falls upon Judah, in consequence of this connection with the house of Ahab. To connect oneself with that which claims to be of God, according to his religion, but which is not so, is intolerable to God. The only son that remained to Jehoram is slain by Jehu, as participating in the iniquity of Ahab's family; and Athaliah who belonged to it also, takes possession of the throne, destroying all the seed royal, except one child that God in His grace took care of, who would not have the lamp of David put out at Jerusalem, although he chastened His family. The sister of Ahaziah, wife to the high priest, preserves the child, who is concealed in the house of God for six years.

Everything was in a very low state; and, to outward appearance, all was over with the house of David; but the faithfulness of God did not fail. And, although the power of the throne is absolutely destroyed, and the family of David set aside, God raises up a man of faith, in the person of the high priest, to restore the whole. The chastisement of God was complete. The entire order of the throne was subverted by his judgment. Nothing was left but the faithfulness of God. Man was judged. He had no longer any means of recovery. But all things are at God's disposal, the heart of Jehoshabeath and the faith of Jehoiada. The latter takes the needful steps, and the king is set upon his throne; and, after all the same thing which we have seen before, again takes place: the king appoints everything concerning the reestablishment of order in the house of God.

How often the energy of faith may, so to say, establish a kingdom, yet fail at the same time in maintaining the ordinary duty of those who have to do with the service of God! Faithful at the commencement of his reign, Joash walks nevertheless more by Jehoiada's faith than by his own; and, after the death of the high-priest, he leans on the princes of Judah, and serves idols; and even puts to death the son of Jehoiada, by whom the Holy Ghost had testified against him. Joash, forsaken of God, is defeated by the Syrians. He falls into many diseases, and is at length slain by his own servants.

In this whole history, we must observe that the immediate government of a God of judgment is in exercise, because those whom He judges were in close connection with Himself.

Amaziah, up to a certain point, walks with God, but in weakness and with an unsteady step. He leans upon an arm of flesh; but he hearkens to the prophet, and this saves him from being defeated. The cities of Judah, however, suffer the consequences of his false step, and are plundered by the army of Israel which Amaziah had sent back. Lifted up by the victory that he had obtained over Edom, he takes the gods of Seir, which could not deliver their own people, and bows himself down before them. He then turns a deaf ear to the prophet who rebukes him. But pride goeth before a fall. Amaziah, making war against Israel, is ignominiously defeated, and made prisoner, and Jerusalem itself is laid waste. We should remark, in this part of the history, the goodness of the Lord who continually interposes by means of prophets.

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, walks for a long time with the Lord, and prospers. The strength of Judah is increased, and all the king's undertakings are successful; "but when he was strong his heart was lifted up;" he takes upon himself the priestly function, and is smitten with leprosy by the hand of God.

We enter now on a period in which Isaiah throws much light on the state of the people. This state was partly exhibited before, in the reign of Joash, who, as soon as he hearkens to the princes, falls

into idolatry. But in reading the two first chapters of Isaiah, or the prophecy of Hosea, we shall see the terrible condition of the people, the greatness of God's patience, and the manner in which iniquity and idolatry multiplied on every side, when the king was not faithful and energetic.

Jotham, the son of Uzziah, walks uprightly; and he avoids his father's fault, but the people were still corrupt. Nevertheless, the faithfulness of Jotham procures him blessing and prosperity. For it is always the state of the king which is the object of God's judgment. As we have seen, the people as such had failed long before.

The reign of Ahaz forms an epoch. Entirely forsaking the Lord, he gives himself up wholly to idolatry; and the more he is smitten of God, the more he sins against Him. He is delivered into the hand of the Syrians, and into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel. In the latter case, however, God interposes for the rescue at least of the captives. The Edomites, and afterward the Philistines invade Judah. All this distress induces Ahaz to seek help from the king of Assyria, who only brought him into still greater trouble (comp. Isaiah, chap. 7:17; 8:7; see also Hosea, chap. 5:13-15).

Although piety is not transmitted from father to son, grace can work in the heart and direct the steps of one who had the most wicked father. This was the case with the son of Ahaz. The way in which Hezekiah sought the glory of his God, shows remarkable faith and energy. In the better days of the kingdom, true piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat; great energy of faith is now displayed in Hezekiah; we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the Scriptures, for the Book of the Law. I recall here the great principle, the effects of which the reader has to remark in the Book which occupies us, namely, the government of God which visited every act with its immediate consequences, a government which always had reference, to the king's conduct. But, in spite of some awakenings, and some restorations wrought by grace, the people having entirely corrupted themselves, the kingly power, which alone recalled them to their duties, came short of the glory of God; and, at length, the oath made in the Lord's name being broken, the measure of sin was filled up and the judgment of Israel, as well as the times of the Gentiles commenced.

Hezekiah acknowledges the sinful state of Israel; and he invites the people to cleanse themselves. A true worship, affecting in its character, is re-established (29:25-29), and the service of the Lord's house is set in order. But Hezekiah's zeal embraces all Israel, and he sends letters which, although the greater part laughed them to scorn, brought up many serious souls to the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem. If everything is not re-established as a whole, yet wherever faith is in action and a sincere heart seeks to glorify God, there is always cause for the faithful to rejoice in the dealings of God. God pardoned their failure in the purification necessary for participation in the service of the sanctuary; the prayer for blessing came up to His holy dwelling-place, and was granted.

Strengthened by this communion with the Lord, all Israel that had been present went out and destroyed the groves and the images, not only in Judah but also in Ephraim and Manasseh. The state of disorder in Israel gave an opportunity on God's part, for the exercise of faithfulness and the manifestation of devotedness in His people. Abundance and blessing are found in Judah, and the Lord's house is filled with proofs of His goodness, brought in by grateful hearts, according to the ordinances of the law; and even in the cities of the priests, everything is set in order according

to the law, and everything prospers. God fully answered the king's faith; but the iniquity of the people's heart was little changed, and the ways of God in judgment began to be manifested; and in such a manner as to make it evident that in the midst of His judgments, and at the height of the enemy's power, the faithful seed of David should be the infallible resource of His people. This is the lesson of chap. 32. This man is the peace of the people when the Assyrian enters the land. See in Isaiah chap. 8 the Assyrian's entrance into the land, already called the land of Immanuel, through the prophetic revelation of the birth of the Virgin's Son, a revelation addressed to the unfaithful king, to Ahaz; see also in the same chapter, the revelation of the terrible distress of the people, the law being sealed and entrusted to the remnant who would follow Christ as a prophet, until the people confess that the Son was born unto them. See, also, in chap. 22 of the same prophet, the Spirit's judgment as to the moral condition of the people, on the occasion of those events which are recorded in chap. 32 of 2 Chronicles. Hezekiah himself did not render again to the Lord, according to the benefit done unto him; but his heart was lifted up. Nevertheless, as he humbled himself, he was allowed to see the peace of Jerusalem all the days of his life.

Manasseh, his son, who gave himself up to iniquity in spite of the warnings of the prophets, brought desolation and ruin upon himself, and afterward upon Israel. Guilty of sins which God had not forgotten, his personal repentance in his captivity procured him personal restoration and peace, through the mercy of God; and after his return to Jerusalem, he acted faithfully and was jealous for the glory of God, for the time of Judah's judgment was not yet come. His son Amon followed him in his iniquity, but not in his repentance, and he dies by the hand of his own servants.

We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the Word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God; only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God; however, makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen, he began, by the grace of God, to seek the Lord; and at twenty, he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in, for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers. Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple, and there the Book of the Law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the Word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to be, and God makes known to him, by Huldah, the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him, at the same time, that his eyes shall not see the evil. It was this communication which should have made him act with less precipitation, and with a more exercised heart than he manifested, when he went up against the king of Egypt. The knowledge that their well-deserved judgment was soon to overwhelm Israel, and that there was no remedy for their sins (although Josiah himself was spared), ought to have prevented his going up against Pharaoh, when the latter did not attack him, and even warned him to forbear: but he would not hearken, and was lost through a hardihood which was not of God.

His death opened the sluices to the affliction of Judah and Jerusalem, who had been blessed through his means, for they had followed the Lord all the days of Josiah, and had therefore been blessed: they had also mourned for his death. Jeremiah (that is to say, the Spirit of God by the

prophet), in lamenting over the last king who would maintain the relations of God with His people, wept for the ruin and desolation which sin would bring the flock whom the Lord loved - the vineyard that He had planted with the choicest vine.

However faithful Josiah had been, this had not changed the heart of the people (compare Jer. 3:10). Josiah's faith was in action, and over-ruled this state of things; and, as we have constantly seen, blessing depended on the conduct of the king, although the under-current was always tending to the ruin and rejection of the people.

It remains for us to notice the Passover. Everything is set in order, according to the ordinances of Moses and David; and that in a remarkable manner. It appears that even the ark had been removed from its place (35:3); but now the ark being restored to its rest, the Levites occupy themselves diligently with their service; and even make ready for the priests that they might keep the feast. They were all in their places, according to the blessing of Israel in the rest they enjoyed under Solomon. Those who taught all Israel no longer bore the ark, but they ministered to God and to His people. The singers were there also according to their order, so that there had not been such a Passover since the days of Samuel. It was like the last glimmering of the lamp which God had lighted among His people in the house Of David. It was soon extinguished in the darkness of the nations which know not God, and those who had been His people, under the judgment expressed by the word Lo-ammi (not my people); but this was only to give occasion afterward' to the manifestation of His infinite grace towards the one, and His unchangeable faithfulness to the others. Ezekiel dates his prophecy from the year of this Passover, when he says, the thirtieth year. Why so, I cannot tell. Was it the year of the jubilee, or did the Passover itself form an epoch?

Little need be said of the succeeding reigns. The king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt-a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles-comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him, after all, to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon. Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by the Lord-thus acknowledging the authority of that name over his conscience-more sinful in this respect, than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of the Lord; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary; for both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted: they dishonored the Lord and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

Sad and solemn lesson of the sin and iniquity of man, and of the just judgment of God.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But, in His judgments, God remembers mercy; and, in the counsels of His grace, He had already prepared, and even proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name) an instrument to give His people some respite. After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, the Lord puts it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was the Lord, the God of Heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that the Lord their God will be with them.

Thus it is by mercy-but by a mercy which recognizes that power has passed into the hands of the Gentile's-that the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favorable circumstances, so that God could say to them: "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"-a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of the Lord to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, His habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restorations He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless. The vineyard, for they were men, brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem has ceased, for the present, to be the throne of the Lord; and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.

2 Timothy

This Epistle especially commends itself to us as the utterance of the Spirit through the Apostle, not only in the midst of nothing but failure around, and of greater, as about to occur, but as instructing the servant of Christ in circumstances not then known in the church, namely, in that when the great organ of rule and order would be mostly wanted, he should be removed. When confusion and evil would increase, (and increasing they were) there should be no apostle to correct abuses, as at Corinth: he, in such critical times, was on the eve of departure; and it is in prospect of this event and its contingencies, that this epistle was written, and from hence it comes with deep interest to us as unfolding God's provisional care for us in such a time, as well as tracing our only safe line for service and blessing. I repeat the very fact of the Apostle's intimating the proximity of his dissolution, and simultaneously that great disorder existed and still greater was to be expected, should be sufficient to lead us, who know the love and care of our God, to search this epistle, assured that we should find therein manifest tokens that God hath not cast away His people; and that, though the great instrument by which he had hitherto guided the church, and suppressed, by the Holy Ghost, disorder as it arose—that, though he should be removed when to the natural judgment he was mostly needed, yet God was not without resource to meet us in such exigency; nay more, that in this epistle when our difficulties are declared, relief, abundant relief, is plainly communicated. The terrible storm is foreshown: but what Jesus is, and what His power in such a juncture, is as plainly revealed to faith. God always sets His bow in the cloud, and "Fear not" ever reaches the ear from the Shepherd who feeds as well as saves. How little we know of God, or we should always expect this! We hear of decline and unfaithfulness and we are ready to say, "There is no hope;" we forget that God is equal to any emergency; that it is in it He is magnified, because then He only can do anything. God constantly allows men, used of Satan, to expend all their malice and then makes bare His hand to show their wretched impotency. In this epistle, very explicitly to the inquiring soul, are detailed the dangers and disasters which shall occur, and the only remedies and modes of escape which the faithful can adopt.

In a time of weakness and failure, the first thing to be assured of is the simplicity of our own confidence in God, and consequently our ground for the same. The Spirit leads Timothy to this contemplation. He addresses him by an Apostle of Jesus Christ, one doubtless so by the will of God; but his apostolate characterized and directly so to Timothy, "according to the promise [or message] of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus," In the former epistle, it was according to " the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ our hope." To Titus it is "according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." I cite these instances, to show how characteristic with the circumstances in each case are the principles represented by the Apostle and forming the basis of his commission. The authority which addresses Timothy is based on " the message of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus." This is a well-spring of strength and refreshment, and unailing in its supply, though every channel through which it flowed here was broken and gone. Here Timothy is to begin—from this source he must derive strength and hope; and when many turn aside and the faith of some is overthrown, his soul

can rest undisturbedly on the message of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. Hence the Apostle, in very touching language, alludes to " the unfeigned faith that is in thee;" and it is no novelty, for it "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also." When is faith most wanted to sustain the soul? When all visible evidence of power is removed. " Ye believe in God, believe also in me," were the words of Jesus when He in person should no longer accompany His disciples. The real amount of our faith is proved when there is nothing visible to cling to. If our faith is unfeigned, the removal of order or other evidences of power do not affect our confidence in God, for it depends not on what we see but on what we know. Nor in failure are we discomfited for service according to God's gift to us, for "God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." And this is a sufficient reason for not being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. This many may readily admit, because the Lord is worthy of all service; but there is more required,-that one should not be ashamed " of me His prisoner." This I believe few understand, and it is more our touchstone than the other. It is much easier to respect the Master than the servant; and he who receives the servant with honor will undoubtedly receive the master with more; our real respect for a person is best tested by our implicit deference to whatever emanates from him. Hence the true servant of Jesus Christ in unfeigned faith is not only not ashamed of the testimony of his Lord, but also he is not ashamed of Paul "His prisoner;" no matter whatever afflictions may await him in this service he will partake of them as of the gospel according to the power of God; and all because of the gospel-through it he has learned. The gospel gives power to do all this-saved and called with a holy calling, antecedent to all the ages and prior to any dispensation-not responsible to any, as before all-unprejudiced by any, as quite distinct and beyond all -and the effects of death may still remain-yet assured that it is abolished, and life and immortality our unalterable portion. As this was the ground from which the Apostle started, so is it the highest and most glorious to establish the saint on, and therefore if all they which are in Asia be turned away from Paul; if even Phygellus and Hermogenes are gone, the word to him is, "My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." In all your service revert to this, that Jesus was raised from the dead according to my gospel. This basis of rest, and strength, and service, he cannot too often be reminded of; alas, that it is necessary to say to us, " Remember"!-to remember counteract the darkness, and thus you are no servant at all. To be a servant you must purge yourself. Your efficiency depends on it. Nay more, in proportion as you accomplish it, in like proportion are you efficient; and, therefore, to this assuredly may be traced the inefficiency of many of us-we are not sufficiently purged from vessels unto dishonor-we have not been sufficiently anxious to be efficient, or if we have, we have not implicitly obeyed the injunction here so emphatically pronounced, or doubtless the results promised to obedience would be more practically known.

In every age of the Church, any little effort to obey this injunction has had its reward, whether observed by one or more; and whoever will take the trouble to investigate the course of any distinguished servant of the Lord, or company of believers, he will find that separation from surrounding evil was one of their leading characteristics, and that their service and honor was proportionate thereto, but declined and vanished as this key to service was neglected or unused. The rule is simple-true devotedness to Christ would easily adopt it, was our purpose simply to magnify Christ, this rule would not be regarded severe or excisory; nay, if we were rightly zealous and true-hearted, it would rejoice us to know that a certain action, no matter how painful, would ensure us so high, so distinguished a post as a " vessel unto honor." To know, in the midst of

coldness and apathy, in a day of rebuke and blasphemy, when there is not strength to bring forth, that the observance of a simple rule would place you in this position, with the energy and qualifications for effective service-I say, to know this, ought to give the largest relief to our distracted spirits. I own that in late days no passage of the word has given me such especial comfort, for I see God's faithfulness therein, and that though great are the trials of His children in these days, yet there is a door of escape; and this is that door. O may many find it! It has been a difficulty with many, to whom or what "purge himself from them" may refer. The subject evidently begins at verse 16, where "to shun profane vain babblings," is enjoined, "for they will increase ungodliness the more, and the word ($\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) of them will eat as doth a canker, of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus." Now the transition here from the thing spoken to the speaker, is apparent. It is first, vain babblings will increase ungodliness; and then the reasoning of them will eat as doth a canker; and then, without any previous allusion to persons, Hymenaeus and Philetus are presented as fearful examples of the unbridled utterance of "profane vain babblings;" and, therefore, I conclude, that "these," in this sentence, includes not only what we should "shun," but the aggravated form of evil which demands a more absolute separation, and designated by the very significant word "Purge," only used here and in 1 Cor. 5

How the soul, eager to please God, would drink in the instruction conveyed in this Epistle! What a chart to guide us this long starless night! But to resume: Timothy is not only told how he is to be a vessel unto honor, but as such his course is marked out for him. After the most complete and positive separation, "prepared unto every good work," he has still more to do. The Spirit has more to accomplish in him and by him. He must "flee also youthful lusts or desires." Alas, how needed this exhortation, how divinely appropriate to our poor weak condition. Paul, from a wondrous sojourn in Paradise, had to descend into all the teazings of a thorn in the flesh. His rapture to glory did not secure him against the lusts of the flesh. The greater the treasure committed to the vessel, the greater need to prevent the vessel from appropriating the honor due to the treasure, which the flesh is ready to do. Hence Timothy is warned as soon as he has set his foot on the ground of honor and distinction for the Lord's service, "to flee also youthful lusts." We are never so near failure as when we have acted faithfully. We are dissatisfied. The enemy surprises us. This is very marked in scripture. Hormah and the necessity for the brazen serpent, stand strangely near one another-we can hardly trust God in two consecutive instances. If we have trusted Him in one, and have known his succor, in the next we go a lusting-if we are at Elim, ere long we shall be found at Rephidim. Surely it is well timed advice to say to one who has taken a great step, one involving glorious consequences-"flee also youthful lusts;" or in other words, "beware of nature." Now it is plain that not merely the grosser desires are here alluded to, the word "youthful," classifies them. The ardency and thoughtlessness of youth characterize them; therefore, wherever we see men who would purge themselves from all uncleanness, and yet carried away by the impetuosity and peculiarity of their wills, we may assuredly reckon that such have missed the course of the Spirit of God, and forgot the exhortation-"flee also youthful lusts;" and such can never follow out the remaining part of the admonition, however they may assay it.

The man who does not flee youthful lusts cannot follow "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Here are laid down unmistakable lines of instruction to guide one in any condition of the Church. Two things are very prominent-1st. Separation from evil under all circumstances. 2nd. Association with the faithful of God's people. It is not supposed

that at any time these two grand means for maintaining testimony to the absent Jesus can be destroyed or be impracticable. Separation from evil must ever distinguish God's people in a world of evil. Surely we must say, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever." If separation from evil is paramount, to every faithful servant of Christ, it is but natural to expect that they who act alike would associate together, and for Christ's service they are commanded to do so. And as God does not require of us impossibilities, we must conclude, that there never will be a time when there shall be none to meet with-never a time when we cannot follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart; that however low or ruined may be the condition of things, that yet "them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" will ever be found, and with them we must ever associate, if "purged" and superior to the influence of youthful desires.

It is evident, that the second chapter of this epistle closes the instruction to Timothy in respect of things as they were; but in the following chapters we are made acquainted with the line of conduct which would become him even in "the last days." The utmost boundary is surveyed by the Holy Ghost, and the faithful servant is instructed as to his course in a region at once so dreary and so unknown. If this was a necessary and a welcome chart to Timothy, then so distant from these days, how necessary and valued ought it be to us, now on the border, if not really in them. We cannot say that the counsel suited to the "last days" was of no use to Timothy, as he flourished not in them, for doubtless he had to contend with the spirit of those days; and, if he did not survive to them, it is evident that it is contemplated by the Spirit, that some one filling the place of service then occupied by Timothy would do so. This is of great importance, teaching us that the Holy Ghost did not merely counsel Timothy, but the servant of Christ then in being; even in the state of things to which Re adverts. Timothy derives instruction as far as he enters on such scenes; but if we are in them, to us especially is this word sent, for to us entirely and peculiarly it applies. The opening sentence corroborates this thought-"This also know." The apostle admits "the last days" had not come, but he desires that Timothy should be prepared in the event of their coming; and, if needful for him to be prepared, how much more so for us. The first point to be observed is the character of mankind, they would be then in uncontrolled selfishness; but, in addition, this unprecedented peculiarity, "having the form of godliness," this cloak would envelop the worst specimen of nature. Such was to be the aspect and character of mankind in general, from whom Timothy is summarily warned to "turn away;" but his attention is more especially directed to a narrower circle within this universal one. For out of this sort (*ἐκ τούτων*)-out of the mass above described, there should arise those who would attract female adherents; judged by the Spirit of God, as "silly women, laden with sins, carried away with divers lusts" (from which we know that Timothy was cautioned to flee), "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Now these are evidently teachers; for their followers those silly women are "ever learning." There is a great appetite for acquiring knowledge, but to the knowledge of the truth they are never able to come. But, lest there should be any doubt in our minds as to the position of these men, it is recorded that they resemble Jannes and Jambres, the great ministers of false divination in the days of Moses; and, moreover, that they should withstand the truth, as the magicians withstood Moses. The apostle then sums up their character, as "men of corrupt minds (*τὸν νοῦν*), reprobate concerning the faith." All these delineations were afforded to Timothy as necessary to describe to him the characters with whom he, or any servant of Christ, would be surrounded in the last days, and thus be able to distinguish friends from foes. It ought to need no comment to enforce the importance of close observation and admeasurement of every teacher in such critical times; our

safety depends on it. The features are here boldly and distinctly traced for us; and if we are too dull and indifferent to notice a likeness, we must expect to be ignorant and deceived. To the attentive observer, it will be very evident that all false teachers combine two great errors—a corrupt understanding, and practically devoid of simple dependence on God. It is surprising how these two evils emanate from one source, and are always found concurrent when the understanding is uncontrolled by the Spirit of God; it is corrupted—at best it is only "vain," as we see from the Apostle's exhortation to the Ephesians (chap. 4:17); and as soon as the mind escapes from God's control, it at the same time ceases to depend on God, so that, I repeat, we may always be prepared for a surrender of simple dependence and waiting on God when the understanding is corrupted. And to these two heads can be traced all the systems and ignorance with which Christendom abounds; in fact, unless the mind is kept distinctly under the control of God's Spirit, its tendency, because it is "vain," is to adopt forms and systems, and act independently of God. Surely, saints had need to remember the exhortation—"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." It leads to alienation from God, and then forms and human plans take the place of God. Earnestly would I say, cannot we recall many instances in our own history, as well as (inasmuch as we know of the history of the church of God) of the practical distrust of God, and though unknown to ourselves, it was accompanied with a corrupted understanding. Alas! how often it is corrupted! How ready are we to take credit, and give credit for sincerity and an honest mind, when our acts clearly tell of distrust in God. We forget the latter is but the evidence and result of inward corruption, and excuse ourselves for want of faith, or failure in faith, as if we were only losers by the loss of it, and not actually proved as proceeding from a vitiated mind, which is really the case. Some may say, that "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith," are not necessarily in apposition; but here I would remark, that in scripture, when the copulative conjunction is not used, we may generally say, that where two or more things are predicated of any person, that they exist at one and the same time together, but when "and" is used, a long term may transpire between the first and any of the following ideas thus conjoined.

It is extraordinary, the subtlety which Satan uses to distract the saints from simple confidence in God. It will probably commence by providing a fund for missionaries or laboring brethren. Or, as I have known, endeavoring to collect a sum for a poor widow, which being placed in the funds would, by the interest alone, afford her a maintenance. I plainly say, either of these acts are disguisedly originating in distrust of God's providing care either for His servants or His poor. Ministerial arrangement is a worse form. Faith says, that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and any arrangement which denies the verity of this does not proceed from soundness of mind. Faith is much pressed in this epistle, and necessarily so, for if confidence is not in God when disorder and disaffection increase where will stability be? We see in the former epistle when men depart from faith where they end. The great secret of all power and permanency now is faith in God—nothing visible, nothing tangible: the soul finds strength and encouragement as it reaches unto God. There are, however, to the waiting soul marked manifestations of the hand of God continually. These evil teachers which we are so warned of, are not always undiscovered. "They shall proceed no further, but their folly shall be manifest unto all"; but only as the magicians were in the days of Moses. This is important, for though their folly shall be manifest, and the seeing eye will perceive it, yet we know they will not discontinue their deceivings; nay, but "wicked men and jugglers shall wax worse and worse" (the same word as "proceed" above), "deceiving and being

deceived." The magicians, though exposed and their folly made manifest, were not reduced to silence, doubtless many a one still admired them; but they ceased to be any difficulty in the mind of the faithful, and so here, these evil men shall be exposed, those who have honest and good hearts, who understand the word and keep it, will not be deceived by them, nor stumbled by them, though they still pursue their old course, deceived and deceiving. While the apostle warns Timothy of the evils growing around him, he contrasts Timothy's own course, " But thou hast fully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions." So that we may conclude, that this is the only proper contrast to the false teachers of the last days. Paul's course was to the end to be an example for the Church. In the last days, in perilous times, the best evidence that you were not mixed up with the evil system at work, is that you are following in the tracks of the apostle of the Gentiles. Hence we see that the greater the departure from genuine Christianity, the more remote the reference to Paul. Peter is assigned as the head of the most glaring form of departure, with scarcely an allusion to the apostle whom Timothy so exactly and fully followed; and so important is it that he should do so, that he is still further exhorted neither to be discouraged by persecutions, for they are the portion of the godly in this world, but be prepared for evil men and seducers to wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, and thus prepared, "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned." Timothy was hitherto a close follower of the Apostle; but this is not enough when Satan would work and by angels of light oppose the truth, he was to strengthen himself, not by new revelations, but by the things and subjects he had up to this frilly followed. Let nothing shake him from them-let no argument as to their unsuitability, and so forth, cause him in the least to swerve from what he had learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned. It appears to me that the antecedent to " whom" is the Apostle, and that then he adds, as corroborative of what Timothy had learned from him, Timothy's own knowledge • of the Scriptures. The Apostle could not have taught anything contrary to them-there must be sanction in them, for any new truth communicated by Paul-and I should say that when the apostle says " all Scripture," he includes the very epistle before us, for it is " all scripture"; not merely those that Timothy knew from a child, which " is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"; and all for this distinct purpose, that as the servant in the second chapter was by " purging from these" prepared unto every good work, so also by the Scriptures he was to be " thoroughly furnished unto every good work." By the one act he is prepared; and, " being prepared," he is by the Scripture; " thoroughly furnished."

The fourth chapter of this epistle enters very minutely into the duties incumbent on Timothy as a servant. He is charged to render his service unmoved by anything; but all strictly in reference to the appearing and kingdom of Jesus Christ. He is forewarned that he will need all the qualities of a true servant; enunciating, the word perfect and entire-ever ready to do so-not shrinking from the odium of a censor. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort With all long-suffering and doctrine," is his commission. "For the time will come, when they [I suppose not teachers so much as believers in general], will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts [here we have this word again, thus three times in this epistle, and in each place showing us what we may expect from allowing our own desires to lead us], shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." For this time Timothy is to be prepared-and how he is to encounter this form of evil he is instructed, both in reference to them as in the second verse, and as to himself in the words, " Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of (or fulfill) thy ministry."

Timothy's example was to be distinctly in contrast with theirs who were walking after their own lusts; for surely, when our hearts have such power over us as to influence us in our selection of teachers, we must be eager to spare ourselves-we are on the highway to the spirit which can say to Christ in person, " Art thou come to torment us." They already say, Prophecy to us smooth things prophecy deceits. Timothy, in contrast to all this, was to "watch in all things;" every avenue to the heart was to be guarded with vigilance nothing less would do in such a time. The enemy was abroad, the more disunion and disorganization, and little concert among the people of God, the more it becomes a faithful one to be especially alert. Nay, when it is wanting at such a time we may assuredly gather they are yielding to their own lusts, and in a little time it will be seen "where they bowed there they fell." Timothy's example is as one awake, not deceived by all the plots and counterplots of the enemy-he is able to deny himself-he stands forth as having mastery over his own lusts-he endures afflictions or hardness-for if he pleased himself he should not be the servant of Christ; such a course would stand strangely in contrast with theirs, who would not only yield to their own desires, but admit of no servant of God but the one who would sanction them. No preaching so forcible as practical preaching. Paul could extend his hands to the Ephesian elders, and say, " have showed you:" thus also was Timothy now. True, he was to preach the word-he was to declare the whole counsel of God-he was always to be ready-he was to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering; and so, intelligently: but in addition, his own personal walk was to be a living example of the course he demanded of others. However many might fail and dishonor the Gospel, yet the Gospel was still to be proclaimed-the work of the evangelist was not to cease because of man's rejection-God's grace was still to flow-blessed be His name!-unto the end.-Timothy must not forget this. Nay, he must fulfill his ministry in spite of all hindrances-Christ is above all powers. His servant is to walk in the confidence of this, and unmoved fulfill his service, and the more especially, for the Apostle was now ready to be offered. The time of his departure was at hand. Timothy is now to work on without him-nay, to work more. The apostle then adds a natural and gracious wish as on the eve of his departure: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." And again touching on the various sorrows, vicissitudes, and anxieties connected with church service-very interesting and instructive, showing also God's faithfulness amidst all human forsakings, he repeats: " Do thy diligence to come before winter;" his heart yearns after the one like-minded-and then, having assured him of the greetings of the saints, thus refreshing his soul, he prays that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with his spirit, "grace with you" [■μ■v] for him and us.-Amen.

Acrostic Psalms

Each of the verses from 25-32 begins with ■ Daleth.

Ver. 25 - Down to the dust my soul cleaves;

Quicken Thou me according to Thy word.

Ver. 26 - Declared have I my ways, and Thou heartiest me;

Teach me Thy statutes.

Ver. 27 - Do Thou make me to understand the way of Thy precepts;

So shall I muse of Thy wondrous works.

Ver. 28 - Dropping-as-if-melting is my soul through heaviness;

Make me to stand according to Thy Word.

Ver. 29 - Deceitful ways remove Thou from me;

And graciously favor me with Thy law.

Ver. 30 - Delighted I in [lit. chose 1] the way of truth;

Thy judgments have I laid (before me).

Ver. 31 - Do not shame me, O Lord;

I have cleaved to Thy testimonies.

Ver. 32 - (Directing my steps) in the way of Thy commandments I will run;

For Thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Apostasy: "Thou Hast Left Thy First Love"

There can be no doubt, that there is a particular work, which the Lord has in view, at any particular period of the Church's -history, when He is acting in any power. It becomes, therefore, a matter of particular interest, to know what is the particular truth, which the Lord has in view at a given time, because thus, with increased intelligence, we become fellow-workers with Him. As illustrations of the fact, I might adduce, I believe, the presentation of the original and entire corruption of man in Augustine's time, as opposed to Pelagianism, justification in Luther's, the necessity of Regeneration in the time of the Wesleys, etc.

With regard to ourselves and the Lord's special work now, it is clear that it is an internal one. The Lord's promise was, that previous to his actual return the cry should go forth again, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." That cry was to act upon themselves. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." What then the Lord has awakened our attention to now, is the solemn fact that all have slumbered, wise and foolish together, whilst the Bridegroom has tarried; in fact, the complete apostasy, and departure of the professing Church from the truth and position once delivered to the, saints. We find that we have been enveloped in corruption, the question is how to escape that corruption.

It is not merely coming out of corrupt bodies, though that is necessary, we must come out of every body that is gathered on false principles, else we never can have even a fair start: still, if we carry with us the seeds of the corruption, unheeded and unjudged, the result will be the same again, only worse, by reason of our increased light, responsibility, and profession.

If we would get then the Lord's watchword now, I believe it is, " To Him that overcometh" (and that is within), and if we would know what it is that is to be overcome, I believe it is indicated in that word, " Thou East left thy first love." To suppose that we have not to overcome even within, because we have taken a position of separation, even if it were separation sevenfold, would only entirely betray us, and perhaps plunge us in the I. same corruption. If we then search from the word of God, what are the causes and principles of corruption, what the preservative, I believe we shall find them singularly simple. Resting in present attainment, I believe we shall find the whole, that is, the general secret of it. Look at Israel, and how distinctly do we find it traced! In Deut. 32, after all the marvelous grace of-" He found him... in a waste howling wilderness, he led him about... made him to suck honey out of the rock; butter of kine... and the pure blood of the grape"-how comes in the corruption? He rests self-complacently in the goodness of God to him, instead of resting on, and walking-with God himself, as a present thing, " Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness;" and, as a natural consequence, " he forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." That whole song is of the last importance; it is, I think, God's anatomy of man's corruption. We get, I think, the same account of the process, and God's pain at this leaving of the first love in Jer. 2:2. "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land

that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" etc. He reminds them of the desert land he led them through (v. 7) "I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination." "They have forsaken the fountain of living waters (v. 13), and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The same is traced with full distinctness in Ezek. 16 "Thy father was an Amorite thy mother a Hittite.... I passed by, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood,... and said, Live,... I have caused thee to multiply,... thy breasts are fashioned.... thou roast decked with gold, thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou DIDST TRUST in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot BECAUSE OF thy renown; " and so forth. In our Lord's time, there He found them. " Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father."

Turn now to the Gentile (Rom. 11). Its snare would be, " Be not high-minded." In Rev. 2 we get Christ's own delineation of the corruption. Every evil which you get in Thyatira, Sardis, or Laodicea, has, I believe, its germ in that simple word at Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love," amidst all the height, to which the Ephesian Epistle evidently shows God had brought them, and Christ's address bears witness too (ver. 2, 3).

Surely, then, these things are written before us with a pencil of light; and it must be of no slight importance to the saint to take heed to them. If we would get the preservative, " Christ's love" supplies one, and Phil. Iii. 13, another aspect;- " Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded " (i.e. perfect in not being perfect, but aiming at it). This, therefore, should be our spring, kept simple and fresh to the

"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (or perhaps "all died," i.e., all believers died in, or with Him): 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." This, I say, should be our motive, simple and fresh to the end. And then, as the Apostle says, "forgetting those things which are behind." When this is not the case, when the soul rests in attainments made, it becomes self-satisfied: it rests in the knowledge, perhaps, previously heaped up, which, like the manna, only breeds worms, and becomes corrupt, for want of being gathered day by day. And I would remark that all knowledge of truth gathered beyond our present communion, is not only not a blessing, but an injury. We can place no limit to the extent to which the Lord may teach and lead us on, but when once knowledge becomes an object to me apart from the Lord Himself, I may as well, and better, be employed about some other object. The hardest conscience of all often to deal with and arouse, is that which knows everything. You can tell them nothing new. Their previous knowledge without communion, is like a foil put upon " the sword of the Spirit," it makes it dull, ineffectual. Further, the being thus laden with vain knowledge, makes the saint restless, like an overloaded stomach, that does not know what is the matter with it. He has no longer an appetite for simple things. He must have something new and overpowering, or some- thing to meet his particular taste. Well does the wise man say, " The full soul loatheth the honey-comb, whilst to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Oftentimes he mistakes this restlessness, and dissatisfaction for spirituality, not knowing that the complaint is in

himself, he is not at the right point for satisfaction (John 6:35), and therefore dissatisfied with everything and every one.

May we not well look to our own hearts; how is it with our hearts as to this? Are we as simple and fresh as we once were? The example of Ephesus is full to the point. May we then, cultivate that simple taste, cherishing, loving, and receiving all that is of God, be it weak or strong (for one may err either way, Ex. 23:3-6). Let us love the whole word of God, not forming to ourselves particular tastes, and choosing particular parts, for "all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine... that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished;" neither having particular tastes in the saints we select for intercourse-this leads to a coterie and self-righteousness, and one-sided Christian character: further, the doing diligently what we have to do of worldly calling, the doing diligently whatsoever God enables us to do in any way of spiritual service, not critically discussing about gifts; for real ability from God is gift.

" Preach the word," says Paul to Timothy, " reprove, rebuke (2 Tim. 3), do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" for the love of Christ, for the work of Christ? Do we take as much delight in His word, for its or His own sake, not for mere knowledge? Surely there ought to be an appetite about this-" as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may feed thereupon, and grow "-and, in connection with that, putting away evil from our hearts, for it is impossible to grow without that; " laying aside all Malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (1 Peter 2).

I have endeavored to show then, that the root of all apostasy and corruption (and we know not to what length that may go the more has been the knowledge, joy, and devotedness, the deeper it sinks when corrupted), is to be found in resting in present attainment, instead of being kept freshly in the love of Christ.

Nothing is more healthful to one's own soul than the carefully bearing forth of the Gospel, publicly or privately. Distaste for that is a bad sign indeed. " He that watereth others, shall be watered himself." Finally, acknowledging the poorness of our endeavors, and the hopelessness of the ruin, which we still seek in grace to overcome, holding forth the word of life-to wait for that which alone will put all right. That "blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

And if our poor hearts at all feel that we have slipped back, and fallen under the power of this corruption, O how blessedly still does Christ meet us. " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." To Him be glory!

The Change of the Heavens and of the Earth Which Now Are

There is a difficulty, to my own mind, at least, as one inquiring into prophetic subjects, upon this, viz., as to the time of the change taking place.

I might state my difficulty thus:-In Rev. 20:11, it is written, " And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and he heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." This, apparently, is after the loosing of Satan, and, therefore, after the close of the Millennium. Perhaps, corroborative of this, is chapter 21:1, in which the naming of the new heaven and new earth (in which there is no more sea-which, if it is to be taken literally, points to something post-Millennial-for there is sea in the Millennial earth) immediately precedes the description of the descent of the tabernacle of God to be with men. But (as most are agreed) 21:9 onward, shows the New Jerusalem to be in the heavenlies during the thousand years.

Now (query) is the change of the heavens not synchronous with that of the earth; or is the New Jerusalem let down into the present heavenlies; Satan and his powers being chased first; out of them (Rev. 12) and then out of the earth (19 and 20).

The character of the Millennium as on earth, has, I confess, changed much its aspect to me; I used to consider it to be the Adamic possession of the earth, fulfilled in the second Adam. Now; it seems to me, rather, the Noachic possession made good in Christ. That is, it is the sword, or power of government, wielded by Christ through this earth in God's name,-a king reigning in righteousness. It is a dispensation put into the Son of Man's hand, a deposit entrusted to Him, in which many a contrast will be taught between men and Himself, as entrusted by God. Satan removed, the world subjected, the earth filled with blessing. He will yet allow man to show out his difference from Himself. And, perhaps; man never shows out more strongly what man is, than in the winding up of the Millennium.

If the change of the heavens is post-Millennial, my difficulty ceases; but then I have a new phase of the Millennium as to its heavenly glory to that which I have had; namely, it is the glory of God let down into the heavens which are. As the entire separateness of the city is marked,-it is a walled city-it may be so. The bearing of this upon "God's testimony of grace" important.

I should be really thankful for help on this subject from any one taught thereon. I only state my difficulty as one inquiring into matters which are all settled of God and are revealed for our learning; but as to which it better to be an inquirer than, hastily, or wrongly, to decide without the full support of the word of the Lord.

Colossians 1:12-19

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. 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 pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

Consecration to God

We stand in all that Christ was to the Father, when he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me." We stand in divine acceptableness in Him. Whatever there is of sweetness and excellency in Christ is upon us. Every act of Christ's was in the power of the blood of consecration; His obedience, His service, His walk; and ours should be the same. His devotedness is the standard and measure of our walk with God.

There is no sin-offering before Aaron is anointed, because he typifies Christ; but there is, before his sons are anointed, which shows its application to us. We are never to forget that we could not be consecrated to God, if Christ had not died to put away our sin. Still it is not the blood of the sin-offering that is put on the ear, the hand, and the foot, as it was when the leper was cleansed, and when putting away defilement was the question. Here consecration is the question. The value of Christ's blood in consecrating us to God, not the aspect of putting away defilement. His death is as necessary for the one as for the other; but consecration to God is here the aspect of it. There must be nothing in our thoughts, acts, or ways, inconsistent with that blood.

The blood and the oil were to be sprinkled on the garments. The death of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost should mark that which appears before the world. The world should be able to recognize that we are devoted to the Lord, though they cannot understand it in its principle and spring. Still it should be visible to men, as it is obligatory before God: Christian practice is the fruit of what we are with God, and flows from it. It is what we are that shows itself in our walk.

All our privileges are the result of our union with Christ. The sons of Aaron and their garments are sprinkled with Him. Observe, they were not sprinkled when they had been washed, but when the blood had been applied. The Holy Ghost is not the seal of regeneration, but of the work of Christ.

Aaron's being washed with his sons is like Christ uniting Himself with His people in John's baptism. Aaron was anointed without blood. The Holy Ghost could seal Christ as perfectly accepted in His own person; but to us He is the seal of Christ's work being accepted for us.

In being consecrated for worship, their hands were filled-but with what? Christ in His life and in His death. The one figured in the oiled bread and the other in the burnt-offering-" the fat." Every part of the value of Christ is thus put into our hands and offered up before God. It is not only that Christ is ever before God in all His sweet savor, and there for us; but we are to come and present Him afresh in worship-our hands are to be filled with Christ. We cannot go to God without finding Him already in the full delight of grace; still we may bring it afresh before Him. Noah's offering was a sweet-savor; and thus the very reason why God brought judgment on the world is given, why He would not any more curse them, now that the offering was accepted, " For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

The daily sacrifice was the provision, on God's part, for the sweet-savor being always before Him (ver. 38) whether we fail or not in our priestly action. This shows us the meaning of the taking away of the daily sacrifice in Daniel. When this is taken away there is no link with God left.

Unless we are willing to be consecrated to God, we shall never know the full value of the blood; at least not this aspect of its value. Self-will, however, is not consecration; but the reverse. There will be failure constantly in carrying it out; but there must be the purpose of heart to live wholly to Him, and not at all to self. Verse 43 shows that meeting God is the object; and this marks our title to perfect peace. For if there was one spot of sin left God could not meet us. If we are brought to God, sin must have been entirely put away; and that according to His estimate of it. For it is God's estimate and not ours; both of the sin and the blood, which gives us our place before Him. " It is God that justifies." It is not I that justify myself by my sense of the value of this blood.

Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes is up to a certain point, the inverse of the Book of Proverbs. It is the experience of a man who-retaining wisdom, that he may judge of all-makes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy. That is, by enjoying everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a canker worm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of righteousness, cannot be realized. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here below-a happiness drawn from things below, and resting on their stability. There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sin and transgression. It is the result of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of the Lord is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy, even when he has everything at command. "For what can the man do that cometh after the king?" Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained. The moral of this book goes even farther than that of the proverbs-on one side at least; for we must remember that it is this world that is in question (under the sun). Wisdom avails no more than folly. The difference between them is as great as that between light and darkness. But one event happeneth to them all, and much reflection only makes us hate life. The heart becomes weary of research, and after all one dies like another. The world is ruined as a system, and death cuts the thread of thoughts and projects, and annihilates all connection between the most skilful workman and the fruit of his labors. What profit has it been to him? There is a time for all things, and man must do each in its season, and enjoy that which God gives on his way. But God is the same in all his works, that men should fear before Him. He knows that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; but as far as man's knowledge extends, he dies as the beast dies, and who can tell what becomes of him afterward. There is no question here of the revelation of the world to come, but only of the conclusions drawn from experience of what takes place in this world. The knowledge of God teaches that there is a judgment; to man, all is darkness beyond the present life.

The fourth chapter expresses the deep sorrow, caused by the crying injustice of a sinful world, the unredressed wrongs, which compose the history of our race, and which, in fact, make the history of man insupportable to one who has a sense of natural justice, and creates the desire to put an end to it. Labor and sloth alike bring their quota of distress. Nevertheless, in the midst of this quicksand in which there is no standing, we see the thought of God arise, giving a firm foundation to heart and mind. This is in the beginning of chap. v. He demands respect from man. The folly of the heart is indeed folly in His presence. That which takes away the vain hope of earthly

happiness, gives a more true joy to the heart that becomes wise, and therefore joyful in separating itself from the world. There is, therefore, the grace also of patience. The self-sufficient effort to be righteous, only ends in shame; to be active in evil, ends in death. Finally, to strive after wisdom by the knowledge of things below is labor in vain. He has found two things-1st, with respect to woman judged by the experience of the world, he has found none good; amongst men, one in a thousand: and, in a word, that God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions apart from God.

God must be honored, and the king also, to whom God has given authority. We see, too, in chapters 9 and 10 how little everything here meets the apparent capacity of man; and even when this capacity is real, how little it is esteemed. Nevertheless, the wisdom of the upright and the folly of the fool have each their own consequences, and after all, God judges. To sum up the whole, God must be remembered, and that before weakness and old age overtake us. For the manifest conclusion of all that has been said is, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man."

The chief subject then of this book, is the folly of all man's efforts in seeking happiness here below, and that the wisdom which judges all this, only renders man still more unhappy. And then, all this experience, on the part of one who possessed the highest capacity, is put in contrast with the simple principle of all true wisdom -submission and obedience to God, who knows all things, and who governs all things, because " God shall bring every work into judgment."

If we remember that this book gives us the experience of man, and the reasonings of man on all that happens under the sun, there is no difficulty in those passages that have the semblance of infidelity. The experience of man is necessarily infidel. He confesses his ignorance; for beyond that which is seen, experience can know nothing. But the solution of all moral problems is above that which is seen. The book of Ecclesiastes makes this manifest. The only rule of life then is to fear the God who disposes of our life, who judges every action all the days of the life of our vanity. There is no question, in this book, of grace or of redemption, but only of the experience of this present life, and of that which God has said with respect to it, namely, His law, His commandments, and the consequent judgment. That which is decreed to man.

A few under the law might say these things, after having had the experience of all that God could give man to favor him in this position, and in view of the judgment of God that is connected with it.

The End and Purpose of God in the Church

We have often the question, What is the Church and what its testimony? put before us; and very necessary considerations are these. They should be recalled to our minds, for we are apt to forget what the Church is, and what its testimony is; but we do not see as often mentioned the end and purpose of God in the Church; and it is most needful, for everything is subordinate to this. Testimony is the duty and service of the Church, but much of its testimony should be in act, in conformity to the mind of God, in its position and doings. This testimony cannot exist without the end and purpose of God in the Church being before it. In a sacred body, holding the truth of Christ as to His work and person, practical evil is the greatest evil. The testimony by word flows fitly with a just position and confession; and often out of it. Testimony is often only considered to be testimony to the grace of God in Christ, to the sinner as first found. But if the testimony of the Gospel ends here, it is so far futile, that it becomes a primary work without result but in producing itself. Nor should the result be forming Christianity. It would be Christianizing Jewish thoughts. The end and purpose of God far outstrips this, being to gather together a company as associates of Jesus in the glory; and the Church in its proper action, is the means of God to this end, as the body itself is constituted of those who are to be with Him. This is as far as the persons themselves are looked to. We find the expression of what regards the glory of God in Christ by the Church, in Eph. 1-that God, in the fullness of times, gathers all things in Christ, in heaven and in earth, among which, and at the head of all under Christ, stands the Church.

God, in His wisdom and prudence, makes all this known to us; His known end and purpose being most needful for our humble adoption of His will, and to our having a just conception of our place in reference to His glory. The higher we are carried, the lowlier becomes our bearing; the fitter is faith, not works, to what we receive. Our distinctness also from evil, and care of not uniting ourselves with an inferior dispensation, skew the wisdom and prudence of God in revealing thus His end and purpose for His own glory. It should have the first place in our minds, though its fulfillment stands necessarily last in order. On the rejection of Christ by Jew and Gentile, and of the Holy Ghost by Israel, the Gospel of glory came out. All was put on uncovenanted grace opening to glory, immeasurably distinct from all that could be offered to meet it; and it was in the way of, or through faith, and so necessarily by grace. We find one idea of the apostle that manifests the general result, as arising out of the position of those called and chosen; viz., that in everyplace, in earth as well as in heaven, they are a peculiar people, and as seen here, zealous of good works that became their calling. The world would not know them, as it knew not their Master. One born from above will not be comprehended, and His works not owned, or rather, probably, disowned by the world; being directed neither to its use nor accrediting the struggle it is engaged in. The world hears the sound of His confession, but it knows not whence such a One cometh, nor whither he is going.

The next matter of consideration, is the Church in the point of view as the place of the education of the associates of the glory of Jesus, till they come in the unity of the faith to the Perfect Man-till they know Him who was from the beginning. But what is " the Faith"? I find faith used in several

senses-Faith as opposed to works in justification-Faith as the confidence of conscience-Faith as linked with the power of miracles; and Faith as the sum of life, and walk and confession of those who are called and chosen. In fact, conformity to Christ, and obedience to Him, and separation in accordance with the " calling " they have by grace.

It is more specially connected with calling; but this can never be separated from what becomes it in purification of the soul by faith of His person, and the grace that is in Him. Purification is the oil of the five wise virgins, who were, nevertheless, asleep to the hope of the appearing of Christ.

We can easily feel, that there was a special qualification for the Bride of the Lamb required by God. However, grace is the only fountain; yet must there be a condition and confession in accordance with the grace given to us in the gift of eternal life, and of association with the glory of Jesus. How vainly do we see the strength of saints wasted in a thousand ways, and diverted from the object set before them by God-how much service attempted by those who are ranking only as " little children," and who in the end manifest themselves not to have kept themselves in subjection, and, moreover, are ignorant of the way of righteousness, and have their senses unexercised to discern good and evil? It is a painful lesson to learn by looking back, how impure the way has been while the things of God have been in the mouth. The action of the Church as gathered to God has not been understood, or it would not have been thus. The end and purpose of God in it was not held as needful to be secured, or it would not have occurred.

We often find among Christians a thought, that the condition of doing what they would not, and not doing what they would, or that the flesh should be lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, in equal and doubtful balance, is the normal condition of the believer, to which they are necessarily subject. So far from it, these places are an exposition of the case of those who do not apprehend the power and extent of grace, viz., that grace has provided Jesus to be looked at, fed upon, and made the object of desire. It is this brings Christ as risen in his life and grace into the soul. Let them do so, and they shall be in no such condition. They shall thank God by Christ Jesus, and not be under the law. Few may be really inclined to have all that can be given; it would rob them too deeply of what they cherish, (which it would) of the affection as well as of the enjoyment of evil. But this is the only method by which 1 can pass by my affections, and reach and enjoy the power of God. The conflict is not with my sin, but whether I will come to Christ for its undoing or not. Many are ignorant of the way of God in this. They pray against their evil; but do not know that the glory of God seen as in a mirror in Jesus, will pass them on in an effectiveness they have not known to the object of their desire. God loves them; but the new creature is not established.

One thing may be held, therefore, as true, that, by the faith of Him, no evil need remain unovercome, or not displaced by Christ, or any grace remain unpartaken of. To use grace is eating and drinking indeed; and Jesus will be the one to raise those that eat and drink from the dead; for His life is in them. We are given access while yet but just born to consciousness; and we can be receiving from the first day of our admittance. Many a chastisement does the child receive from the father for sluggishness and forgetfulness in his progress. Servants receive reproof from the Lord for neglect of service. Service is a great place of perfecting, while a good confession is held to. God will, however, use what He finds to carry His word where He wills it should go; but it will be worse carried if not carried by instruments not only morally correct and zealous for the dispersion of the gospel, but purified by faith and called of God, and acquainted and exercised in the ways of

God.

In considering what "the faith" is, we see it must necessarily (and mainly so, from the character of faith relating to the future) be found in all that relates to separation from this present evil age. "Be not conformed to this world, but transformed in the renewing of your minds." The action, disposition, and tastes of the Spirit are natural to the new man, because (in intelligence of the calling we have received) if these are maintained by the power and prevalence of them through faith (for it is of grace), they will never suffer the man to remain in accordance with the world, its action, tastes and dispositions. So nearly allied are the "not being conformed," and "being transformed."

The end and purpose of God in the Church in this respect are, that the intelligence of what becomes our calling, and the dispositions that are of God, should be educated in it. And what can a thing be that does not answer the end and purpose of its creator? He gave gifts to this end. Let us set out that remarkable word in Eph. 4, " And he gave some apostles.... some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

We find, in Phil. 3 a promise, that what was wanting to any, should be revealed to make them up. We see in Phil. 2, how, the suggestions of Paul for their growth in the faith being withdrawn, they must, with fear and trembling, make up the measure among themselves; for it was God that was to work to the willing and doing of it by His divine energy: thus, to render every man perfect in Christ Jesus, Paul labored according to the working of God, which worked in him mightily. Christ is the full measure in all things, "as ye, therefore, have received Christ, so walk in Him." We see it said of some, that by the time they should be teachers, they were still ignorant of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ-" babes not having their senses exercised to discern between good and evil." To us it would be ignorance of what became our calling, should not our senses be exercised-" He that doeth righteousness is born of God." There is to us a righteousness according to that calling, and " he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as [after the same manner as, καθ' ομοίωσιν] Christ is righteous." The faith that is the sum of life, and walk according to our calling, is necessarily nearly allied with the hope of the Gospel. If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

We hear also of " striving for the faith once delivered to the saints." Now we see one Lord and one faith joined one faith-that is a separation and obedience to our calling-necessarily one under one Lord.-One faith, that is of Jew and Gentile; of these two Christ having made one in resurrection, having destroyed all obstacles by death; the third chapter being a parenthesis, and the fourth a continuance of the second; and recollecting the unity. of the faith which men were to be brought to by the means appointed, we see a consistency of path with our calling, in which it was necessary for full blessing to be agreed (see Phil. 4:2); but it was practical. It is necessary in our evil day, to strive together to maintain it. I apprehend also that the works of faith of James 2, are allied with this. What becomes the Lord of glory is the point started from. The works of faith are then proceeded with; and his argument is, that if love, which fulfills none of its pretensions, is not love, so faith, that fulfills none of the purposes of redemption is not faith. "He died for our sins to redeem us out of this present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father"; and we are not

redeemed out of it.

All this greatly affects the unity of the body-the Church. The end and purpose of God are as surely and more necessary, than primary qualification, so to speak. If I make the primary qualification, viz., being alive to God through faith of the Son, as the only ground of the oneness of the body (and many may be unawares let in who have it not), what an endless maze of varieties

and measures do I admit professedly (though the progress of souls, I allow, may be different)-varieties that touch essentials, and sit down content with this, that one acknowledges the other, as it is termed, a Christian; yet it is the unity of the faith we are to come up to. Have believers this proposed to them amidst all the ruin and difficulties of the Church? If we read the beginning of 1 John 2, we shall see how in an evil day things had to be measured. How possibly can an assembly clear itself of evil ones, but by advance on the way among themselves. Nor can we put aside the vagueness and uncertainty of the condition of a soul who has feelings, even to say the inward testimony of grace, with knowledge in the truth. In a day of deadness and darkness, light was brought in and spread abroad as to the testimony of the Spirit to the Child of God. It can never be put aside; but in that day of darkness, this becoming a leading circumstance to go by, the time came, that under the name of experience, a door was opened for much feeling that was not of God; and I would only ask the experience of the sober-minded, if they do not find that disapproval of a project in the soul is more to be depended on than the approval. Gathering of assemblies has been affected by these tests and judgment of souls, though not so much so among brethren; but from the " calling " being neglected, and " the faith " as the end and purpose of God not being borne in mind how doubtful the soundness of the reception. To examine whether they were in the faith, was converted into a question which, if they had believed, should never be asked. The end and purpose of God in the Church, might be unrevealed to the neophyte. It might be unknown by those that received him, and what the action in the Church towards it might be still less known. Growing up into unity is, under such a state, impossible; and it must materially affect the true unity of the body.

If I take the primary qualification given of God to be of it as my rule of unity, what a vague, reeling, undirected action must ever be the state of it; the end and purpose of God being the very needful knowledge of every one that comes in. It is an obligation to reach a goal. It would secure, or would go far morally to secure, the humility that tends to practical unity; but the Church has not the elements of unity if the end and purpose of God is not before it. It would, in the knowledge of its calling, be abundantly engaged in the purification of the heart, and in the coming up to the mark of the calling to above which we had received. Without its being known, edifying (properly, building up) the body of Christ is known only as refreshing it in ministry. The knowledge of the end and purpose of God in the Church binds it, burdens its lightness, makes its eye single, and the need of Christ would hinder most debates about His person. Baptism would be known as separation, from all things else that are past, to Christ, and progress would increase thanksgiving for grace received and salvation waited for.

And what ruin more complete would exist of the. Church when the end and purpose of God was not acted upon, and to what would it turn itself, and to what has it ever turned itself? What use is machinery without something to act about out of which it is to be the means of producing something; or what avails the power of God without direction to the just results for which it is

vouchsafed? How different the striving together for " the faith." How intelligent the discipline; how lovely the mutual support; how easily judged the profit of all that is offered to the saints. How full of friendship for the results' sake; and the glory of God in it is the earnest exhortation of one another. How the judgment is helped to all clearness in receiving those that profess their share in Christ. What a blessed nursery for the forgiven children in the steps to manhood, and the knowledge of the Son of God. How wanting we have been in these things, and who will be patient in hearing them. W. H. D.

Ephesians 5:1-8

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. 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. 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. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.

Esther

The Book of Nehemiah has shown us the people reinstated in the land, but deprived of the presence of God, except as to general blessing, and unacknowledged by God as His people; so that, whatever time may elapse, this condition leads us morally up to the moment when the Messiah should be presented to seal up prophecy, to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. That book gave us the last word-until the coming of Christ-of the history of Israel; and that, in grace and patience on God's part.

The Book of Esther skews us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the objects of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us) when they no longer held any position owned of God, and had lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them-which is manifest-He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favor of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (2:5, 6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the absolute and sovereign goodness, the absolute and sovereign faithfulness of that God Himself.

We see, then, in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of all the rights of God's people, and are stripped of the promises; in the fulfillment of which, as offered them by the mercy of God, at that time in Jerusalem, they take no interest. Even in this condition, God watches over and takes care of them; a people beloved and blessed in spite of all their unfaithfulness; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

It has been often remarked that the name of God is not found in the Book of Esther. This is characteristic. God does not chew Himself. But behind the power and the mistakes of that throne to which the government of the world had fallen, God holds the reins by His Providence; He watches over the accomplishment of His purposes and over everything necessary to their fulfillment; and He cares for His people, whatever may be their condition or the power of their enemies. Happy people! (compare, as to Israel, Jer. 31:20.)

It is to be noticed, that faith in the protection of God, and an acknowledgment of it, are to be found even when the dealings of God, with respect to His promises, are not owned. We are speaking of God's government and not of salvation. Salvation is not the question here. The Gentile reigns and does according to his will, taking, at his pleasure, one of the daughters of Benjamin for his wife. Sad condition, indeed, for the people of God! a position contrary to all divine law, to all faithfulness under other circumstances, but here not leading even to expostulation. The people of -Israel are lost here, as to themselves. But God acts in His sovereignty, and makes use of this sorrowful

evidence of their position, to preserve them from the destruction with which they were threatened.

Nehemiah unfolds the last relationship of God with the people before the coming of the Messiah; a relation of long-suffering, in which God does not own them as His people; a provisional and imperfect relation. Esther teaches us that God watches in sovereignty over the dispersed Jews, and preserves them even without any relation; and that without revoking any part of the judgment passed upon them, God shelters them without displaying Himself, and consequently by hidden means.

It was this that, as a matter of history, had yet to be made known before the public interposition of God at the end, in the person of Messiah, which prophecy alone could reveal.

This interposition appears to me to be pointed out in the circumstances of this history; vaguely, indeed, yet clearly enough for one who has traced the ways of God as revealed in the word. We see the Gentile wife set aside on account of her disobedience, and her having failed in displaying her beauty to the world; and she is succeeded by a Jewish wife who possesses the king's affections. We see the audacious power of Haman, the Gentile, the oppressor of the Jews, destroyed; and the Jew, the protector of Esther, Mordecai, formerly despised and disgraced, raised to glory and honor in place of the Gentile. All this, be it remembered, is in connection with the earth.

Finally, in the details of this Book, there is a very interesting point, namely, the Providential means which God employed, the opportuneness of the moment at which everything happens--even to the king's wakefulness; showing, in the most interesting manner, how the hidden hand of God prepares and directs everything, and how those who seek His will may rely upon Him at all times and under all circumstances, even when deliverance appears impossible, and in spite of all the machinations of the enemy and their apparent success.

The close of the Book presents, historically, the great characteristic fact of the dominion of the Gentiles; but one can hardly fail to see in it typically, in the position of Mordecai, the Lord Himself as head of the Jews, in closest connection with the throne that rules over all.

It will be easily understood, that this Book concludes the deeply interesting series of the historical Books, which, through the goodness of God, we have been considering; exhibiting-as far as there has been ability -their leading features. May the Spirit who has enabled us to enjoy that which God has deigned to reveal in them, continue to instruct us while meditating on those Books which we have still to examine!

Ezra

The events which we have been considering were deeply significant. The throne of God was no longer at Jerusalem. God had fulfilled His threat of casting off the city which He had chosen. He had bestowed the throne of the earth upon the Gentiles (Dan. 2:37). Not only had Israel failed under the old covenant and rejected God, so that God was no longer their king; but even after grace had raised up the house of David to sustain the relations of the people with God, everything was entirely corrupted by sin; so that there was no more remedy, and God had written Lo-Ammi (not my people) as it were on the forehead of a people who had forsaken Him. The counsels of God cannot fail; but such was the sad condition of the relationship between this people and God; if it can be said that a judgment like this allowed any relationship still to exist. So far as it depended on Israel - on man: all was lost. The consequences of this, with respect to God's dealings, were of great importance; they were nothing less than His taking His throne from the earth, casting off His people, and transferring power to the Gentiles. Man, in probation under the law, had failed, and he was condemned. He had been sustained by grace, through means which God had granted for his continuance therein, and he had failed again. Kingly power was in the hands of the Gentiles, and the people were under condemnation, according to the old covenant. But God now brings back a little remnant, and causes the temple to be rebuilt in its place, according to the promises given by the mouth of Jeremiah, and at the request of His servant Daniel. The latter, still at Babylon, with a deeper sense of the real condition of the people than they had who were rebuilding the temple, has received much more extensive information as to the future destiny of Israel, and the intentions of God respecting it.

A due appreciation of this return from captivity is not then without importance, since it is evident that the understanding of God's dealings with respect to the restoration of Israel, is connected with this event. It was the will of God that there should be some respite; but the current of His purposes, concerning the times of the Gentiles and the position of His people was unaltered.

It is Cyrus, king of Persia, who commands the people to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. A type, himself, in some respects, of a far more glorious deliverer, he confesses Jehovah, the God of Israel, to be the true God, He is "the righteous man raised up from the east who treads down the princes like mortar." Called of the Lord by name for this purpose, he favors Israel and honors the Lord. A man distinguished and blessed by the favor of the mighty God, a man whose conduct was certainly under the guidance of God, His personal character did not interfere with its being the times of the Gentiles, notwithstanding that God had put it into the heart of one of these Gentiles to favor His people. The word of God, by Jeremiah, is fulfilled. Babylon is judged. But, in fact, that which still exists is a prolongation of its power. The seat of the royal authority which God bestows on man, is a city which is not the city of God; which is neither the earthly Jerusalem nor the heavenly. The house of David no longer holds the scepter entrusted to it.

It is true that the rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that "the Branch" of the root of Jesse may be presented to this tribe. But the power of the Gentiles still continued; it existed even

when the Messiah was on earth, and the Jews had to be commanded to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. The presentation of Jesus, the true Messiah, was but the occasion of fully demonstrating this, in the cry, "We have no king but Caesar."

Nevertheless, God still gives the people - guilty under the law - an opportunity for the exercise of faith.

Let us examine the principles that characterize the energy of the Holy Ghost in the people, at the time of their return.

The first thing to be observed is, that having felt what it was to have to do with the Gentiles, and having experienced the power and wickedness of those whose help they had formerly sought, the children of the captivity resolve that Israel shall be an unmingled Israel, and proved to be so. They are most careful in verifying the genealogies of the people and of the priests, in order that none but Israel should be engaged in the work. Formerly one priest succeeded another without previous examination; genealogy was not verified, and children came into their father's place in the enjoyment of the privileges which God had granted them. But Israel now, through the great grace of God, had to recover their position. This was neither the beginning of their history nor the power suited to the beginning; it was a return, and the disorder that sin had brought in was not henceforth to be endured. What had any but Israel to do there? To mark out the family of God was now the essential thing. Deliverance from Babylon was their deliverance. It was this family, or a small remnant of it, which God had brought, or was bringing, out from thence. Thus, even amongst those who had come up to Judah, whoever could not produce his genealogy was set aside; and every priest with whom this was the case; was put away from the priesthood as polluted, whatever, as it appears, might be the reality of his qualification. Divine discernment might, perhaps, recognize them and their rights another day; but the people who had returned from captivity could not do so. They were a numbered and recognized people. They dwelt each in his own city.

In the seventh month, the children of Israel gather themselves together at Jerusalem, each one going up from the place where he dwelt. The first thing which they do there under the direction of Joshua and Zeruabbabel, is to build the altar, to place themselves under the wings of the God of Israel, the sole Help and sole Protector of His people; for fear was upon them, because of the people of those countries. Their refuge is in God: beautiful testimony of faith; precious effect of the state of trial and abasement they were in. Surrounded by enemies, the unwalled city is protected by the altar of her God, erected by the faith of God's people; and she is in greater security than when she had her kings and her walls. Faith, strict in following the word, confides in the goodness of its God. This exactness in following the word, characterized the Jews at that time in several respects. We have seen it, chap. 2:59-63; we find it again here, 3:2; and again in verse 4, on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles. Customs, traditions, all were lost. They were very careful not to follow the ways of Babylon. What had they left, except the word? A condition like this gave it its full power. All this takes place before the house is built. It was faith seeking the will of God, although far from having set everything in order. We find then no attempt at doing, without God, those things which required a discernment that they did not possess. But with touching faith, these Jews exercise piety towards God, worship God, and, as we may say, set Him in their midst, rendering Him that which duty required. They acknowledged God by faith; but until the Urim and Thummim should be there, they placed no one on God's part in a position which required the

exercise of God's authority, with the object of giving some competency to act for Him.

Having at length brought together the materials which the king of Persia had granted them, the Jews begin to build the temple, and lay its foundations. The joy of the people, generally, was great. This was natural and right. They praise the Lord according to the ordinance of David, and sing (how well it became them now to do so!) "His mercy endureth forever." Nevertheless, the ancient men wept, for they had seen the former house, built according to the inspired direction of God. Alas! we understand this. He who thinks of what the Church was at the first, will understand the tears of these old men. This became nearness to God. Farther off, it was right that joy, or at least the confused shout which only proclaimed the public event, should be heard; for, in truth, God had interposed in His people's behalf.

Joy was in His presence and acceptable. Tears confessed the truth, and testified a just sense of what God had been for His people, and of the blessing they had enjoyed under His hand. Tears recognized, alas! that which the people of God had been for God; and these tears were acceptable to Him. The weeping could not be discerned from the shout of joy; this was a truthful result, natural and sad, yet becoming in the presence of God. For He rejoices in the joy of His people, and He understands their tears. It was, indeed, a true expression of the state of things.

But, in such a case, difficulties do not arise only from the weakness of the remnant; they proceed also from elements with which the remnant are outwardly connected, and which, at the same time, are foreign to the relationship of the people with God. In Israel's case, there was real weakness, because God-although faithful to His people according to their need-did not, in fact, come forward to establish them on the original footing. To do so, would not have been morally suitable; either with respect to the position in which the people stood with God; or with regard to a power which He had established among the Gentiles, apart from Israel; or with a view to the instruction of His own people in all ages, as to the government of God. Relationship with God is never despised with impunity.

In such a state of things, the power of the world having gained so much ground already in the land of promise even among the people, to whom the promise belonged, difficulties arose from the fact that persons who, in consequence of the intervention of the civil powers, were within the borders of the promised land, desired to participate with the Jews in constructing the temple. They alleged, in support of their claim, that they called upon God as the Jews did, and had sacrificed unto Him since Esar-haddon had brought them into the land. This was not enmity. Why repel such a desire? The Spirit of God calls them the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin. The people of God-the Church of God-ought to be conscious of their own peculiar privileges, and that they are the Church of the Lord. The Lord loved Judah and Benjamin. From His grace towards this people flowed all the blessing of which they were the object, and the people ought fully to recognize this grace. Not to recognize it, was to despise it. Now this grace was the sovereign goodness of God. To admit strangers, would have been insensibility to this grace as the only source of good; it would have been to lose it, and to say that they were not its objects according to the sovereign goodness of God. But the faithfulness and intelligence of the chiefs among Israel delivered them from this snare. "We ourselves, together," said they, "will build unto the Lord God of Israel. Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God." In fact, it would have been to deny that He was their God, the God of Israel. This is especially the Church's case, when called to remember her

privileges, after long forgetfulness and painful chastisement. If God allow it for the trial, or the chastening of His people, it is possible that the work may be stopped through the practices and the malice of those who will praise the great and noble Asnapper to the powers of the earth, before whom they will appear in their true earthly character, just as they assumed the garb of piety when seeking to insinuate themselves among the remnant of Israel. The power that belonged to God's people, at the time of their former independence, will alarm one who-not trusting in God-dreads the effect upon his own authority of the energy which the Spirit of God produces in the people, independently of this, authority, however submissive the people may be. Israel was acting here according to Cyrus's own decree; but this is of no avail. That which depends on God is absolute-That which does not depend on Him is arbitrary; but the faithful have nothing to do with all this. God may see that trial and chastening are needful to them. Whatever happens they have to go through that which puts faith to the proof; but their path is ordered by the will of God, and their faith relies upon Him. In this case they had to wait; but God's time would come; and that, not by means of a mere decree from the Gentile king. God raises up a much more precious encouragement for them from another quarter. Although the people had been subject to the Gentiles, God was still supreme; His Word is still of supreme authority to His people, whenever He condescends to speak to them. If necessary, He can dispose the hearts of kings to uphold it. In every case, His people are to follow it without seeking other motive, or other help. Haggai and Zechariah are sent of God, and prophesy among the people. These immediate communications from God were of infinite value; and although they did not change the position of the people with respect to the Gentiles, they were a touching proof that God was interested in His people; and that, whatever might be their afflictions, the God of Israel was above all that had power to oppress them.

I have said that the people were obliged to wait; this was the case as soon as they received the decree that forbade their continuing to build. But many years had elapsed before this prohibition came; and it seems evident to me, from examining the prophecies which throw so much light on the contemporary history, and from comparing their dates, that it was want of faith in the remnant which was the true hindrance. There were adversaries in the land who made them afraid, and who thus prevented their building. It appears that the Jews did not dare continue. Their adversaries hired counselors in the Persian court to frustrate the purpose of the Jews. But the first thing was that the adversaries weakened the hands of the people. It was not until two reigns later that the prohibition was obtained; but the Jews had left off building through fear of their adversaries (compare 4:4 and 25, and 5:1, with Hag. 1:1, 2, 4; 2:15). Neither was, it because the king's decree was brought them that they began again to build, but because they feared the Lord, and feared not the king's command, as seeing Him who is invisible (Hag. 1:12, 13). God was not any more to be feared in the reign of Darius than in that of Cyrus or of Artaxerxes; but the source of their weakness was their having forgotten God. This makes manifest the great grace of God in thus awakening them by the mouth of Haggai. God had until then also chastened the people.

All this shows us, that in ceasing to build the Temple, Israel was in fault. It appears from Haggai (2:15), that they had made no progress at all. The terror with which the adversaries had inspired the Jews had stopped them. They had no excuse for this, since even the king's commandment was on their side. That which they lacked was faith in God. We have seen that when there was faith, they dared to build, although there was a decree against it. The effect of this faith is to give

rise to a decree in their favor, and that even through the intervention of their adversaries. It is good to trust in God. Blessed be His gracious name!

Under the influence of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, the house was finished (6:15).

The Lord's great grace in this was a real occasion for joy. The priests are set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, according to the law of Moses, and we find more faithfulness than in the best days of the kings (compare 6:20, with 2 Chron. 29:34). But we hear nothing of the ordinances of David, and a still greater deficiency is seen in their celebration of the feast of dedication. They kept the Passover, a proof that the redemption of the people could be remembered in the land; happy privilege of the restored remnant! Many also had joined them, separating themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land. The Lord had given them cause for joy; but fire no longer came down from heaven to testify divine acceptance of the sacrifice offered for the dedication of the house. This was indeed a negative difference, but one of deep significance. And even that which formed the subject of their joy, betrayed their condition. "The Lord had turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." It was great kindness and touching grace on His part; but what a change!

Alas! this was not the end of the history! God, in His goodness, must still watch over the unfaithfulness and the failures of His people, even when they are but a small remnant who by His grace have escaped from the ruin. He puts it into the heart of Ezra, a ready scribe in the law of Moses, to think of the remnant in Jerusalem, to seek the law of the Lord, to teach it and cause it to be observed. Here again, it is still the Gentile king who sends him for this purpose to Jerusalem. All blessing is of God, but nothing (except prophecy, in which God was sovereign, as we have already seen Samuel at the time of the people's downfall), nothing in point of authority comes immediately from God. He could not ignore the throne which He had Himself established among the Gentiles.

The character of this intervention of God by Ezra's mission, is, I think, a touching proof of his loving-kindness. It was exactly suited to the wants of the people. It was not power that had been removed to another place. It was the knowledge of the will and the ordinances of God, -of the mind of God in the word. The king himself recognized this (7:26). Guarded by the good hand of his God, this pious and devoted man goes up with many others to Jerusalem. Alas! as soon as he can look into these things, he finds the law already broken, evil already come in. The people of Israel had not kept themselves separate from the people of the lands, and even the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass. Ezra is confounded at this, and remains overwhelmed with grief the whole day. Can it be that the remnant, whom God had snatched as it were from the fire, have so soon forgotten the hand that delivered them and married the daughter of a strange God? Those who trembled at the Lord's word having assembled with him, Ezra humbles himself on account of it. At the time of the evening sacrifice he pours out the deep sorrow of his heart before the Lord. A great multitude have their hearts touched by grace. There is no prophetic answer, as so often before had happened in similar circumstances; but there is an answer from God in the hearts of the guilty. "We have sinned," said one among them; "yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." And they set themselves heartily to the work. Israel is summoned, each one under pain of exclusion, to come up to Jerusalem, and they assembled at the time of rain, for the matter was

urgent; and the congregation acknowledge it to be their duty to conform to the law. Under the hand of Ezra, and by the diligence of those who were appointed to this work, it was accomplished in two months. As for all those who had taken strange wives they gave their hand that they would put away their wives, they confessed their sin and offered a ram for this trespass.

Once more we find that that which characterizes the operation of the Spirit of God, and the intervention of God among His people, with respect to their walk and their moral condition, is separation from all who are not the people of God as they were. Those of the priestly family, who were unable to produce their genealogy, had been excluded from the priesthood as polluted; and those among the people who were in the same case, were not acknowledged. They positively refuse any participation in the work to the people of the land who wished to join them in building the temple; and, finally, with respect to their own wives, several of whom had borne them children, they have to put them away and to separate themselves, at whatever cost, from all that was not Israel. It is this which characterizes faithfulness in a position like theirs; come out from Babylon, and occupied in restoring the temple and the service of God, according to that which yet remained to them.

Moreover, we see that God did not fail to comfort them by His testimony; sweet and precious consolation! But the power of the Gentiles was there. That which appertained to authority, and the throne at Jerusalem, and to the power of ordaining which belonged to it, was not re-established. The public sanction of God was not granted. Nevertheless, God blessed the remnant of His people when they were faithful; and the most prominent thing, and that which should dwell upon our hearts, is the grace which, in the midst of such ruin, and in the presence of the Gentile throne-set up through Israel's sin-could still bless this people, though acknowledging the Gentile throne which God had established in judgment upon them.

It is a solemn season, when God, in His compassion, encourages and sustains the little remnant of His people in the midst of their difficulties; and owns them, as far as possible, after the ruin which their unfaithfulness had brought upon them; such ruin that God had been constrained to say of them Lo-Ammi.

It is most afflicting to see the people, after such grace as this, plunging again into fresh unfaithfulness and departure from God. But such is God, and such is man.

Fragment: Prayer

"Prayer is prayer, let it come from the weak or from the strong. It is not the heart or the lip from which it comes, as the Ear that it goes to, which is the great thing."

D.

Fragment: Scripture a Great Reality

How many neglected texts, texts hid away in corners, so to speak, half-sentences, may I say, parts of verses, obscure pieces or fragments of the word, were realized in the days of the New Testament. Generations had scarcely heeded them, but they were in the oracles of God, and God would treat them as real, however man might neglect them. " For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the word of God of none effect: God forbid."

" Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" " The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" " A bone of Him shall not be broken;" " Behold I and the children whom God hath given me;" " With men of other tongues will I speak," etc.; " He that gathered little had no lack;" " Rejoice, ye gentiles, with his people."

I only put down what just occurs to me at the moment; but they serve to illustrate what we are saying, How the Spirit of God, thus, in a distant age, made scripture to come forth from its hiding or secret place in the book, and from under the practical ignorance and neglect of man, and show itself as a great reality. Thousands of years had made no alteration, had had no effect upon them: they were as real before God as when His Spirit breathed them, and He would make them good, nor let a jot or a tittle fail.

So with us. What the ministry of the Lord and of the Spirit in the Apostles did, in those days, after this manner, for many and many a neglected scripture, the coming day of power and of glory and of Christ, will do for many a neglected scripture still. All shall be realized, and word after word shall come forth, whether of promise or of judgment; and God shall be found true, the' every man a liar.

The price of the measure of fine meal, and the treading down of the unbelieving lord, in the day of the famine of Samaria, tell us these things in a solemn and yet interesting Scripture (2 Kings 7).

Fragment: the Church

If it be impossible to find anywhere the primitive position and pristine glory of the Church, if one seeks it in form as the dissenters have done; it is not impossible, if we seek it in principle, according to the obedience of faith, to withdraw from all the evil; for God is faithful, and faints not in His love towards those who seek Him.

Fragment: the Church on Earth

The system which denies the existence of a responsible church, even from the Day of Pentecost, upon earth, because, according to the Divine counsels, the Church will not in truth be gathered together in one, safe in the heavens, at the end, is false and absurd. 'Tis false; because Timothy had to be instructed how to conduct himself in the Church of God; certainly this referred not to the Church assembled in heaven. And the body of: Christ increased (Eph. 4) by joints and bands, etc.; and certainly this is not in heaven. 'Tis absurd; because no one dreams of corruptions in the heavens; and the reasoning of every man of sense, and of the Bible, is occupied with the Church upon earth.

But, alas! the errors which crept in among true Christians (Gal. 4:11 and 20) were such, that Paul, for a moment, stood in doubt of those who had adopted them. 'Tis true, also, that there is corruption now in the Church; for the sins and errors of the beginning have gone on augmenting, although God has often raised up in the midst thereof special light and testimony.

Fragment: the Perfectness of Christ

The proper and immediate trial of Gethsemane was the power of Satan-" This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The great point was, to get between his soul and the Father (as before with desirable things of this life); but he could not. Christ hence pleading with His Father-receiving nothing from Satan or man in the cup-receives it from His Father in perfect and blessed obedience-" Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Hence his soul is entirely out of the darkness in respect of the enemy; and he can say, in perfect calm of others: "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and present himself willingly, that his disciples might go free.

How blessed the perfectness which, at his own cost, always kept them free! For in their position Satan would have caught them in his hour, had not the Lord stood forward in the gap. And so ever. And when needed, as for Peter, He can allow just so much as was good to sift; but stay, for him, the proud billows which were to go clean over his own soul.

Fragment: the State of the Church

What is the state of things around us (called the Church), when it is compared with that which was displayed at first at Jerusalem; and what will be the result of it all in the day of the Lord's coming?

Fragments

There are two ways in which we learn the knowledge of God -by enjoying Him-or by our needs, to which He ministers. At present it is chiefly the latter: by and bye it will be the former.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, note the Father's love in falling on the son's neck, and kissing him in all his rags; then introducing him into the house, clothed in the best robe. It would have been discreditable to the Father, had his son been in his house in rags.

An ambassador is not of the country into which he is sent: so we, having to bear witness for Christ down here, should do so according to the glory in which he has set us: and, as being born from above, carry out into the daily details of our conversation the great and heavenly principles, of that country, to which by our new birth we belong.

All through the gospel of John we find Christ occupied with putting His disciples in the same place with Himself, before God and before the world.

Fragments

It is the saint or the church rather, which gives Christ His character before the world-the epistle of Christ to the world. We may know how to distinguish and understand how inadequate the representation; but the world, the infidel, judges of what Christianity is, by what Christians are.

Christ must be known by faith to the individual himself, in order that he may be changed into the same image: no ordinance can do this.

Fragments

There is no fear when we see Christ in the glory above, because every ray of this glory says to me, no condemnation. I is because the sin is put away that He is up there.

Stephen was a true epistle of Christ, when he looked up into heaven, saw Jesus there, and said of his murderers, lay not this sin to their charge. If any man loveth, he is born of God. In no other way than by being made a partaker of the divine nature could he know what loving is.

A perfectly humble man would be one who was always thinking of the Lord Jesus, and never of himself.

God made man the center of a system. Hence fallen man always seeks to make himself the center of things: this is what we call selfishness. But now God has made Christ the center of a system of blessing, and it is sin to make anything else the center.

Fragments

The Christian has got a nature which all the motives in the world can never touch: which knows and is constrained by the love of Christ; but we are apt to let a quantity of little earthly motives creep in again. Hence the charge, "Thou hast left thy first love."

In confessing Christ, we often fail through not keeping "grace and truth" in their proper harmony: both came by Jesus Christ: and in Him we never see them in collision.

Trial may force our thoughts to desire the coming of Christ; but if we knew its full blessedness, we should love that "blessed hope " for its own sake.

Testimony for Christ must always flow from intercourse with Him-not simply doing things because we desire to bear testimony for Him, for then our hearts will be thinking about our testimony, instead of about Him.

In every Christian there is the grace which was in the Lord Jesus Christ: not indeed fully developed: even as in the heart of man there is every evil thing, though more or less developed.

No word of commandment can produce fruit: but the Spirit leads us as partakers of the divine nature to bring forth fruit.

Fragments

The worship of the Heathen amounted to this-bribing their gods to countenance sin. All their offerings had this character upon them.

The Church ought to have been a witness for God in the world, exhibiting that "God is light," "God is love," and "God is one."

Nicodemus comes to Christ as a teacher; but he must be sent to the brazen serpent to learn the secret of life for the dead sinner before he can be taught anything else.

Fragments

The saints have often very imperfect thoughts about the blessing of Christ Himself being theirs. When God tells Abraham, "I am thine exceeding great reward," Abraham asks, "What wilt thou give me?"

God acts in grace as One above all the evil, and places His children in a position to do so too.

The Christian's confidence is in the living God-the worldly man's in Providence. The Christian is taught, that the God of Providence is his Father.

Man may think he can do better than Christ in making men love God; but the result of His manifestation of the Father was, "The world hath not known Thee." The Gospel is powerful not to improve the world, but to bring out the Church.

The miraculous restoration of the sick, etc., was a little sample of what Christ will do when He returns to the earth, and sets all creation in order-destroying the works of the devil: hence they are called, " The powers (miracles) of the world to come."

Those who are enjoying a constant settled happiness, do not, except when it is a new thing, talk much about it; they talk out of it.

God begins with His grace with that which is farthest off-"enemies in your minds" by wicked works: other things follow.

In Isaiah you find Israel as the servant, up to chap. 49; afterward, Christ is the Servant.

If man be a sinner, you may polish a sinner; but he is a sinner still.

Fragments

Faith is faith in the person of Christ - not faith that I am forgiven.

God is the Sovereign. God can let Satan loose to suit his own blessed purpose: but he does not entrust to his saints to allow evil that good may come.

The temptation now is not to give up the name of Jesus, but to connect something else with that name.

The golden calf was not to put aside Jehovah. When Aaron saw it, he said, "Let us make a feast to Jehovah."

Fragments

Who is to judge of the word of God? Nobody: the word is to judge you and me. When this is felt, God takes His proper place in the matter.

One's own heart wants blessing. If always occupied with the contemplation of the evil, I could not get on and keep my heart tender. We must be occupied with the power of God in blessing, in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Law says, thou shalt; but does not give the motive.

The gift of tongues was not the restoration of the condition of things which existed before the curse of Babel; but it was the demonstration of God's power in blessing in the midst of the evil.

Grace

How refreshing it is to our souls to think of the grace of God; for what do we not owe to that grace? May the God of all grace guide us, whilst for a little we dwell upon this blessed aspect of His character towards, us poor sinners!

The very fact that we are sinners at once brings in the necessity, that if God act towards us at all, it should be by grace. The Scripture recognizes but two ways of our dealing with God, and He with us, and those ways complete in themselves, either all works, i.e. obedience, or all grace, i.e. the ground of works being entirely forfeited, so that entire grace can alone reach the case. Now that there has been a flaw somewhere in his obedience, the most hardy would scarcely dare to deny, and, therefore, if we are to be saved it must be by grace. But without entering on that question now, let us trace a little the stream of grace. That it was grace that set God in motion towards us, for the purpose of our salvation and complete blessing, the Scripture declares to us. For speaking of the calling with which He calls us, "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself" (Eph. 1:5), He says it is "to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath bestowed His favor upon us in the Beloved." For so I believe it ought to be rendered. Not so much His bringing us to acceptance in Christ, as He subsequently does, as the original movement of His heart towards us in Christ at first. The word is the same as, "Hail, Mary, highly favored," i.e. the subject of favor. And as He foreknew, and fore-provided for our case as sinners in the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, this necessarily follows. And as it was grace that began, so grace has equally showed itself forth in all its ways. The dispensational wisdom, wherein God has brought forth His grace, shines marvelously forth. He waited till the law had run its full course, "as a school-master unto Christ," until it had shown by its heavy yoke, which they could not bear, the helplessness of the sinner, man, and the inefficiency of the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10), to meet the manifested need. He waited, and then in the fullness of time He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under law. What forbearing grace and wisdom! How necessary for us-"For I knew thee, that thy neck was as brass"! It came, therefore, at the right time; for "when we were yet without strength (proved to be so dispensationally), in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And, indeed, as I said, God has taken occasion thus to set forth and show forth His grace, and that it is grace. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Nor is it this only; but look at the whole calling of the Church, look at what God did for the Church at once, in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ-He took it once from the horrible pit, out of which it was hewed (Eph. 2:1-3), and at once, at One bound, taking us just as He found us, but putting away our sins by the blood of Christ, "even when, or though, we were dead in sins, He quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And, indeed, the next verse tells us this is to be the thing specially displayed and illustrated hereby hereafter, "That in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." And how it loves in that passage to dwell on this one thought of grace; cutting away everything which

for a moment could intercept the view. " For by grace are ye saved through faith," and that very faith (the hand by which we receive it) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not surely of works, for we are His workmanship, and how can the workmanship boast itself against the workman, as though it were anything in itself?

Then, again, look at the place whereinto we are brought by it. It is not merely a number of blessings, as we have it in our translation (Eph. 1:3), but one unbroken, unclouded charter of blessing-" all spiritual blessing, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

To return. The more we study the salvation and blessing of the Church in Eph. 2 and 1, the more do we see that it is, must be of grace. The depth and height of it cuts every string of human claim or strength.

Take another view.- Look at the person in whom this grace comes - God's Son, His only begotten Son, in whom He was ever well pleased, one with the Father; what do we read in that? It is the deepest of all. 'Tis an unspeakable gift. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. " Angels desire to look into it."

That it is grace alone carries on the work which itself began, we know to our joy. It is, indeed, God only that works in us, to will and to do of His own good pleasure: "Thou also hast wrought our works in us" (Isa. 26:12). Further, we know that--

"Who grace has brought, will glory bring,

And we shall reign with Him."

He will thus crown His own work.

I say, then, it is well, often amidst the trials and corruptions of the Church, our- own failures and trials, to look away from all to that grace, which stands forth bright and independent of all for us. It refreshes our souls, it animates us afresh, it inspires the freshest and the brightest confidence in God, and again girds us for our work. "Hearken unto me" says the Lord to Israel's remnant (Isa. 51), " ye that follow righteousness: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed and increased him." The result is full confidence. "For the Lord will comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

It is both refreshing and profitable to think of the simple grace of God; for the same spirit that works the unconverted to assert salvation by works, works also in us to bring us into bondage, to becloud our apprehensions of the simple grace of God, and thus to cut us off, more or less, from the fountain of all joy, and of all strength. For our _strength will always be in proportion to our simple apprehension of the grace of God. If that fountain is disturbed, the waters will surely become muddy in our souls. And how decisive is the Spirit of God, knowing the importance of clearness here. He admits of no compromise. Gal. 5:4 -" Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by law [wholly, or in part, for the Galatians did not give up Christ altogether, but would have Christ and something else]; ye are fallen' from grace." That is, ye have left the ground of grace, which admits no compromise.

Yes; the sum of the Gospel will ever be found in its fullness in those words of the Apostle, Titus 2
The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, godly, and righteously, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar, or special people, zealous of good works." This is God's golden chain, grace running through all. That grace may, in every way, in heart, and life, have its full effect with us, may well be our prayer.

Adelphus.

The Habitation of God

So thoroughly corrupt are the springs of human thought, that every true knowledge of God must reach and abide in the soul as a revelation. It is not a conception; it is light-the disclosure and teaching of the life of Him who is the light of men. The word of Scripture does not of itself impart this, for then every thinker of it would be enlightened; whereas it is a fact, that reason brought to bear on Scripture always leads to error and confusion. The spiritual man reads the Word which measures his thoughts; for the Word is God's limit of revelation. Anything more or less is not divine; because, though reason is not light, it is, in the pride of nature, always seeking to rank as such; and it is ever ready to take up even a position, obtained by the Spirit, which does not own it but as a servant; and here always the spiritual man needs holy discipline. The abundance of revelations, though of God, did not make Paul a less vain man. Nay, from the fact of being thus gifted, he required a buffeting-a depreciation of nature equivalent to the exaltation through grace. Seek the one, be prepared for the other. Nothing so marks the constitutional debility of the household of faith, as how few truths, compared with the many professed to be known, are held by them in all the vigor and influence of light; "light is that which cloth make manifest;" light is the fruit of life, and declares that which produces it; so that there is constitutional strength with intelligence of its value and use. This imbecility is marked now, as in Israel. That the conscience may lose its sensibility long before the mere man loses the habit which the conscience had once led him to conform to. "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, and their heart goeth after their covetousness." The most important truths (alas, how the soul feels it!) are often nothing more than "a very lovely song," pleased with the enunciation of a new truth as a problem of science. The conscience keeps aloof from the severe and holy demands of the Word of God; consequently the blessing of being a doer of the Word is little known-and, what is still more sad, the most important truths are spoken of with a lightness and flippancy, which show what little grasp they have of the conscience-for when the conscience is acted on, the painful consciousness of imperfectness only finds relief where light finds its source and the soul its Savior; hence, he who is doing truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God, and then, plainer than any place else, he learns that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

In heading this paper with "THE HABITATION OF GOD," I cannot divest myself of the feeling, that this tritely acknowledged truth has little or no hold of our consciences. It is spoken of-it is admitted-nay, even wondered at-but does the great responsibility which such undeserved dignity imposes sensibly engage our souls? Do we contemplate in all its wondrous import that word, "I will dwell with them." The heart goeth after covetousness, that is, seeking something instead of God; and, consequently, the wonderful springs, from which God would refresh the soul passing through this wilderness, are unheeded and untasted. God made man for Himself. Man may doubt-may refuse the glory-but God, in His blessed grace, is not diverted by either from the fulfillment of His purpose. This purpose, declared for a moment in the garden of Eden, when God, in the cool of the day (marvelous to behold!), sought association with the first man Adam, has

never been surrendered on the part of God. True, Adam shrank from it (sin made him), and his children have been ever ready, wantonly and wickedly, to refuse it. Nevertheless, it is the purpose of God, and, opposition surmounted, only adds greater glory to the ovation. Man, in every dispensation hitherto, has retained this natural dread of the presence of God; and this fear is used of the enemy to encourage avoidance of what would excite it-yet God has never failed to present Himself to the man who was ready to hear and obey His counsels; nay, He has never set him, the execution of His counsel or testimony, that He has not presented Himself at once to confirm and co-operate with him. Before the seventh from Adam fell under stern rule which reigned from Adam to Moses, God arrests its fatal course-and Enoch walked with God three hundred years. As soon as Abram declared his full separation from Syria, and committed himself without reserve to the hand of God to guide and succor him in an unknown territory, the Lord appeared to him; and it is edifying to study the occasions on which the Lord displays this readiness of His to be on personal intimacy with him. To Isaac, after the forced separation from Gerar only, after conflict, abandoned-the reward and solace were, " the Lord appeared to him that night." I cite these instances in the earlier history of God's people to show, that though man had passed from the place where God could meet him without remorse, and though the time had not come when the breach was repaired, yet God discloses the desire of his heart, even livingly and personally, to connect Himself with His people.

A fuller example of this we get in the manifestation to Moses in the burning bush. There is shown that the God of glory can dwell in the midst of what He could in a moment consume, and which He does not consume; that His mercy is as great as His power. Israel should learn to value His presence. That though He was consumable, and worthy to be consumed, yet the God of glory would come to their rescue and deliverance; consequently, when the deliverance is effected, and that the many witnesses of the achievement stand on the Canaan side of the Red Sea-what is among the first notes of the triumphal song? " He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation 1" The soul had learned the blessing of Him who dwelt in the bush; and now it ascends to the desire which is always in him who has known in truth the salvation of God, even that He might dwell with him; but this is also God's purpose; and hence, further on in this song we read, " Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in." And again, " Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation." Thus man in the ecstasies of salvation has common thought with God. God and he desire to dwell together. How much Israel departed from this sentiment afterward, does not derogate from the blessedness and the purpose of him who is exulting in the grace and mercy of God. When law and assertion of competency to fulfill it came in, the spring of grace is closed and the song forgotten?

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel are introduced for a moment into that wondrous presence, which a little while ago, all Israel in the fullness of their heart, desired an habitation for amongst themselves. Alas! in proportion as we lose a sense of what God is for us, do we lose perception or desire of His glory. The better we know His grace the better will we seek His glory. The tabernacle revealed heaven in a figure only open to the priests-God had His place there, but the high priest alone could enter it; still, though heaven in a figure translated to earth, yet it was amongst men, and God dwelt there; not surely as if He had found a resting-place on earth, but until then He sets His pavilion here with heavenly dignities.

Thus the tabernacle never fulfilled the purpose of God as His " Holy habitation." It bore God in heavenly order among His people on earth, till that spot was reached, when the ransom being paid, the sin removed, the Holy God could set up His dwelling-place among men. This it was that David, " the man after God's own heart," desired to find, and for which he is told, " It was well that it was in thine heart." Many and glorious were the achievements of David; yet a commendation of none of them is recorded, but the desire to build God a house. This is distinguished as paramount to all His other services. May our souls appreciate the moral!

At length the time came-" Solomon built Him a house" on that spot where Abraham learned to estimate how God loved the world when he offered up His son-where David was taught that mercy rejoiceth over judgment-where the spotless Lamb of God should flow and take away the sin of the world, there are laid the foundations of that house which was to be God's habitation. True, it was after all but a shadow of that which was to come-of that temple of which it could be said, " Destroy this temple and in three days will I raise it up." But if such dignity and virtue were attached to the type, how much and how great to the antitype? Who can read Solomon's dedication of that temple and not be filled with wonder and praise at the blessings stored up in that house for every soul in almost any shade, difficulty or distance, who would cast the eye of faith upon it. Surely not because it was a gorgeous edifice, but simply because it was the habitation of God. Daniel in Babylon-Jonah in the whale's belly-knew what it was to set their eye, the eye of faith, on that temple. May we echo, We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." God, if we may so say, had only obtained an installment in the temple at Jerusalem of that purpose which is incomprehensible to us because of the magnitude of its mercy and blessing, even that He should dwell with us. And yet can we read down the page of Israel's history, and not be warned while we admire the jealousy with which they cared for that house. Seventy long years of bitter captivity did not eradicate their love for a temple built with hands. Nay, when their power was gone, never to return, having lapsed into the hands of the Gentiles, the undying zeal for the house of the Lord was still to be the harbinger of every blessing, as Haggai admonishes them. How it stirs the soul to see Israel, after the flesh, go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house of the Lord, which one day Antiochus should profane! Nothing so marks the fidelity of our soul's attachment to God-and a great spring in it-as our care for His house. Jesus began His ministry in Israel with this motto, " The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," and he ends it faithful to the same. The widow gave up all her living for the repairs of the temple. The Lord of glory gave His life because " the zeal of thine house hath eaten Him up"-and He that was greater than Solomon would build an enduring house.

From Adam's fall till Jesus stood in the waters of Jordan, God did not abide with man in all the nearness which His heart desired. There, and then, the Holy Ghost, in a bodily shape, like a dove descending from heaven, abode upon the man Christ Jesus. The breach between man and God was now repaired, not on the frail basis of a creature, however innocent and good as Adam once was, but on the foundation of the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. Here God now dwelt; and if even wicked hands should destroy this temple, He would raise IT up again in three days. No purpose or act of wickedness must any longer frustrate the desire of God. The zeal of God's house is now the service of the Son of God. Man, in fatal madness, may reject, and cast out, and crucify the Son, who from the bosom of the Father has come forth to link forever God and His glory with the human family-all who will accept of it. The Son will not succumb, or retire from

His mission by any power or malice leveled against Him. From death, the stronghold of power, He rises at once pre-eminently powerful and persevering to fulfill all the counsel of God. The greatness of the power He exercised here in person is only exceeded on His departure. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father."

Malice against God in the gratification of its passion, only calls forth more of the power of God, though the Son of God is rejected as the true resting-place of God upon earth. Yet earth is not abandoned. The link now established in the Son will be maintained by the Holy Ghost in that body, the Bride of Christ, which He now is building from the life of Christ, as Eve from the rib of Adam, to be presented ere long as God's gift from a world which rejected Him. In this body the Holy Ghost will always abide-not as in former times-the glory came and the glory went. He now is to abide ever, for the link is established on the everlasting foundations of the Son of God; and He, though in heaven, is the Head of the body, the Church, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all-the Church was thus to be a marvelous display of the grace of God-composed of materials once dead, in trespasses and sin rebels against God, crucifiers of His Son, yet now, quickened by the Spirit of the rejected but forgiving one, are builded together for a habitation for God through " the Spirit." Can our souls measure this wondrous elevation? Is it not amazing to be a forgiven sinner, accepted in the beloved? But to be a component of that structure of which Christ is the Head, and in which God DWELLS! O how little do we understand 1 in the selfishness of our hearts Christianity is limited to our own necessities, and blessed be God these are not overlooked; but yet it has a wider scope, and he who knows most of God's grace, will, as I have said before, yearn most after God's glory. It is, at least, but a just requital; and when the Lord has quieted every fear, and the banner of peace is unfurled, He does expect us to glorify His Father. An individual may glorify the Father; but the Holy Ghost is on a service as Abraham's steward in Syria. And any one in fellowship with Him will not limit God's glory to a unit; but understand, that we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body. His spiritual tendencies will be always congregational with them for whom the Spirit has affinity. For the body is not one member, but many; and we are " blinded together for an habitation of God." It is not the question whether it is more for our blessing that we should show ourselves as of the habitation of God, but it is plainly our duty-it is the service required of us. Paul writes various instructions to Timothy, not on the ground of promoting his own blessing, but as his duty, that he might know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God-the pillar and the ground of truth. It is something most solemn for a man to contemplate that he is of the house of God; and hence should be with him an anxious study how there to carry himself, for " holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever."

We never will get proper ideas of our responsibility till we understand something of the dignity imposed on us. Corinth could be a Church coming behind in no gift, and yet it was needful to exhort them, that, as they were the temple of the living God, they should be separate and touch not the unclean thing, or God would not receive them. However hitherto decorated by the gifts of God, if defilement was overlooked, God's presence as a Father would be overthrown. The joy, the fullness of joy, the fellowship of the Father and the Son, which the Son would realize in His body, was to be lost. Alas! how often has it been forfeited by many a goodly company of believers. " The temple of God is holy" we do well to remember; because otherwise we shall have no principle to guide us in the ordering of that house, either how we are to work together with God-or how to avoid building on the foundation, wood, hay, or stubble; and it behooves us personally, for God is

careful of His house, and if we defile the temple of God, so likewise will He do to us. Grace accepts us, and ever keeps us; but we serve a righteous God who loveth righteousness, and will render to every man according to his work.

These warnings to Corinth were not always attended to; and hence, ere long, the beautiful structure of the house of God loses the characteristics of the Church of the living God—the pillar and the ground of truth; and in its place there is the great house in which vessels to honor and dishonor are promiscuously collected together. Proper carefulness as to the principles which ought to guide the fellow-workers with God, would have prevented this ostensibly great, but intrinsically paralyzed, condition of the house of God. We see the first seeds of this carelessness in 1 Cor. 5 Wickedness glossed over such as would not be named among the Gentiles, and because of the discovery of such carelessness, classes of persons are specially notified as unfit for the church of God. Spiritual discernment, became so ineffective, that on record must be placed a list of cases to help to right the church discipline. True, in this case Corinth righted itself—repented, and was clear in the matter; but what if they had not? Surely God would not dwell amongst them. Need I prove that though a highly endowed church, it was declared that God was not among them, for levity, disorder, and leaven were in their assembly; but they repented, and all was right again. The house of God degenerates into a great human edifice; but God's vessels are never without rallying power, for the Holy Ghost abides, and to the last we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; we can ever call on the beloved to build themselves up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, but with our eyes opened to see (as we are taught by Jude), the fearful association we have been involved in. But again, how came all this to pass? Was there watching in all things when ungodly men crept in unawares? Watch was the duty of all, the duty of the fellow-workers with the porter. But watching was soon given up, and the church was puffed up, and not rather mourning because of inherent disorder and evil. Puffed up by God's gifts and blessings, it forgot that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and that when once God deserted them, all the fair proportions would sink into a mass of confusion and jargon. And so has the church ostensibly! But the Holy Ghost still abides; there is still an opposing force to the manifestation of anti-Christ. To the last and worst state, even to an individual, it is, I stand at the door and knock, if any man open to me I will come and sup with him, and he with me. Let us be ever so refractory and failing, the Holy Ghost will not surrender his service; He is still the same, bent on the construction of a holy temple in the Lord, and building together the members of Christ now for a habitation of God. Faithful souls now, as Israel on the Canaan side of the Red Sea, will desire a habitation for God: like the man after God's own heart, they will seek a tabernacle for God. Like the Spirit of Him from whom all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, maketh the increase of God.

The zeal of thine house," will deeply and solemnly interest them. Widowed and desolate, one act will command all their living—the last link with creature existence will be strained in the service of the house of God. The power of Darkness and his angels had raised the storm to its height against the Lord of glory, and concentrated his lieges with resistless fury against Him; yet was a shadow of a rock in a weary land, and a covert from the tempest. Bethany was His retreat. Two or three there could lodge and tabernacle the Beloved of the Father. And there (see John 12), the grand characteristics of the house and church of God find among so few a faithful expression. Thus in early dawn, in the infancy of the church are exhibited the simple and glorious dignities of the house

of God. The ark of His presence destined to brave all troubled waters, until that moment when the church will pass from this scene and take its place in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (all historically announced in this chapter).

The shadow of a great rock in a weary land will ever remain-the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. There will be always a Bethany, from which our Lord ascended till he returns again. When the two thousand cubits or sabbath day's journey shall be traveled by Israel, the ark of the covenant in the hands of priests having already opened a fair and safe transit from every wilderness sorrow, into the land of rest. Two thoughts ought to deeply engage our souls. Do our hearts desire God to dwell with us? Do we know the immensity which such a desire involves? See how David prepared, and what sacrifices he endured, even to prepare a habitation for God. Do our souls measure at all the gloriousness of the presence of God amongst us? And secondly, so we set ourselves to be rightly instructed in the proper ordering of His house? Do we practically conform in all our ways, irrespective even of all our living, or all living people?-the only terms on which He will consent to dwell with us. If first, we desire His dwelling with us, a purpose so dear, so determined on by Him, are we prepared, not only at all sacrifices to effect it, but also in the undeviating maintenance of that holiness which becometh His house-to come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. No thought higher in the soul than the presence of God. Nothing to be regarded or spared that would grieve or hinder it. If God's presence was once known well, we could not make so light of losing it. Souls speak of communion with their brethren, and then allow themselves to be seduced from the only communion which can give value to any other. If we say we have fellowship, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God, and also with one another, so that the fellowship with one another only flows with our fellowships with God; but with God we have no fellowship if we walk in darkness. Be not deceived, much church duty and observance may go on without communion with God or the knowledge of God's presence. Corinth was an example of this, Israel in the days of Christ were still a more fearful example.

Brethren, repent, and let your care for the church of God exceed every other. It is God's sanctuary, while two or three remain; care for the nucleus of the body more than for the one who has done wrong, or the one who has suffered wrong; your eye only resting where Christ's heart rests - and only caring how and by what means you may habitate the presence of God where He desires. Be a David in desire, and a Solomon in accomplishment. Amen.

Hebrews 6:19

A stranger launch'd upon this world's rude sea,
My bark still wending to its port above,
Wild winds detain her; but the spirit free
Spans the wide waste to reach the ONE I love.
Whilst faith beholds thee, Lord, with strong desire,
The' on the waters 'tis my call to roam,
The waves obedient from my feet retire,
Since thy blest accents bid me, Savior, come!
Anchor'd in Thee secure, thy light afar,
Thou faithful beacon of my midnight way,
Tracks the dark billows, till the Morning Star
Wanes in the noon of yonder coming day.
A. S.

It Is Well

The following original hymn is one of a selection now forming for children; and it is kindly communicated by the Editors of the selection. Its appearance in the Present Testimony will not be understood to affect its claim to be an original hymn in the collection referred to.

There's beauty above, in the bright blue sky,
On earth is the reapers' glee,
'Tis harvest-time in Jehovah's land,
And the corn by the breeze is gently fann'd
Like the waves of a golden sea.
But sorrow shall wait on the reapers' mirth,
The lord of those fields shall sigh,
One only boy
Is his father's joy,
This day that boy must die.
And the sun has look'd forth, in his morning pride
On the child, with a scorching ray:
"My head! my head!"
'Twas all he said,
'Twas all that the child could say.
And see, they are come, they have borne him home,
And he sits on his mother's knee,
But who can tell
How her countenance fell
Her alter'd boy to see?
He knows her not, with his dull fix'd eye,
On her bosom he pillows his head;
When the sun shines bright

From his noontide height
The boy on her knee is dead.
But faith within the mother's breast
Shall calm her agony,
"The God who gave
Is the God who shall save,
And give back my boy to me."
Though sad be her heart, the bright lamp of faith
Shall light up its innermost cell:
The son lies dead
On the prophet's bed,
But the mother can say "It is well!"
'Tis well with the mother, 'tis well with the boy!
His breath and his life are restored,
The child is awake
Let her hasten and take
To her arms this new gift from the Lord.
And I know it is well with the servants of God,
Naught them from their stronghold shall sever,
Whether Christ shall soon come,
Or they're laid in the tomb,
'Twill be well with His people forever.
They fear not the arrow that flieth by day,
Nor the plague that walks forth in the dark;
The sun shall not smite,
Nor the moon, by night,
One who 's hidden in Jesus, the ark.
They fear not to die, for the deep, dark grave,
Is a bed where their Savior has lain,

They sink not to Hell,
But with Him they shall dwell,
For Jesus can raise them again.
And can I too hope to arise from the dead,
And Christ as my Savior to see?
If I look to the Lord,
And believe in His word,
'Twill be well, then, forever with me.

Psalms.

I feel that the Book of Psalms contains so intimate an expression of the sentiments of the Spirit of God, that in speaking of it peculiar circumspection is required. Not that one part of the Word possesses more authority than another, or that the truth which it contains is less the truth, or less worthy to be received with absolute subjection of mind. But, evidently, there is a part which expresses feelings rather than teaches truths, and which unfolds the workings of a heart filled by the Spirit, rather than relates facts. Consequently, the appreciation of this portion requires a riper spiritual judgment, which, while giving all its force to the piety it contains, as being the same in all ages for every renewed soul, can yet recognize, at the same time, the particular position with respect to which the Spirit of God is speaking: a position which gives its form to this piety. Without this the true force of the Gospel of grace is lost, and the dealings of God are not perceived. This observation is most especially applicable to the Psalms, which, while full of those expressions of trust which have sustained the faith and piety of God's children at all times, contain, nevertheless, some sentiments which have been a stumbling-block to many Christians, sentiments which they have vainly sought to understand while considering this Book as a manual of devotion adapted to our present dispensation. But if the character of the book is rightly apprehended, these expressions offer no difficulty. We will examine the book as a whole, and some of its details. The most profitable manner of doing this will be-as I have attempted in the books we have already considered -to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety, which it contains, to the heart that alone is capable of estimating it, namely, one that feeds upon the grace of the Spirit of God.

The judgment which we have formed respecting the Psalms is sanctioned by the Apostle himself. "We know that what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law" (Rom. 3). Several Psalms are quoted in the preceding verses. Thus the Psalms concern Israel and the position in which those who belong to Israel are found, whatever that position may be. This is the first general principle which the Word itself establishes for us. But in examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive.

The Psalms distinguish -and even commence by distinguishing-the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. They treat then of the true believing remnant, of the righteous in Israel It is the portion and the hopes of Israel which form their subject. But it is the

hopes of a remnant, whose portion is from the commencement distinguished in the most marked way from that of the wicked. Again, it is evident, that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, that speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case in the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a Spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which, in this respect, often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ's own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expression of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt them, expressed by His own lips at the moment He endured them. It is always the Spirit of Christ that speaks, as taking part Himself in the affliction and grief of His people, whether it is by His Spirit in them, or Himself for them as the sole means, in presence of the just judgment of God, of delivering a beloved though guilty people. The Psalms, then, are the expression of the Spirit of Christ, either in the Jewish remnant, or in His own person as suffering for them, in view of the counsels of God with respect to His elect earthly people; and, since these counsels are to be accomplished more particularly in the latter days, it is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant, in the midst of the events which will take place in those days. The moral sufferings connected with those events have been more or less verified in the history of Christ on earth. And whether in His life, or yet more in His death, He is linked with the interests and with the fate of this remnant. In His history, at the time of His baptism by John, He had already identified Himself with those that formed this remnant; not with the impenitent multitude of Israel, but with this first movement of the Spirit of God in these " excellent of the earth," which led them to recognize the truth of God in the mouth of John, and to submit to it. Now it is in this remnant that the promises made to Israel will be accomplished; so that while being only a remnant, their affections and hopes are those of the nation. On the cross, Jesus remained the only true faithful one before God in Israel.

Having made these general observations which appeared to me necessary in order to understand the book, we will examine its details.

The First Book

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with Psa. 41, the second with Psa. 72, the third with Psa. 89, the fourth with Psa. 106, and the fifth with Psa. 150 I doubt not that each of these books is distinguished by an especial subject, or rather by an especial position of the remnant of Israel, or by its relation to others. But I prefer giving what I believe to be the special subject of each book, when we shall have the proofs before us in the examination of the books themselves. Other series of Psalms are comprised in these five books. We will point them out as we meet with them.

At the very opening of the book we find one of these series. We shall understand it better when we have examined the two first Psalms.

The first Psalm shows us the condition of the righteous man under the government of the Lord, considering it according to the normal effect of this government when exercised in power to accomplish the purpose of God in righteousness. The existence of the wicked is assumed. The righteous man is described in his legal perfection, separating himself from the wicked and the scornful, and meditating in the law of the Lord. Constant blessing attends this man, in contrast with the wicked, who are like the chaff Which the wind driveth away, who shall not stand in the judgment, nor in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. We see at once here, in the first place, that we are on the ground of Israel and of God's government, under the law; and in the second place, that the righteous are distinguished from the wicked, for the Spirit does not speak of blessing for the whole people as such, but the portion of him who is righteous before God, in Israel. That is to say, He distinguishes the remnant. Even when this shall be verified at the end, in the judgment, and when, as the principle of life, the character of the blessed man shall be found again in the last days in the remnant, still there is none but Christ who perfectly answers to this character. He was the righteous man in Israel amidst the wicked: The first Psalm then describes the righteous and upright man in Israel, and that which shall be his portion from God in consequence. It is the judgment of that which is within, distinguishing the wicked from the just.

The second Psalm reveals to us the counsels and purpose of God with respect to His anointed; He whom He has chosen in spite of the nations who oppose Him. We find the heathen and the people setting themselves against the Lord and against His anointed. God, however, is not in Zion. " He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." He will manifest His wrath and fill them with terror. Afterward, He sets His king upon His holy hill of Zion. Christ must be made king in Zion. But the glory of His person must be known, and the extent of His dominion. He is the Son of God. This is not said here with respect to His eternal relationship to the Father, according to which His glory is fully revealed in the New Testament; but as begotten in time, as man on the earth, "born there," and owned as Son there: fully proved to be so by His resurrection. To this title is added the possession of all the heathen for an inheritance. He is not only king in Zion, but when He shall ask it of the Lord, the heathen shall be given to Him for an inheritance,

and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, and He shall break them with a rod of iron.

The Son has not yet asked for this dominion over the heathen. He is now interceding for the Church (made the righteousness of God in Him), at the right hand of God, the Son of the Father, bringing His people into the enjoyment, by the Spirit, of His own position before God.

It is to Christ, proclaimed in this character of the Son begotten here below, anointed king in Zion, that the kings of the earth are summoned to submit, lest He be angry, They are called to serve the Lord, and to kiss the Son, submitting to His reign, as decreed of God. But, as we have seen, they rebel and take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. The wrath of the Son will be their portion.

Thus the first psalm has given us the result, according to the government of God, of man's righteousness; and the second, the result of God's counsels. But alas! with respect to Jesus, for a time, and the remnant in the latter days, all is very different. Affliction and rejection are their portion. And this is brought before us in the succeeding Psalms, which are the expression of faith in the hearts of the afflicted. From the 3rd Psalm to the end of the seventh this affliction is expressed. In the 8th, we have the grand result-Christ presented in another character, namely, that of his universal dominion as Son of Man. These eight Psalms form one of those series to which we have alluded.

A few remarks on the Psa. 3 to 7 will suffice. It is the spirit of Christ who speaks in the righteous one, and that principally in his own person, but also in the remnant, and always in connection with the remnant. One can understand that it will be extremely sweet to this believing remnant in their state of imperfection, to find the need of their hearts expressed in perfection, and that He who is perfect should have placed himself in their circumstances, being afflicted in all their affliction; and having, in these afflictions, accomplished all that was necessary for their deliverance. The consciousness of this identification of Christ with the affliction of the remnant, and, as the victim, with their sin, is of the deepest import. Its whole effect will not be produced in the remnant until they shall see Christ; but His spirit in this remnant will make use of His identification with them, and that even in His death, as a wonderful testimony of sympathy and participation in their sorrows, and at the same time as a proof that the Lord thinks of the afflicted to deliver them. Thus in Psa. 3, we find that those who trouble the righteous are increased, they even say, that there is no help for him in God. But his entire confidence is in Jehovah: salvation is from Him, and His blessing is upon His people. We feel the contrast between this and the first and second Psalms, how far it is in principle true of Christ, and how far, according to numerous prophecies, it applies to the Jews in the latter days. The fourth Psalm applies still more directly to Christ, the Godly one whom the Lord had set apart for Himself; but it is to Christ as the Jewish man, chosen on earth, the Elect of God as he is called by the Holy Ghost. He enforces a faithful walk upon the Jews and amidst distress and discouragement, waits for the lifting up of the light of Jehovah's countenance upon them-their only hope. The fifth Psalm gives us an appeal to Jehovah with respect to ungodly enemies. The conscience and the heart of the righteous one are sensible that these cannot stand in Jehovah's sight, and He invokes blessing on all those who put their trust in Him. The godly man's knowledge of Jehovah's character, inspires him with full confidence, and with the language of his supplication, which closes with the expression of the certainty of blessing. The character of the wicked confirms the righteous in his confidence, for faith brings God into the scene and judges everything

according to the effect of His presence.

Nevertheless, the remnant had truly deserved chastisement, and must necessarily see much more in their affliction than the oppression of the wicked. They saw the hand of God in it, but it was a God whom they knew. This is the sixth Psalm. Vexed, feeble, and overwhelmed, the remnant appeal to mercy, saying, "How long?" resting on what Jehovah was. For what profit would their death be? Could they give

Him thanks in the grave? We know well that the spirit of Christ went beyond this. But here He puts Himself in connection with the remnant of Israel, and, as we have said, furnishes them with the perfect expression of His mind in their condition. For, Israel on earth, death put an end to all possibility of glorifying God. Christ, in sympathy, took His place there with the remnant.

The seventh Psalm goes farther. It pleads for the execution of judgment, and that God will awake, on behalf of the righteous, to the judgment that He has commanded; so that the congregation of the righteous shall compass Him about, because He takes cognizance of the integrity of the righteous and delivers them.

There are two principles which connect Christ and the remnant in the latter days. First, as to the nature

and principles of their life, the righteous have morally the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ, as He was upon earth among the Jews. In the Psalms, God grants to this remnant the expression of the claims of Christ in this position upon Himself, for He allows them the same claims, although they have not clear intelligence respecting this. It is a need and a desire, which the life that is in them legitimates to his heart, but the satisfaction of which appears impossible in their circumstances. Nevertheless, the knowledge of what the Lord is, and trust in Him, that is to say, faith, reckons upon it in spite of everything. These exercises give rise to a deeper discovery of sin. But the principles of God's government in Israel form a solid basis for the hopes of the remnant, for they are conscious of integrity before God. Perhaps the heart of my reader will say, "But the repentant Jew of those days, this remnant of whom you speak, would be presumptuous in assuming such a position, whatever their desires might be; and the effect of an awakened conscience ought to make them feel that they cannot be in it." I do not deny this, but there are two principles to be remembered. First, they cast themselves (according to principles divinely binding upon them) on the government of God, which recognizes the upright man. But there is another answer, which sets the difficulty entirely aside. The remnant does not assume to itself the position of Christ. It is grace, which, in these Psalms, supplies them with the divine expression of His feelings, or rather, with the manner in which Christ places Himself in their position, and attributes to them all the value of what He Himself was in that position. This is the most beautiful point in the character of these Psalms.

How often when we ourselves have been in a state of weakness, which, through discouragement, would have led us away from God, how often have we been sustained by these expressions in the word of perfect faith, which meeting the need of our inward life (a life weakened by the flesh) communicates this faith to us by bringing us into the position it represents. In short, this is the second principle of which I spoke above. Christ enters in, spirit into the weakness and anguish of the remnant, who are overwhelmed with distress. Our first principle was, that He brought the

remnant into His own position before God as the faithful Israelite. Here, on the contrary, He associates Himself with the afflictions and ° sorrows of the remnant.

But if the righteous man has not prospered in the earth, if the Messiah has not been set up as King in

Zion, if He has been associated with the sufferings of the remnant of the people, it was in order to bring Him into a much more glorious position. This is set forth in the eighth Psalm. It is still the remnant-but now become the nation- who proclaim this glorious result. The name of their Lord, that is, of Jehovah, is become excellent in all the earth, and He has set His glory above the heavens. Here below, He has made use of the weakness which man despises, to magnify His glory. But His counsels with respect to the Son of Man, have caused all the wonders of His creation to grow pale before the glory of their accomplishment. When beholding the marvels of Creation, we may ask, "What is man?" But if we look at him in Christ, we see him exalted above all things, and having dominion over all the works of God's hand.

The glory of the Son of Man is that which explains and puts an end to the dishonor poured upon the

righteous man and the Messiah. By His means, Jehovah, the Lord of the Jews, becomes great in all the earth.

The quotation of this Psalm in Heb. 2, Eph. 1, 1 Cor. 15, manifests the force and import of its language, bringing in the Church also, not to the position of those who say "our Lord," but as united to Him who shall have all things in subjection under His feet. But the Psalm itself places Jehovah, the Lord of the Jews, in a glory which extends over the whole earth, and shows us the Son of Man crowned with glory and honor, having dominion over all that Jehovah has created. All this is an introduction, and gives us an idea of the Messiah's position and glory in the two following Psalms we are introduced with much more detail into the circumstances of the latter days.

In Psa. 9, we find in prophetic anticipation, the celebration of the judgment, by which God has put an end to the power of the wicked, and rebuked the heathen, who are caught in their own net. Jehovah will now judge the world in righteousness. He dwells in Zion. The needy shall not always be forgotten. He vindicates the claims of the righteous, and maintains their cause. He remembers the humble, and forgets not their cry. He is known by the judgment which He executes.

The tenth Psalm describes the character of the wicked, and the condition in which the meek find themselves during the dominion of the wicked. But the Lord has seen, and He has heard the cry of the humble. The Lord is King, and the heathen perish out of his land. This Psalm is remarkable, because it classes all the wicked together. The Jew who bears this character is not distinguished from the heathen. They are linked together. But it appears to me that the wicked Jews are especially pointed out here, and although at the beginning of the Psalm the word is used as characterizing a class, the verb being in the plural, yet it can scarcely be doubted that the Psalm contemplates some individual, who especially gathers up in his own person all the features of the wicked. Nevertheless, this Psalm describes the character of the wicked in general, and presents the cry of the humble remnant, and the certain judgment of God. These two Psalms describe in a very lively manner the state of the remnant during the latter-day troubles. The ninth gives rather the confidence of faith, and respects the outward oppression and the opposition of the heathen to

the rights of the Jew, especially of the Messiah. The tenth, the inward oppression, and the character of the wicked. In the ninth Jehovah is King in Zion-He has prepared His throne for judgment. In the tenth He is King forever and ever. The heathen, it is said (to give the historical connection of events) are perished out of the land of Israel. Christ is seen here as elsewhere, speaking by His Spirit in the remnant of those days. See 9:1-4.

After these general observations, the Psalms from 11 to 15, will not require any detailed remarks. The varied sentiments of the faithful, during the time of Israel's distress in the latter days, will be found in them. Sometimes it is the expression of trust in Jehovah-sometimes it is the sense of the depths in which they will then find themselves, but in which the compassions of the Lord are drawn out by the condition of the righteous in distress. Sometimes it is the heart complaining of the prolonged affliction. Finally, it is a picture of the folly of the atheist's heart-of that of the wicked; and then the character of him who shall peacefully ascend the hill of the Lord; a joy of which faith assures itself in spite of all difficulties. When Psa. 53 comes under consideration, I shall make some remarks on the difference between the latter and the fourteenth Psalm.

The sixteenth and seventeenth Psalms require a little more explanation, as well as the eighteenth. They are of the highest interest, and deserve especial attention. They set before us with much detail the position of Christ, as connecting Himself with the interests of the people, and placing Himself by sympathy in their circumstances (those of the saints in Israel) while having personally a peculiar position, in that He assumed it voluntarily. The sixteenth marks out very clearly the position itself. Its first words are among those which the Apostle uses in the Epistle to the Heb. 2:13, to show that Christ has taken part with those who are sanctified, not being ashamed to call them brethren; having consequently become man, taking flesh and blood, because the children whom God had given Him partook of it. That is to say, He made Himself really man, but it was in order to identify Himself with the interests, and to secure the blessing of the saints, of the remnant, of the children whom God was bringing to glory, and who are distinguished from the mass of Israel, to whom they were to be a sign. Compare Isa. 8:18, where the condition of this remnant and the expectation of better days, are considered more at length, leaving aside the Church, which the remnant became, in fact, in the interval. Other parts of the Word bear testimony to this latter truth. But the passage I have just quoted from Isaiah will help us much in understanding the manner in which the Spirit of God passes from Christ's personal connection with the saints in Israel, to the position and portion of these saints in the last days. In this passage, Christ in Spirit contemplates only His connection with the remnant of Israel, and so far with the nation, and thus passes over the whole history of the Church, to find Himself again in the same connection with the nation in the last days. If we do not thus abstract the Church, it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. Read from Isa. 8:16, 17, to the 7th verse of chap. 9 where this prophecy closes. The Church has her heavenly portion, but Christ can consider His relations with His earthly people separately.

We will return to our Psalm. Christ, as man, takes the place of dependence on God. He trusts in God, and says that Jehovah is His Lord. This is His self-renunciation and His perfection as man. He takes the place of a servant which should be that of man, and especially of Israel. He declares that in this position He does not put Himself on a level with God, His goodness does not extend to Him; and He makes known to the saints that are in the earth, the " excellent," that all His delight is in them. He publicly demonstrated this at John's baptism (comp. also Matt. 19:16,17). The 4th

verse shows us that this is in connection with Israel, who--as we learn from the Lord's prophecy (Matt. 12:43-45, and Isa. 65), will fall into idolatry in the latter days. Jehovah alone is acknowledged by the prophetic Spirit of Christ. Afterward, in all the latter verses, He rejoices in the portion which the Lord has given Him with the excellent of the earth, a portion which He will enjoy in the days to come; the certainty of this hope being connected with His resurrection, which is a necessary condition to its fulfillment, and which the favor of the Lord secures to His Anointed, in all the virtue of that power which will not suffer this Holy One to see corruption.

In Psa. 17 He takes the path of faithfulness which the position we have spoken of implies, and declares how He maintains Himself in this faithfulness in the presence of mighty enemies, who had this world for their treasure and their end, and who prospered in it according to their desire, God giving them their portion in it. As for Him, who, in His humiliation, is the Lord's faithful servant, His object and His motive, the hope that gives Him peace under all circumstances, that which governs His heart in this world, is that He shall behold Jehovah's face in righteousness. He shall be satisfied when He awakes up in His likeness. Two things strike us here. In the first place, resurrection is strongly marked as necessary to the heart of the righteous man, circumstanced as He is; and morally so, because of the measure and character of perfection, which as a man of God his mind has conceived and laid hold of (comp. Phil. 3) And in the second place, although the Psalm completely changes the moral order with respect to Israel, for whom, as an earthly people, earthly blessing was a token of God's favor. This change is strikingly noted in the Gospels. It is specially the meaning of Luke 16 and of that which is said of the poor (compare Zech. 11) Moreover, the faithful had experienced it at all times. The first of these two points was evidently verified in Christ Himself. But it will be of use as a precious encouragement to the remnant subjected to the first persecution of the last days, while testimony still continues, for this is the case supposed here., Psa. 16, then, places Christ in connection with the excellent of the earth. Psa. 17 places Him with them in the presence of wicked men on the earth. The righteous man keeps himself by the words of the Lord. That Christ held this place and lived by every word that came out of the mouth of God, we well know. But the 11th verse shows us the remnant in this position in the latter days. Resurrection is here still the hope of the faithful. The wicked continue in prosperity. The faithful, verse 7, put their trust always in the right hand of God; but they are in the midst of a wicked nation (Israel) who are an instrument in God's hand to chastise the remnant. The importance of the second point mentioned above is manifest for those who will be so circumstanced.

Psa. 18 is one of the most remarkable in its structure, and one which the most clearly evidences the principle on which the Psalms are composed. We know that David wrote this Psalm; and its occasion is related in 2 Sam. 22. Yet it is most evident that the Spirit of God had a greater than David in view, even the Anointed. But we see, also, as it appears to me, that it is not David's distress alone, but that Christ is concerned in the affliction of His people at all times, and that His sufferings were the cause of God's caring for this people from the period of their captivity in Egypt (whence He called His Son). From this, the Spirit passes on to the oppression of the people at the end of their history, and recognizes the claims of Christ on account of His personal and practical righteousness, as manifested during His life in Israel; which, with respect to God's government is acknowledged in the remnant, being re-produced in them, inasmuch as they possess the life and the desires created by the Spirit of Christ; so that they share all the efficacy and all the

consequences for Israel on the earth of its perfection in Him. Afterward, the consequences of His having relied, as the afflicted one, on the Lord, are manifested in the triumph of Christ. No enemy can stand before him. Delivered from the strivings, of the people, and made the head of the heathen, the strangers submit themselves unto Him; and even when it is with feigned obedience, they dare not resist. He is delivered from the violent man, and praises the Lord among the heathen. It is the history of Israel as participating in the care of God on account of the righteous One, and especially is it the history of the exaltation and triumph of this righteous One himself. Thus these three Psalms set the connection of Christ with Israel before us in a very striking manner.

There is another principle in the Psalms that we may point out here, which is found throughout, and which especially characterizes this Book, as well as Him whom it -reveals. He waits only upon the Lord, and refuses to seek help elsewhere. Thus, faith is thoroughly put to the test, and the heart responds entirely to the perfection of the ways of God. The patience of Him who is tried, however great the affliction, corresponds with the duration of God's forbearance. He has so laid hold of that which is in God, and trusts so perfectly in Him, that he has neither need nor desire to seek help elsewhere, or before He shall interpose. This was perfectly manifested in Christ.

A fresh series of Psalms, possessing equal interest, commences here. But the Psalms that compose it will not require to be so much dwelt upon, because every one will more readily understand them. I refer to Psa. 19 and 22. They speak of God's testimonies. In Psa. 19, we have two of these testimonies, Creation and the Law. Paul makes use of them in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, to prove the whole world's inexcusable state of sin-whether Gentiles or Jews. Here, however, these testimonies are made known in their intrinsic excellence. The third testimony is the Messiah Himself. But in Psa. 20 He is seen in the day of His distress. The remnant is prophetically designated in the fact, that by faith they enter into His distress, being assured that the Lord will hear His Anointed,-having their trust in the Lord, and desiring that the king will hear them when they call. This is a new element in the character of the remnant. They are interested spectators of the sufferings, of the Anointed.

In Psa. 21, the Anointed has been heard, and in answer to his prayer, according to the power of an endless life, exalted to glory on high. Thus, delivered from His enemies and owned of the Lord, the result of the former is judgment and destruction. The right hand of the King finds out all His enemies. They had imagined devices which they were not able to perform. He who had been oppressed by man and by the Jews, being now owned and heard by the Lord, and exalted gloriously, His enemies suffer the just consequences of their wicked hatred. But in Psa. 22, the sufferings of Christ are of a very different kind. His anguish is caused by His being forsaken of God. He alone could know this, He alone expresses it. Accordingly, it is not now the remnant who, beholding Him, utter the language of faith. This could not be done with respect to being forsaken of God. It could only be either unbelief, or a spiritual knowledge of Christ's substitution. The Spirit therefore puts these words into Christ's own mouth, and, in fact, he used these very words. A proof of the precise application of the Psalms. Already overwhelmed by sufferings inflicted by man, and His heart melted like wax, Christ calls upon God, the resource of every righteous man among the Lord's people. But He alone, of all the righteous, must undergo the being forsaken of God, and must proclaim that He is so (a terrible trial before his enemies, but He was altogether before God), as though He were "a worm and no man," even while perfectly glorifying God, and bearing

testimony to Him even in this condition. His sufferings here were expiatory. This is the reason why, when once His prayer was heard from the horns of the unicorn, all is grace, a stream of grace, which first of all reaches the remnant, revealing God to them as a Savior, such as Jesus had known Him, in His perfect love for His beloved Son, delivering Him from the death in which He was for sin--grace which, gathering this remnant, chaunts this Savior God in the midst of the congregation thus formed--grace which then reaches the congregation of Israel, the great congregation, the whole family of Jacob, and afterward extends to all the ends of the world, accomplishing millennial blessing, and embracing the yet unborn generation, the millennial posterity, to whom it shall be declared that Christ hath this; as in former days they spoke of their deliverance from Egypt. Everything flows out for the remnant, for Israel, for the world, and for the generations to come, from the death and atonement of Christ. Observe, that in this Psalm nothing is said of judgment, Christ had drunk that cup to the dregs, and all is grace.

We may examine the next Psalms together as far as the end of Psa. 41; distinguishing, however, the two first, and also Psa. 40

Psa. 23 and 24 go together, and speak of Christ in, His life of humiliation on the earth, and in the brightness of His glory, when He shall be manifested as the great King in Israel. At the same time we see the confidence of every godly man in Israel, and the character of those who will be associated with Christ, and owned by Him. There is an expression in Psa. 23, which might present a difficulty with respect to Christ, "He restoreth my soul," but in His case it must be after His agony, and clearly not after sin. But He trod the path which His sheep should tread; and that, in its whole extent, sin excepted. Observe that this Psalm sets before us, in the first place, the joys which are natural to such a position; but it is not till after restorations, after passing through the valley of the shadow of death, after having experienced that strong assurance which is gained by finding God our safe-guard against the enemies who press us, and after having proved the faithfulness of God in all circumstances, that we are able to trust Him for time and for eternity, and that we can understand the whole extent of that goodness which has sealed us. This Psalm abounds with instruction, in this respect, for every heart.

Psa. 24 speaks of the character of those who shall go up to the sanctuary, when God Himself shall take the government of the earth, which shall then be His; and at the same time reveals Him to us, whose humiliation and faith formed the subject of the preceding Psalm, as being Himself Jehovah, the King of glory, mighty in battle, Jehovah of hosts.

The Psalms that follow, with the exception of the fortieth, contain the various sentiments of the faithful remnant, to which God Himself gives a voice, according to the perfection that He can give them, and which they would not have had in a purely human heart.

Psa. 25 is a touching appeal to God, reminding Him of His mercy, with a full confession of sin. The meek put their trust in His name. It expresses very clearly the condition and the thoughts of the faithful remnant in, connection with their position in Israel, and as possessing feelings suited to the position and history of that people. The relations of the faithful man's heart to Jehovah, his sense of what his God is for him in his weakness, with the consequences that flow from this (verse 13), are unfolded in faith's most touching affections. It is a picture of the true faith of a godly person in Israel in the last days. But of faith in Jehovah, the God of Israel, not thinking yet of Him whom they had pierced; and even without having the wicked one immediately in view. Thus, in principle, it is

the Spirit of the life of Christ also on the earth (sin excepted), which is spoken of in this Psalm, and the sentiments of which are given by His Spirit to the remnant, and in this sense he has partaken of part of it.

Psa. 26 pleads the integrity of which the righteous man will be conscious in that day. Integrity, which, in its absolute sense, is real in Christ alone; but, as a principle of life, it is real in all saints. Confession of sin and conscious integrity of heart go together. In the latter case, it is the heart's desire that his soul may not be gathered with sinners. All this refers especially to Israel in the last days.

Psa. 27 speaks of the confidence which flows from having taken Jehovah for light and for deliverance, desiring only one thing-to be near Him. In the time of trouble the Lord will hide him in His pavilion, and will lift up the head of the faithful man above all his enemies. This, again, is especially the faith of the remnant in the last days. The cry in the ninth verse is founded on a touching argument. The heart of God (as I understand it) had said to the righteous man, when thinking of Israel, " Seek my face." The righteous man says-" Thy face, Lord, will I seek; but since Thou hast commanded me to seek it, hide it not from me." It is to be remarked that in all these Psalms, from Psa. 22 and 23, we are on the ground of deliverance, in the land of the living, and in especial connection with Jehovah, the well-known God of Israel.

Psa. 28 enters into the same desire not to be drawn away with the wicked. The remnant set themselves apart in Israel, entering into the mind of God- "there is no peace for the wicked." Isa. 48:22, 57:21, in which the same separation under the same circumstances, only there proclaimed by God. If the Israelites are wicked, God judges all things, as John the Baptist preached; for it was then that the separation of a remnant was formally marked out as a present thing. He preached this separation of a remnant. God no longer taking account of their being outwardly the children of Abraham, as Peter also (Acts 2:40), and Paul (Rom. 11). The Lord receives them as His sheep (John 10). The consciousness of the strength of God being with His Anointed, and that He will lift up the people, is also expressed in this Psalm.

Psa. 29 proclaims the power of the voice of the Lord; who will be the strength of His people, and will bless them with peace. After a long silence, the time will come when He will make His voice to be heard,

calling on all the great ones of the earth to submit themselves.

There is no particular remark to make on Psa. 30, which expresses the joy of the remnant on their deliverance in the last days, except that it is deliverance from death; for they had, as it were, gone down to the mouth of the grave. We may observe, also (verses 6 and 7), the difference between confidence in the blessing and confidence in Him who blesses.

I think I perceive a greater depth of thought, something more intimate, more habitual and uninterrupted in the relations with God of him who speaks in the Psalms which relate more immediately to Christ. His whole soul is more under the eye of God. Thus in Psa. 31, while making His request for the blessing of the people, and foreseeing with joy the treasures of goodness which are laid up for those that fear Jehovah, one sees that it is Christ himself in presence of the enemy, and whose heart is exercised by the circumstances around Him. It is not only His integrity of which He speaks; and the possibility of being confounded with the workers of iniquity is not supposed; on

the contrary, whatever may be the anguish and burden of His heart on account of the sin of others, His own relationships with God (except as forsaken on the cross) are always fully realized in His soul. There was one moment in which He said He was forsaken, but His prayer was heard. The anguish is more intense and more inward than in those Psalms which express the sentiments of the remnant. It is the anguish of His own soul, but of a soul nearer to God; the sentiments of one who sees, judges, feels everything, according to that which he is morally within, in the communion of God. They are not sentiments produced by outward things in a soul in which, however, the Spirit of Christ is acting. All this is seen prophetically, and it is not always expressed in the historical order, but in moral development, in the way in which it would be gone over in spirit, in reviewing, or rather in foreseeing it. The things which pressed most, and faith with respect to these things, being spoken of first, and afterward the details which brought on the crisis. The word "haste," in verse 22, is rather alarm-anguish; the verse shows that the entire life of Christ unto the end is considered here. The 5th verse, which the Lord used when giving up His Spirit to His Father, proves it also. But it appears to me that it is not in the aspect of atonement that His sufferings are here viewed, but rather as His own personal sufferings, as taking part in the actual position of the remnant, being Himself this remnant in the perfection of the thoughts that became them; and, consequently, exposed to the attacks of the wicked, of the enemy, and at the same time acknowledging all this as the just result of Israel's ways, the penalty of which He was bearing in grace. His faithfulness brought hatred, isolation, and opprobrium upon Him; but His heart recognized the just hand of God in this state of things. I do not think verse 10 is expiatory, but as enduring, in fact, the consequences belonging to it, according to the just government of God. For if one is faithful where all the rest are unfaithful, he will feel so much the more, and in proportion to his faithfulness, all that is dreadful in this state of things. But God will be seen through it all. No one felt the thirty-eight years after Kadesh-barnea, like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. For them it came from God. But they were sustained, because they saw God through everything. Now the Lord went into the very depths of this, seen as God sees it. Thus the hatred of all that was under the enemy's influence had reached its highest point, and He saw it, as He saw everything, as the consequence of the sin which overwhelmed His Heart, because He loved the people according to God. Nevertheless, being perfect, He sees through all this, what the faithfulness of God will do and bestow. He trusts perfectly in Jehovah, and He makes use of the effect of this trust for the encouragement of the faithful remnant. This was indeed what the Lord did. What words of comfort proceeded from the depths of His sufferings and of His sorrows, because His communion with God was perfect with respect to these very things; He drew from it the consolations, and the communications of love, and the consciousness of Jehovah's faithfulness, which He used for the restoration and the encouragement of those who entered but scarcely felt these afflictions, but whose weakness would have caused them to sink without His help. This is what He did for such during His life. He does it in the Psalms for the remnant in the latter days, and even for all those who have not seen His face, but who find in these Psalms His heart, His grace, His faithfulness, His sympathies, and the depth of His communications with the springs of blessing, in the midst of the miseries which surround us, and into which we are brought by our sins, by our sad inheritance of sin (see ver. 22-24; 34:4-6).

But the remnant, as well as every quickened soul, needs something more than this, in order to walk with God, and endure the fight of faith. Forgiveness is needed. As we have seen the blessedness of the righteous man announced in Psa. 1, so here in Psa. 32, another kind of

blessedness is declared. Pardon, and the sense of pardon, and that the Lord does not impute iniquity. He alone is free from guile who possesses this. Without it, he will either keep away from God, to hide from himself, or else he will seek to justify himself, to excuse himself, although his own mouth condemns him. But when pardon is once before his eyes, he has, courage to be truthful, and to confess everything. Who would not declare all his debts, when their discharge by another is the only thing in question? Who would not declare his malady, when it was for a certain cure? Thus brought to confess his transgression, the poor sinner finds that God has taken away all the burden of his sin. It is this principle that encourages the humble and godly man to draw near to God, and the floods of great waters do not come nigh unto him. God, then, guides him with his eye; he is encouraged to yield himself to this guidance, instead of having to be guided by the hand, without understanding the will of God. This blessing is spoken prophetically, announced as a truth; and it describes-not the condition of the remnant, but that which shall be their desire, a desire kindled by the very revelation of the blessing, which they will not realize till Christ shall appear. It is true, moreover, of any soul. The pardon set before him attracts him, encourages him, and leads him to confess his sin. Morally, this is a very instructive Psalm, and one also which very clearly reveals the relative position of the remnant, or rather the truths that will be set before them.

Psa. 33, which is one of great beauty, does not require much explanation. It is the name of Jehovah celebrated as God the Creator. 'Blessed are the people whose God He is! It is the expression of entire confidence in Him, a confidence which He will not fail to answer, because He cannot be wanting to His name, nor to those who put their trust in it. The word of the Lord is right, and all His works are truth. There is great repose in this Psalm, because the eye is turned away from man and fixed upon God.

In Psa. 34, we have the exhortation and the example of Christ to bless the Lord at all times, because our trust is in Him, and not in circumstances. That is to say, not only in the midst of blessing but when surrounded with difficulties and trials, and because he makes himself known in His faithful love in these trials. There are afflictions - but Jehovah is there, Christ himself is the proof of it. He cried, and the Lord heard Him; therefore He saith to others, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

The structure of this Psalm is interesting. As far as verse 4, we evidently see some one who serves for an example, or rather, who having himself experienced the way in which God answers the faith of one who calls upon Him in his distress, holds up as a pattern to others, the faithfulness of Jehovah towards himself. This is applied (verse 5) to others who had been in distress-applied historically to some (verse 6) who make use of the example set before them. The rest of the Psalm is an exhortation by the Spirit to trust thus in Jehovah, showing the contrast between His servants and the wicked. The touching application of all this to Christ and to the faithful in the latter days is evident.

But another thing comes before us in the use of the Psalm; i.e., that the remnant, after the death of Jesus, took the position of Christians; and although, in many respects, that altered their position, yet in the main-apart from those sufferings which are properly Christian -they were to enjoy the promises connected with Jehovah's faithfulness to the remnant of Israel, in the midst of the unbelieving mass; accordingly, Peter quotes this Psalm for the Christian Jews, in this sense. I doubt not that in principle, according to the government of God, this applies to the Gentiles, grafted

into the good olive-tree. But the bringing in of the Church, and the thought of being risen with Christ-which we do not find in Peter's writings-sets aside all this category of ideas, because the Church, seen in Christ, is looked upon as sitting in Heaven..

In Psa. 35, it seems evident to me that we again find Christ, but Christ looked at as uniting himself to the remnant of Israel, and whose deliverance will be the subject of praise and thanksgiving in the great congregation, that is to say, in the whole nation of Israel gathered together at the end. It applies, therefore, to all the faithful, who, going through the evil days, will form a part of it.

Psa. 36 sets the painful truth before us, that in the circumstances which surround the meek in the midst of iniquity, there is no resource in the conscience of the wicked. The upright man who fears God, is often inclined to think that this fear must arrest others, even those who are not walking with the righteous. But this is not the case, and it is well to remember it. But on the other hand, there is a perfect and infinite resource in the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah. How does the Spirit of Christ provide for everything, for all that could disturb the heart of the righteous man in the difficulties that surround him! At length, the wicked shall be cast down., And this is why, in Psa. 37,, he who hearkens to the word of Jehovah's servant (Isa. 1.) is exhorted to be still, and not to fret himself because of the wicked, to trust in the Lord, to delight himself in the Lord, to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, to cease from anger and in no wise to fret himself to do evil; for yet a little while and the wicked shall be cut off, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous. We may take notice here of that which is always found in the Psalms, and which gives them a very distinctive character., which gives the highest proof of their proper application to the Jewish remnant of the last days, and makes it clear that they do not apply to the position of the Church -except in some grand principles already pointed out. This characteristic of the Psalms then is, that deliverance is accomplished by the cutting off and destruction of the enemy by the judgment of God-a judgment consequently, that is desired and prayed for by the faithful. It is not so with the Church; she suffers, and she will be taken away from the evil. Whatever may be the moment of her deliverance, its mode will be, that she will go to meet the Lord in the air. She lives, moreover, by grace, and does not seek for the destruction of any.

But judgment alone will be the deliverance of those who have not taken advantage of this fullness of grace. Oppressed and crushed by iniquity, their only hope is the cutting off of their oppressors. This deliverance is promised them. This difference, I repeat, gives a very decided and distinctive character to the Psalms. The inheritance of the earth is the peculiar subject of this Psalm (37). In general, it may also be observed, that in this Book it is the enemies within, the wicked, of whom the righteous complain, although the outward enemies are pointed out, as we have seen, particularly in Psa. 9 and 33, in order to show distinctly the position of the faithful remnant, as forming part of a faithless and guilty nation, who by their iniquity in those days, will bring on themselves desolation and the scourge; and that in the presence of enemies who are the rod of God on this rebellious people.

In Psa. 38, therefore, the remnant or the individual who is a part of it, commits himself to God in the consciousness of his sin, that the enemy may not prevail against him, now that through grace his heart is upright. It is the perfect picture of one whose conscience being burdened by sin, knows that the enemy might take advantage of it, and pours out the anguish of his heart before God. The chastisement which the suppliant has deserved would be a just cause for fear, but at the same

time he can say that all his desire is before the Lord. He has lost everything, all help, all human consolation, (for what is it worth in such a case?) that he may cast himself entirely upon God, his only help. It is thus that God purifies the heart. It is a terrible thing to be in conflict when the heart is burdened with a sense of sin. This is not the normal condition of a Christian, because with him God begins by giving him a perfect conscience (Heb. 10). Nevertheless, his foolishness may bring him sometimes into this position. But it will be the case of the Jewish remnant, because their conscience will not be purged till they have seen Jesus, and till-through that event-their conflict will be ended. The condition described in this Psalm, will make one who is in it thoroughly sensible that the salvation and deliverance of God is his only hope, in a word, grace his only resource. I repeat the remark already made; how, in these Psalms, does the perfect grace of Christ supply the remnant with all they need for every exercise of heart!

In Psa. 39 the faithful one becomes more calm, because he comes more into the presence of God. He restrains himself while the wicked are before him, until his heart overflows; not in addressing them, but in pouring itself out before God. He prays that God will keep his mind alive to his own nothingness-a sense of which deprives the malice of the enemy of half its power. For what can be done to one who is nothing even in his own eyes? Man is but vanity. But the righteous man waits upon Jehovah; he acknowledges that his afflictions come from God, and takes the place of a suppliant before Him, as having deserved them all. He is a stranger and a sojourner with the Lord, as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He waits, like them, for the fulfillment of the promises instead of looking upon the wicked. Christ indeed took this place, but here it is one of the faithful who is seen in it.

Psa. 40 requires particular attention, because we find Christ-in the eternal counsels of God-taking this place in the congregation of Israel; and suffering in grace at the same time, the consequences of the people's condition, waiting for deliverance from the Lord alone, renouncing everything, and even undergoing wrath rather than fail in fulfilling the will of God. This is the perfection which we always see in Christ, never turning away from perfect obedience, or accepting any other deliverance than that of God, when He should have accomplished the whole of God's will;-and seeking the full blessing and joy of the faithful remnant, whilst he Himself is poor and afflicted. He reminds God of the faithfulness with which He had preached His righteousness and salvation in the great congregation of Israel. He had not drawn back from this difficult task; and now, His testimony being finished (fruitless labor, with respect to the people; Isa. 49:4). His iniquities, i.e., those of His people, have taken hold of Him, and under this burden He cries to the Lord, being still in the presence of those that hate the righteous. It is very striking to see Christ, in the depth of His sufferings, thinking only of the joy of the poor remnant, and praying that they may ever have reason to praise God, whilst He is poor and needy. He experienced, and others might experience with Him, the affliction of the righteous in presence of the wicked; but in bearing iniquity He is alone, and only seeks the joy of His people. "Mine ears hast Thou opened," or "digged;" (translated, "a body hast Thou prepared me," in the New Testament which follows the Septuagint), is His incarnation, for it was then He took the form of a servant-ears in order to obey (see also Isa. 1). But in this last passage, it is the daily spirit of obedience, and not merely taking the place of obedience. Phil. 2, is a very plain commentary on this truth. In Ex. 21, again, it is a different thing, Christ having perfectly fulfilled His service here below, refused to go out free; and in His death He became a servant forever. He is so now (John 13) to wash our feet. He will be so, in this sense,

during the Millennium (see Luke 12:37); and indeed forever. (1 Cor. 15:28). This is a beautiful subject which I cannot now pursue. But the references I give will make it clear to the attentive reader. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. This is Isa. 50:4, 5, 6. The word "opened" in this last passage, is not the same as in the Psalm.

Psa. 41. I am scarcely inclined to apply this Psalm exclusively to Christ, although it undoubtedly applies to Him characteristically. He makes use of verse 9, in speaking of that which happened to Himself; but it appears to me that it is in a characteristic manner. Still, it is evident that its highest fulfillment is in Him:- in him who made Himself the poorest of all. In verse 4, it is clearly the Spirit of Christ speaking in the person of one of the remnant, who feels his sin as being one of the people. The consciousness of sin aggravates the difficulties of his position. But one may always be truthful before God. Christ has associated Himself in grace with this position.

It is this blending together of the condition of the remnant in whom the Spirit of Christ is acting, and Christ Himself; which forms the difficulty of the Psalms. Some of them, as Psa. 22 and others, maintain the revelation at the height of Christ, throughout the whole Psalm. But often it is the condition of the remnant-a condition that Christ in grace has shared, and many of the circumstances of which were more strikingly verified in Christ. This is the reason that we find in the same Psalm confessions of sin and declarations of perfect integrity. The latter being only in intention, except in Christ. But still it was sincere, inasmuch as His Spirit was acting. Accordingly, we have here, in verse 4, " I have sinned against Thee," and afterward, verse 12, " As for me, Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before Thy face forever." The affliction of which this Psalm speaks, has never been accomplished as it was in Christ. Yet the Psalm could only be true of Him, as speaking at the same time in the name of the remnant with whom grace had connected Him. The remnant is characterized as the poor, the meek who shall inherit the earth. But Christ was pre-eminently this.

This Psalm closes the first Book, which is perhaps the most difficult to understand, as laying the foundation of the relations between Christ and the remnant. It speaks especially of their inward condition and the moral sentiments connected with it. It refers, therefore, historically, to the days in which Jesus Himself was among the Jews, and that to the end. With respect to the remnant, this book refers to that period of the last days during which they will be in the midst of the development of iniquity which will take place before they are driven out by the great tribulation. The remnant being still, as Christ was, in the midst of the people. Nevertheless, as will be needful for those who will be in these circumstances, the times are prophetically anticipated and foreseen, up to the end. But the condition actually existing, to which the sentiments apply, is the mingled condition. As far as the end of Psa. 24, the opposition between the righteous and the wicked is much more abstract, when the expression of feeling is in question. It is a much more absolute state of opposition, as it was in the case of Christ Himself, together with full confidence in the Lord. Afterward we perceive that mixture of feeling which is found in a soul, whose desires being really produced by the spirit of God cause it to look unto Him; and yet, who is not only in the presence of the enemy and the oppressor, but whose heart is burdened (because God is working in it) with the sense of sin. It is, therefore, divided between these two feelings; on one side, the need of pardon, to be at liberty with God on the other, need of help, to be delivered from the enemy. God being on the side of one who feels himself guilty, a thing difficult to believe; faith, however, is in exercise. Christ throws Himself into this condition, and gives, in these Psalms, the sentiments that are

suitable to it. When thus circumstanced, it would be difficult to know what was the suitable feeling. Conscience says, God cannot receive the guilty, but the heart turns to God. What a relief to be supplied with inspired language for such a case! To find that the Messiah, whom they had rejected, has, in grace, taken this position, having been forsaken of God in His people's stead, what strong support! With reference to this last truth, the remnant will understand it rather as the extent of their Messiah's sympathy than as the pardon of their own sins. In the latter half of the book, we find the pardon that flows from what Christ has done, presented as a new character of blessing; desired by them, and so far understood as it could be by those who were not in possession of it. This pardon will not be known by the remnant till later. This forms the immense difference between our position and theirs. We have redemption through His blood, i.e., the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. That which is matter of study for us and often difficult for us to understand at present, because we are not in the condition to which it applies, will be very simple for the joy and consolation of those who are in it. Jesus having been on earth in connection with the Jewish remnant, realizing, through grace, their guilt as His own, and suffering all the consequences of the iniquity that surrounded him, and that had made the people of God a slave to their enemies-when those who will form this remnant shall turn to the Lord, the expression of the sympathies of Jesus will be as balm to their heart, wounded and crushed by evil, from which they cannot yet escape. It may have been observed, also, that in the first part of this book, in which, as has been said, faith is more simple and more pure, the contrast between the faithful and the wicked more absolute and distinct, resurrection is much more spoken of. This is remarkable; as in Psa. 16 and 17. The hope of the remnant, as such, will be for the earth. "The meek shall inherit the earth." But as it was with Christ Himself, so with the remnant in their circumstances; resurrection is their necessary hope, since the life of the faithful will be often in danger. In general, probably, this will be the case with the most advanced, those who will have learned this better hope (compare the beginning of Matt. 5:5-12, and this last verse with 11, and Dan. 7:25, and 11:35). Thus in the first part of the book, in which the separation is complete and faith distinct, resurrection is presented as the strength and encouragement of this faith.

The Second Book

Psa. 42 commences the second book, which gives us more outward, more historical thoughts, while still maintaining, the expression of the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ, whether in the remnant or in Himself. But although these sentiments are expressed in this division of the Psalms, it is more characterized by the history of the Jewish remnant, in the latter days. The language of Psa. 1 in this book gives the date. The remnant is scattered', no longer going with the multitude that kept holyday. It is the heaviest part of the distress-- the time that the wicked are in power--the great tribulation. In measure, Jesus took this place representatively (John 10:40, or rather 11:54). As to the remnant, the effect of being thus scattered, and of the temporary triumphs of the wicked, is to make them feel a more urgent need of God himself. At the same time, they are cast down on account of the success of the wicked, and reproaches now addressed to them on that account; while they say unto them, "Where is now your God?" Still they have faith.

Psa. 42 expresses the feelings of the righteous at this cruel taunt, with respect to the heathen, the enemies who oppress them--Psalm, 43, with respect to the Jews. These two Psalms give the position which forms the basis of this book. The righteous man remembers God from the land of Jordan. All God's waves and billows are gone over him. But the help of Jehovah's countenance will yet be the subject of their praises, and the health of the countenance of the just, whose God He Himself will be. We come now to the details.

In Psa. 44, the remnant call upon God, reminding Him of all that they had heard of His deliverances in former days; all that God had then done for his people. For, say they, it was not by their own sword they conquered, nor did their own arm save them, but because "Thou hadst a favor unto them." Now, the remnant had not forsaken the covenant, although they were "sore broken in the place of dragons." They cry to God, imploring Him to manifest Himself, and no longer to forget their affliction, but to arise and deliver them for His mercy's sake. Two points here characterize the remnant--their practical fidelity to God through faith, and their being triumphed over by the heathen for a time. It appears to me also, that the remnant being thus driven out, have a position here more thoroughly their own, more entirely with God, apart from the wicked, however painful the position may be.

Psa. 45 introduces the Messiah in power. This Psalm, so easily understood, is very important with respect to the character of God's intervention on behalf of Israel. It is God; but it is Messiah as King. The prophets testify continually that it is Jehovah who will appear in power for the deliverance of His people. Compare Isa. 66, Zech. 9:1-8, 12-16; 10:3; 12:7, 8; 14:3, 4. But Zech. 9:9, and even 14:4, with this Psalm, show us that if it is Jehovah, it is also the man Christ. Compare Dan. 7:22, Mic. 5:1-5. Compare also Titus 2:12,13, for the Church.

We may also remark, that that which is celebrated here is not the repentance of Israel, but their deliverance, their outward deliverance by power, on the ground--established in Psa. 44--of the remnant's faithfulness to the covenant. It is very touching to see the divine glory of the Lord celebrated at the same time that--coming down to His faithfulness as man--the saints are

acknowledged as His " fellows," when He is anointed with the oil of gladness as chief over them. But further remarks on this subject belong rather to the Epistle to the Hebrews. We will only quote the remarkable verse in Zechariah, the inverse of that referred to in the Psalm. When He is presented as the man smitten of Jehovah He is named His fellow. Celebrated as God, the saints are acknowledged His fellows in His divine joy as man. Smitten as man, He is Himself the fellow of Jehovah. Read Zech. 13:5, " For man has possessed me (as a slave) from my youth; "-His relation with man; ver. 6, His relation with the Jews; ver. 7, with Jehovah.

We will return to our Psalm. The daughter, the queen in gold of Ophir, is, I doubt not, the earthly Jerusalem viewed as restored by grace. Those who accompany her are the other cities of Judah, according to the type in common use by the prophets. She has now children who are glorious enough to eclipse the memory of her fathers.

Psa. 46 As the result of the introduction of the Messiah, the remnant acknowledge God, the God of Jacob, as their refuge and their salvation; and therefore, there is nothing to fear, though the earth be removed. The Lord re-establishes His relationship with His people. The city of God is owned. The river of God makes it glad. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved, the Lord uttered His voice, the earth melted. He is exalted in all the earth, He is the refuge of His people. The kind of deliverance is as in the preceding Psalm.

Psa. 46 sung the intervention of God in favor of His people at the moment they are re-established. Psalm 47 celebrates, with a song of triumph, the effect of the Lord's presence in the midst of His people. It calls upon all the nations to rejoice because the throne of Jehovah is set up over all the earth-Jehovah, who has chosen an inheritance for His people (the remnant) and who subdues the nations under their feet. God is the King of all the earth, He reigns over the heathen, sitting on the throne of His holiness, and the princes of the people are gathered together to the people of the God of Abraham, for power belongeth unto Him.

In Psa. 48 Jehovah is established in Zion, the mountain of His holiness, the joy of the whole earth; the city of the great King is there, on the sides of the north. The kings were assembled, but fear took hold upon them; and that which the remnant had heard (Psa. 44:1) with their ears, they now behold, with songs of triumph, in the city of their God. If when afar from the holy place (Psa. 42) they had sighed for the moment when they should appear before God, they now think of His loving kindness in the midst of His temple. God is their God forever. He is known in praise, according to the name which faith trusted Him in. We may remark that the thought of death remains, but only as the term to which hope extends. God will be their guide until then. The leading idea in this Psalm is Zion, the dwelling-place of the great King, and consequently, his unchangeable security. Compare Zech. 12, Isa. 31, Mic. 4:11-13. In Psa. 46 this is acknowledged by faith, and here the event accomplished is celebrated in peace in the temple. This last Psalm leads to the idea that Gog is the same as the Assyrian; a question which has long been a difficulty to me. The Psalms that we have now been considering, form one of those little books which, by their connection one with another, help much in understanding the Psalms, and which add also much to their beauty.

Psa. 49 is a sort of moral reflection upon all this. All the glory of man without understanding is but vanity. Be appearances what they may, he is like the beasts that perish. They will die-for the redemption of the soul from the power of death is the question-and all this outward show will perish. But God redeems the souls. of those that trust in Him, and receives them., Men will praise

Him who doeth well unto himself; he blesseth his soul, and lie will perish. Observe here, that it is no longer resurrection which is the desire of the righteous, but that God will deliver his life. He saves life.

In Psa. 50 the public judgment of God when He appears in Zion is announced, especially the judgment of His people. But at the same time it will be a session of Jehovah, at which heavens and earth shall assist. He likewise gathers his saints together who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. These are still, I think, the earthly remnant. And now it is not merely the intervention of His Providence, which requires spirituality to discern. God Himself is Judge. The heavens, declare His righteousness. He comes Himself (ver. 3). The judgment of His people, from ver. 7, presents no difficulty, being announced prophetically (comp. ver. 3). There is an exhortation in ver. 22 to consider this. A part of the opening of the Psalm is more enigmatical. The earthly people are the object of the judgment; the saints, or the godly, gathered together (ver. 5) are those of this people. But the heavens being brought in, the declaration of righteousness that proceeds from thence, must have a special character. It is not the judgment-that is carried on upon earth with respect to the conduct of the people. It appears to me, although the' Psalm only brings in the heavens, that it is the manifestation of Christ (who is in the heavens) which shows forth His righteousness. The Church herself will be there as a witness, for it will be seen in her that wherever there has been faith in God and in His Christ, blessing has not failed. If there was the appearance of His people being forgotten, the heavens will bear testimony that it was not His faithfulness that failed.

Psa. 51 gives us the effect of Israel's consciousness of their position with respect to their rejection of Christ. This operation of the Spirit in the heart of the remnant sets them in the enjoyment of that peace which flows from the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah. It is the fulfillment of Zech. 11, and of the day of affliction, the tenth day of the seventh month. The judgment of sin is much deeper, more spiritual, and more real, in God's presence. His mercy more absolutely the source of all joy and of all hope. When the people are cleansed from the guilt of that precious blood which Israel shed (a sin which lies with all its weight upon the consciences of the remnant, when they behold Him who was pierced), then their prayer (verse 11) that the Spirit may not be taken from them is a cry of anguish from those who, being brought back to God, and enjoying by faith the assurance of God's faithfulness to deliver Israel according to the promise, are nevertheless alarmed lest the enormous guilt of the nation, in rejecting the Messiah, should destroy the possibility of blessing. We constantly find in the Scripture history and experience of Israel this difference between the faith that counts upon deliverance from the enemy and the oppressor, and that which realizes pardon and acceptance on God's part, leading to all the blessings that flow from His favor. Faith, which placed the Ark in Zion, had not yet built an altar on the threshing-floor of Oman. This is the reason that we find a prayer for blessing, even while acknowledging deliverance already accomplished. Indeed, the act of power that puts Christ in connection with the Jews at the destruction of Antichrist, has not yet established the rights of the Messiah, and of Israel with Him, over the earth, although it has laid the foundation for it.

Psa. 52 applies particularly, I think, to the " mighty man" who will oppress the Jews in the last days-an enemy from within, rather than those from without. That is to say, the little horn, or head of the last empire. Unless it may be still more in connection with the. Jews, and apply to an Antichrist more immediately linked with them.

Psa. 53 is, as we know, nearly a repetition of Psa. 14; but there is a difference. Psa. 14 gives the aspect of what Jehovah is for His people, at least for the righteous. Psa. 53 relates to that which He is against His enemies. This is the reason why the Spirit uses the name of Jehovah in Psa. 14, which is the name of relationship with Israel, and that of Elohim in Psa. 53 (compare verses 4 and 5 of the latter Psalm, with verses 5 and 6 of Psa. 14) Those who fear in Psa. 53:5, appear to me to be the unfaithful Jews (see Isa. 33:14, and the following verses, and also 8:12, 10:24). In Psa. 14:5,6, they oppress and despise the Jews, scoffing at them, because, in spite of everything, they put their trust in Jehovah.

In Psa. 54 we have the two characters of the enemies of the righteous-strangers (unless, with the *keri*, we read "the proud") and oppressors. But the name of God is their refuge; they commit themselves unto God-Jehovah-and they see their desire upon their enemies.

Psa. 55 gives a terrible description of the state of Jerusalem, where the power of death, and of Him who has the power of death (compare Rev. 12:13, 15, 17), and of those who have made a covenant with Him, bears heavily on the righteous. Treachery is that which the righteous especially complain of in this Psalm; but it appears to me, that this reproach is more particularly addressed to the Jews who professed to walk with them, and not to Antichrist himself, although it is possible he may have acted in the same way. Judas, we know, was the especial means by which the Lord went through the same experience. The remnant had been driven out by the power of evil; they here express their feelings respecting it, for it is rather the language of those who have left the city, than of those (the remnant of the seed) who may be still more exposed to the persecution. It is the moment when the thorough treachery of those who join Antichrist is brought to light, and iniquity fully unveiled to the eyes, of the righteous. Meanwhile, Jehovah is a refuge. That which especially characterizes the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms is, that the name of Jehovah is His refuge-He will have none other, and therefore will wait for Him, whatever the result may be.

From Psa. 42 to 55, the Spirit gives either the history (prophetically) of the position and re-establishment of those who were driven out by the great tribulation, or the exercise of faith in general, with regard to this position. From Psa. 55 we have rather the painful sentiments which the position itself produces. Faith, however, is maintained at the same time.

In Psa. 56, the enemy is ready to swallow up the righteous. God and His word are the ground of their confidence. God had delivered them from death, and they trust in Him to preserve them, that they may walk before Him in the light of the living. It will be seen that from Psa. 1, the name of Jehovah is no longer used. It is God who is in question. The soul casts itself upon what God is in Himself as God, apart from the established relationship with Israel, amongst whom the enemy reigns in power. The righteous trust, in a more abstract and absolute manner, in that which God is in Himself. It is indeed Jehovah in verse 1, Psa. 1, but these cases have in view the future manifestation, as also in 51:15; 54:6; 55:16.

In Psa. 57 the terrible condition, of the righteous during these calamities, is again presented to God. The thought of what He is, strengthens the heart. The Lord shall be praised among the peoples and the nations, for His mercy is great. His glory shall yet be manifested above the heavens and over all the earth. All hope is lost of help on earth, and faith would not even seek it there. For in whom could it be found? But this gives occasion for a higher faith. " He shall send from Heaven." Difficulties cause faith to seek God in the height, from whence they will be

surmounted, and thus they make His glory to be appreciated.

In Psa. 58, the iniquity of the Jews (whom, nevertheless, the Spirit addresses by a title which sets them before God, according to their nature and their responsibility) is presented in this aspect—that instruction and the calls of grace are useless, and that judgment must come. The triumph which this shall give to him will be a testimony that there is a God who judges in the earth, and a reward for the righteous. This very distinctly characterizes the bearing of the Psalms in general.

In Psa. 59 the heathen prowl about Jerusalem, like dogs that are not satisfied. But Jehovah, the God of Israel, and none other, is the strength of His people. Nevertheless, the righteous here express their own confidence, rather than their sense of the iniquity around them. Christ in person speaks prophetically as king. We find the same confidence again in Psa. 60. The remnant speak as the people of God, but as rejected and scattered. The sense of being His people, makes them feel more keenly the hardship of their condition; but also enables them to refer it to God, and to reckon on His power. God has given a banner to those that honor Him, that the truth may be maintained. God thus executing His judgments in the world, His people cry for deliverance. God's answer asserts His rights, and points out Edom in particular as the strong city, with respect to which God will succor His people. Christ speaks here in person, it seems to me, as the head of Israel (verse 9). The fact of being driven out, gives much more distinctly and simply the consciousness of being God's people; and places them outwardly beyond the relationship of Israel, but inwardly more in the relations of faith. Thus, as being without, they are more entirely with God.

Psa. 61 Christ here presents Himself again in person as king. He who was the first to be rejected, can show Himself again with the rejected people. It is a natural position in which to meet with them again (as in the case of the man who was born blind). Observe also how this connects the life of our precious Lord with the history of His people in the last days, when this poor remnant will also be rejected of man. Only here He enters into it in spirit, so that it is by faith that the remnant are to enjoy it. We feel this to be proper. But what a complete provision it is for faith! In this Psalm, then, Jesus enters in spirit into the condition of the remnant. He is naturally their Head. I have already remarked that in the Psalms in which He speaks more personally, there is more calmness, the intercourse is on surer ground with God, as founded on a well known relationship. We find it so here. But this does not prevent His entering in heart thoroughly into the most painful circumstances, or His feeling them; quite the contrary, He feels them all the more deeply. Who has ever felt our sins as Jesus felt them? I am not speaking of His having borne them on the Cross, but of His having felt them before God. But He enters into these circumstances with God. He cries unto Him from the ends of the earth. He feels what it is to be away from the enjoyment of His happy intercourse with God, which is found in His Temple. As man, He seeks for Himself and for His people, a rock higher than Himself. He walks in dependance, and His trust in God is not disappointed. He sees and celebrates the joy in which He shall dwell before God forever, and perform the vows He had made in this day of His distress. What a day will that be, in which the Lord shall do this—His heart being satisfied with God's answer in favor of His people. It is still God here, and not Jehovah, because the people are still without.

In Psa. 62, we have the open profession of a principle which I have already pointed out. The righteous, verse 5, seek no other deliverance than that of God. The connection is very strongly

marked here between the life of Christ on earth, and the position of the remnant with respect to the iniquity of the last days. Personally, it was during the life of Christ that verse 4 was fulfilled; and, for the time, His enemies succeeded outwardly-to their own ruin. But this generation will not pass away till all is fulfilled. The spirit of the wicked at the end will be exactly the same as that described in verse 4. They will absolutely reject the true Christ. In verse 8, the Messiah encourages the remnant, identifying Himself with them. Man is but vanity. Power belongeth unto God (see Matt. 17;24-27). Christ shows Himself to be God, in knowledge and in power; knowing all that takes place, and commanding Creation. Peter promptly replies that he is a good Jew, ready to pay the didrachma of the temple. Christ, who had just been displaying His glory on the Mount, shows by a comparison, not that He was free Himself, but that the children were free. "Nevertheless, He saith, lest we should offend them, go, etc.,... that take and give unto them, for me and thee." What grace, what relations with such a Savior, with such a heart!

Psa. 63 rises a little higher. The principle and the position are the same. But the opposition here between the actual condition and the joy which the faithful derive from the presence of God, is more strongly marked by distance from the presence and glory of God. The dry and thirsty land is put in contrast with the enjoyment of God, but with this enjoyment in the manifestation of His power and glory in the Sanctuary. The consequence is, that the assurance afforded by this knowledge of God, makes the dry and thirsty land, which is like death to man, a place of blessing; because God's loving kindness is better than life. If this has been really tasted, it is never enjoyed so much as when there is nothing else.

We understand here, in what Sanctuary Christ had enjoyed the presence and the glory of God, and why in this dry and thirsty land, where no water is, His life was such, that (although it was a continual death) He could pray that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. Now this joy-the joy of the Son of Man who was in Heaven-is our own proper joy; only in Him it arose from what He was Himself; He, who had seen the glory of God, being in it. As to us, it is in Him that we have seen it, and it is in Him that we enjoy it. For the Jewish remnant it will doubtless be in another manner. Nevertheless, it will be the favor of God, and that is always better than life. There is joy in communion with His loving-kindness, and there is also His help. Observe that in both cases it is from having enjoyed it that the joy and confidence flow. The circumstances are the same. They sought the king's life to destroy it. The remnant will suffer under similar iniquity. But their enemies, who are the king's enemies, shall be judged. Confidence abounds here, but being in connection with Israel, it is expressed with reference to the judgment of their enemies.

In all these Psalms, the relations of the soul of the righteous are more immediately with God. This Psalm merits a detailed examination.

Psa. 64 especially displays the rancor of the wicked against the righteous, seeking to injure them with bitter words and calumny - those counsels of iniquity, where the means are arrayed for casting discredit upon him who seeks to serve God. This is one peculiar form of trial of those who are faithful witnesses for the Lord, and especially were the trials of Jesus. Alas! it is not the Jews only who make diligent search for iniquity, in order to bring a reproach upon faithfulness, and make it even afraid to come forward in testimony. But God has His arrows if the enemy have theirs, and judgment is at hand. They must commit their case to God.

Psa. 65 contains a touching appeal to God; He has only to intervene, praise waits for Him, and even unto Him shall all flesh come. This appeal is most beautiful, and shows thoroughly prepared hearts, the fruit of those exercises which the Psalms have laid before us. Nevertheless, there is the confession, that their sins were the hindrance. But God would take them away; they acknowledge it is grace. The elect shall enjoy the blessing. The happiness and the abundance of His house will satisfy the hearts of those whom He brings into it. They apply this blessing to themselves by faith. Christ is pre-eminently the Elect; but all the great moral principles of their being brought into favor, and into the enjoyment of blessing, are developed here. The terrible intervention of God in judgment is the means-of Him on whom the earth and the sea depend, and whose goodness fills the earth with blessing. For them He is the God of salvation, in answer to their cry. The great principles upon which the relations of Israel with God are re-established, are here laid down in a remarkable manner, with their results.

Psa. 66 rehearses very distinctly, and with thanksgivings, this intervention of God in favor of His people; alluding to their coming out of Egypt, to their sufferings at the end, and the deliverance wrought by Jehovah, as well as the worship rendered afterward, according to the vows which they made in their distress. They know that God could not accept iniquity, but that He had accepted the remnant. The faithful render thanks to God, who has heard their prayer.

Psa. 67 goes farther, setting Israel as the center of blessing to all the earth, which shall be blessed when Israel is blessed.

Psa. 68 furnishes a striking instance of Israel's re-establishment in the enjoyment of their former relations with God; but, at the same time, through means that secure it to them forever. Means which give their enjoyment of it a glory that nothing else could have imparted. The first verse recalls that manifestation of God's presence in the wilderness, which was their glory and their security. They are the same words that Moses uttered when the Ark set forward. Here they ask God that His enemies may be scattered, and that the righteous may rejoice before Him; for in the last days they are always distinguished from the rest. They acknowledge Him as riding upon the heavens by His name Jah, a God who is a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows-who setteth the solitary in families-who giveth liberty to the captives, but judgeth the froward. This is what He is in the eyes of His people, now that the Spirit of Christ has given them understanding-what He will be to them in the last days. The Spirit recalls the glory of Sinai, the blessing of the hand of a God who blesses the poor. The congregation of Jehovah had dwelt there.

Nevertheless, this only introduces the power with which He works in these last days, scattering all that oppose Him, and establishing his throne above all, whatever their pretensions or their confidence may be. The host of heaven is His host. Having thus celebrated the power of Jehovah, this Psalm shows Him to us as the Christ, ascended up on high, to receive gifts for men, and even for the rebellious (i.e. Israel; consequently, the Apostle does not quote this part of the text), that the Lord God might dwell among them, thus again taking up His abode in the midst of Israel. This introduction of the Lord is very remarkable in connection with the blessing of Israel. The expression "for men," or "in the man," leaves it open for all men, and the Lord has brought every believer into this grace. But in this Psalm the subject is treated with respect to Israel's blessing, as the whole Psalm unquestionably proves. But God is here a God of salvation to Israel, and not of

judgment and chastisement. The 30th verse refers to the powers whom God has humbled before Israel. The "beasts of the reeds" (margin) may, perhaps, be in allusion to the former character of Egypt; at any rate, it refers to some powerful enemy of Israel in the last days, of whom the crocodile or the hippopotamus might be a type. Verse 34 shows us the power and the glory hovering over Israel, and protecting them as the object of God's care on the earth.

In Psa. 69, as is the case in all the books of the Psalms, we find the Lord entering into all the depth of the sufferings through which His people are to pass, and anticipating them, taking them up at their source. Nevertheless, this Psalm has not the same character as Psa. 22. Moreover, this remark is true with respect to each one of the Psalms that describe our precious Lord's sufferings. Each has its own peculiar character. The subject here is not His being forsaken of God, but the extremity to which He is reduced by the enmity of men, and especially of the Jews, God making Him no answer. But while acknowledging all the sins of the people, and this was His righteousness (it was thus He acted at the time of John's baptism), He is here, and He presents Himself here as the righteous man who has borne reproach for God's sake. Eaten up with zeal for the house of God, He had been exposed to all the hatred of those who profaned it, who, being regardless of God, were unwilling that any testimony should be given to bring out their iniquity. But He prays, according to His perfect faithfulness, that this may not be a stumbling-block to those who wait upon Jehovah (for blessed is every one who is not offended in Him), so that we have the faithful Savior here especially exposed to the fierce hatred of the people, and left to the full suffering of this position, not being sheltered from it by God. But He commits Himself to God. In all the details it will be found that the insults and the hard-heartedness of man are "the subject, and that amongst His own people; a terrible testimony. It is not (in addition to this) the being actually forsaken of God as something between Him and God; so that man's malice is but the occasion of that far deeper suffering. If He complains here that He has to wait for God, it is that He is left without alleviation to the pitiless malice of men, i.e. of the Jews. From verse 22 to 28, we have the judgment of the nation, on account of their conduct to Him. But He, the head, and model, and consoler of the little remnant, shall be set up on high-poor and sorrowful as He may now be-to praise the name of His God, and thus to be a source of consolation and joy to the humble and meek. For Jehovah heareth the poor: He calls the prisoners among His people His prisoners. The heavens and the earth shall praise Him when God delivers Zion, and causes His servants and those that love His name to dwell therein. Compare (for the remnant) Isa. 65;66, from verse 12 of 65. I have merely pointed out the principle of the Psalm. The reader cannot too much study its details, that he may learn Jesus for himself, and also the position that He took on behalf of the Jewish remnant. The 5th verse is the only one that presents any difficulty. It does not appear to me that bearing the sins of His people in expiation is the meaning here, but rather the manner in which-identifying Himself with the remnant- He confesses sin, as a righteous man in Israel ought to confess it. He did the same thing before at John's baptism. In how many and various aspects the Psalms set Christ before us I One understands the comfort it will be to the remnant to have been thus preceded by the Lord in this painful rejection by the people.

Psa. 70 again presents the Messiah in rejection. But this rejection was the touchstone (verse 2, 3), and that which brought down judgment on those who were guilty of it. In verses 4, we have the intercession of Christ for all those who fear God in Israel. He does not here put Himself forward as the object of their thoughts, but Jehovah Himself. However wretched the state of Israel may be, He

prays that all those who seek Jehovah may always have reason to praise Elohim. As to Himself, He is poor and needy, but He trusts in the Lord. His perfect faith could wait for God's appointed time although longing for, and deeply feeling the need of, deliverance. But at least, may those that fear the Lord rejoice and be glad in Him. Observe, here, with respect to the remnant, that although the intervention is that of the Messiah, and its efficacy is by virtue of His name, yet it is not for those who know His name that He intercedes, but for those that seek Jehovah. This makes us understand the position of the remnant. Grace towards them has the Messiah's work for its basis; but as yet they know neither its meaning nor its efficacy. They are delivered according to the relations of Israel with Jehovah.

In Psa. 71 the remnant take the position of Israel, and acknowledging the faithfulness of God from the beginning, celebrate it as a spring of gladness that fills their heart, and, leaning on God alone, desire, now, to be witnesses for His faithfulness to the end of their history, counting upon the blessed and glorious results which their God will accomplish, He with whom none can be compared. The 12th and 13th verses connect this Psalm with the preceding one. We may suppose that the rebellion of Absalom or of Adonijah was its occasion. Observe to what a degree the Spirit of God quickened the sensibility of David's soul, so as to make him understand the moral bearing of that which was going on in the heart of his enemies, and not merely certain outward actions; thus making him in spirit the vessel of Christ's sentiments • although, frequently, these sentiments are the rather called out by the state of the remnant in whom the Spirit of Christ produces them. But sometimes they rise to the height of Christ Himself.

In Psa. 72, under the character of Solomon, we have the Millennial glory of the true Son of David. At the end of the Chronicles, we find this identification of the royalty of David and of Solomon, in whom this royalty had its glory strikingly presented. The Beloved and the Prince of Peace are its two essential characters. This Psalm concludes the second book.

The Third Book

The third book begins with Psa. 73. It does not follow the second chronologically. Besides some great general principles, the two first books give us, in connection with the work of the Spirit of Christ, sentiments suitable to the two periods of the troubles of the Jews. That is to say, before the full manifestation of the iniquity of the wicked one, or Antichrist, and afterward, during the three years and a half of his reign. During this latter period (that of the unequalled tribulation) which follows the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, the faithful are driven out of Jerusalem. The second book supplies the sentiments wrought by the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, during this second period, and the last Psalm in it gives a brief exposition of Millennial blessing. The third book, then, necessarily goes back again, and contemplates the same periods of time, but in a more general point of view. All Israel is before the eye (looked at only in the faithful ones); the people historically, and God's relations with them as such, the contrast between the heathen and the people, the havoc made by the heathen in the holy city, are constantly spoken of. In Psa. 73 we have in general the faithful Israelite's exercise of heart, with respect to the circumstances of the last days. Apparently, faithfulness was of no use; and he was ready to say with the wicked, that God was no longer mindful of the ways of men, and took no notice of them; for the ungodly prospered. But on going into the sanctuary of God, the faithful perceived what the end of the ungodly would be. When the Lord awakes, all their glory shall vanish. The thought of offending against the generation of God's children, was the first check; for through grace there is always something that keeps the heart of the faithful, however ignorant he may be, if he is upright; afterward he saw the real truth of their case. No doubt the judgment to be executed at the end is in view here, and explains everything. But all the faithful go through a similar exercise. Meanwhile, God is their strength. Observe, it is Jehovah who had been the confidence of the faithful; His attributes, as God, inspired this confidence. The relationship was not yet formed, but to the heart of the faithful, it was Jehovah who was their God.

Psa. 74 is the complaint of the faithful Israelite, with respect to the havoc made in the sanctuary; and with the thoughts of Jewish faith, he reminds God. of the congregation which He had redeemed, the Mount Zion wherein He had dwelt, the God who had been their king of old, and had manifested His power in their behalf. It is a touching appeal to God, uniting His cause to that of His people.

In Psa. 75 faith has reached the point at which the people acknowledge that the name of the Lord is near unto His people, and in a certain sense, unto the world also, to act towards it in accordance with that name. To faith, His works declare it (not necessarily at the moment). In the 2nd verse, Christ replies, He is going to take the kingdom as the Messiah. It is a Psalm of thanksgiving by the remnant, celebrating the intentions of Messiah. Its form has particular force, in that the Messiah declares prophetically the counsels that He gives to the proud, with a view to the judgment. From the 2nd verse He speaks in His own person. This Psalm gives a, very distinct character to the connection between faith and God, who is very far from the thoughts of the proud, although faith sees Him ready to execute judgment. The exhortation that follows, to the worldly, is always the

testimony of God, but is specially recalled to them by the Messiah before the execution of the judgment. This makes clear that which is said at the end of Psa. 2.

In Psa. 76 God is known in Judah, and His name is great in Israel. He dwells in Zion, where He has broken the bow and the strength of the enemy. For He has arisen to judgment and to help all the meek of the earth.

In Psa. 77 the remembrance of God in the day of distress had troubled the faithful, for God appeared entirely to have forgotten. Can the Lord cast off forever? No;-such a thought springs only from man's infirmity. Faith will remember what God has been unto His people. His way is in the sanctuary, always there, even when His path is through the deep waters, where man cannot trace his footsteps. In these Psalms the ways of God between Israel and God are maintained according to His former relations when He brought them up out of Egypt.

Psa. 78 recapitulates all the dealings of God with them, proving the folly and unbelief of the people; and laying particular stress on their having limited the Holy One of Israel. The history of the people, and of their dealings, is traced as far as when in the days of Eli, God delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand; thus forsaking Shiloh, where His altar and His tabernacle were placed. At this period, in fact, all Israel's hope was lost, if the people and their responsibility were alone considered. Their sin was so great that God allowed the ark of the covenant to fall into the hands of the Philistines; vindicating, however, there His own glory: But at the height of His people's distress, the Lord awakes and smites His enemies; for they were the enemies of God as well as of Israel. But He rejects the natural heir-that is to say, the one to whom the birthright, the goodly land, and the double portion, belonged. He 'chose (for it was now electing grace, since all was lost) the tribe of Judah; He chose Zion, He chose David, to maintain the blessing of His people. This bringing in of grace when all is lost, and God comes in to deliver for His own name's sake, and from love to His people, is all-important for the faith of the Israelites in the latter day, as well as for our instruction in His ways. The patience of God, even unto the end, meeting with the unbelief and unfaithfulness of His people; and at length His intervention according to His purposes of grace, when, on the ground of responsibility, He had given up His people. We see the people pass from the extremity of distress to the all-powerful intervention of God in grace; failure on the ground of their responsibility, and even of judgment executed in consequence of their fall, to the results of God's election and sovereign grace.

Psa. 79 rehearses' before God the capture of Jerusalem in the last days, and calls on God to interpose for His name's sake in behalf of His people, to compassionate them and their sufferings, and to pour out the cup of His wrath upon the heathen who had devoured Jacob. In all these Psalms, we find faith in the relationship between God and His people in spite of all circumstances; and faith also in His intervention on their behalf, whatever their condition may be. It was Jehovah whom the heathen reproached when they said " Where is their God?" When there is faith in the relation that exists between Him and His people, distress and the power of the enemy are a prevailing plea with God.

Psa. 80 takes up the same subject with respect to the people in general, building on the former relationship of God to them; faith drawing from thence its knowledge of God, and entreating the Shepherd of Israel, who led Joseph like a flock, and who dwelt between the cherubims, to shine forth as He had done in the wilderness. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, were the three tribes

nearest to the Ark and the Cloud, in the camp of Israel. Israel, now faithful, acknowledge the hand of God in their misery. Can God be deaf to their cry? It was He who had planted the people. Could He give them up to the boar out of the wood? A revelation of the deepest import is then given. The Spirit of God directs the faith of the people towards the Son of man, whom God had made strong for the accomplishment of all his purposes. Through Him, Israel would no more go back; being quickened, they would call upon His name. They cast themselves upon God. If He cause His face to shine, Israel shall be saved. These Psalms contain much instruction for every heart, with respect to trust in God in the deepest distress. But they can only be interpreted with reference to the circumstances of Israel in the last days.

Psa. 81 is remarkable in this point of view. It speaks of the feast of the new moon, a sign of the renewal of God's favor towards Israel; their being recalled by God to the enjoyment of His blessing. The people appear again on the scene, although not yet in full blessing. But the doctrine taught here (giving an answer to the faith which pleaded the blessing formerly bestowed on the people, and their connection with the Lord) is that Israel had forfeited all this by their unfaithfulness. God had blessed them, assuring them, if they were obedient, of all kinds of blessing. But they would not hearken to His voice. If they would have hearkened to it, all their enemies should have been confounded, and the people should have enjoyed the best of earthly blessings. If all this failed it was their own fault.

In Psa. 82 God is the judge among the authorities of the earth. Alas! the rulers of His people were wicked like all the rest (John 8). Although they were called *elohim* (gods) as was the case under the law, they should all die like men. God was to arise and judge the earth and inherit all nations. This is a very distinct revelation of the great fact, that God resumes the authority which He had committed to man in order to judge the unjust judges.

Psa. 83 reveals to us the last confederacy of the nations (those which encompass the land of Canaan with Assyria) against Israel; and the judgment of God is invoked upon them, in order that the name of Jehovah may be known as the Most High, over all the earth. It appears by the prophecies, that the nations will capture and plunder Jerusalem. Afterward, at the end, it will be again attacked; and on this occasion the Lord will defend Zion and destroy His enemies. This Psalm apparently speaks of the latter event.

Psa. 84 In this fine Psalm, the spirit of which applies with yet more precious force to our Christian career, we have the joy which the faithful Israelite feels in once more going up to Jerusalem to enjoy the ordinances of God (although we may see in it a moral sense for the Israelite also). The Israelite is not yet there; but the thought renewed in all its strength, of the blessings connected with it. The altar of his God is to him what its nest is to the swallow, and its house to the sparrow (this is the meaning, I doubt not), and if God has found a resting-place for the birds, there is as surely one for His people. A touching argument, which gives so much the more force to the remembrance of the Lord's position. In this Psalm, the name and the title of the Lord of hosts, the King and the God of Israel, reappears in all its significance. There are here two kinds of blessing for the faithful. He who dwells in the house of such a God as this has only to praise Him; but to find strength in God for the way that leads to it, and to have this way in their heart, is also a blessing that characterizes the faithful, though they have not yet reached the house of God. The valley of tears; through which they are passing, becomes to them a springing well; rain from heaven fills it with water. They go

from strength to I strength until they appear before God in Zion. The heart that is thus occupied with the way, is then filled by the Spirit with the joy of having to do with God, Jehovah of Hosts. But this is not all, for that which now inspires him with confidence and joy in the expression of his desires, is the thought that God looks upon the face of His anointed (of Christ, the Lord). The Jehovah of hosts is the God of Jacob. Blessed is the man that trusts in Him!

In Psa. 85, we find a very distinct expression of the sentiments which faith produces when the people, although returned, are not yet enjoying the peace and blessing promised to Israel. The fact of the people's return is laid hold of by faith as the fulfillment of the ancient promises; such as, Lev. 26, Deut. 32, and many others; and this faith addresses itself to Jehovah- the covenant name, and not simply to God. But the people are not yet in the enjoyment of all the blessings which the Lord bestows upon His earthly people, and faith awaits His answer. Upon this, the great principles of God's dealings are announced. The reconciliation (through the intervention of sovereign grace) of mercy and truth, of righteousness and peace, which were otherwise incompatible; for the rejection of Israel would have been righteousness. Truth springs out of the earth, for all the promises of God are accomplished, and " he who sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth;" and the righteousness of God can look down from heaven in blessing upon His people and upon His earth. For the Lord gives that which is good, and the earth is blessed (compare the end of Hosea Righteousness goes before Him, and directs the people in His ways. It is evidently the millennial state. In the Psalms that follow, to the end of this book, we have Christ connected in a peculiar manner with the circumstances and interests of the people, in order that they may enjoy this millennial blessing.

In Psa. 86 we have the meek one who acknowledges Jehovah and all his rights, even over the nations, and who seeks to unite all his faculties in the praises of Jehovah. He knows God through faith in his goodness. Having gone down to the lowest parts of the earth, he makes use of the deliverance of his soul by Jehovah, to confirm his faith, in the presence of all the power of the enemies that assembled themselves against him. Jehovah, the God of mercy, would save the son of His handmaid. But it is Jehovah, the God of the Jews, who is here celebrated.

Psa. 87 God has founded His city in the holy mountains. It is called "His foundation." Zion is then celebrated as the most glorious of the cities. She fears not comparison with Egypt or Babylon, her oppressors. She can speak of her great men. In writing up the people, Jehovah Himself numbers Christ, His son, among those who are born in Zion, the beloved city.

In Psa. 88 we find the profound source of all these blessings; it is that Christ, according to His infinite grace, enters into the deepest miseries of His people. His soul passes through all that the people had deserved, and that as God sees it. Yet it is not exactly expiation here, and subjection to the wrath due to sin according to the nature of God, Jehovah. It appears to me to be rather his governmental wrath, to which Israel, as a people, were subject, under the weight of which they were lying, about which they troubled themselves little, and still trouble themselves little, although outwardly experiencing a portion of its bitterness. But the soul of Jesus entered into it according to the full power which this wrath of God would have on one who felt it as Jesus could feel it (see Deut. 32:20,22). Lev. 26 gives rather the outward sufferings. Christ was pure from all those things which brought these sufferings upon them. He looked only to Jehovah, as we see in the Psalms. But He bore upon His heart all the misery and all the sorrows of the people.

Psa. 89 is, up to a certain point, in contrast with the preceding Psalm; but, founded on the sure mercies of David, it celebrates all that Jehovah is in power, in righteousness, and in faithfulness. The people who know Him shall rejoice in His name. He is the glory of their strength. Now, David and his seed were the depository of the promises, and the instrument of their fulfillment. His children should be chastised, if needful, but the blessing should never be taken away. The immutable faithfulness of God was concerned in this. Faith reckoned on this faithfulness, and found in the distress of the people and the ruin of David's family, an occasion to call upon God, who had given the promises, and had even sworn to accomplish them. He could not leave the crown of David in the dust. The humiliation of Christ, the meek one; His connection in the mind of God with Zion, the elect city; the sufferings which the soul of Christ went through in grace, bearing in his heart before God the burden of His people's sin; the sure promises of the Lord (perfect and glorious in all His ways, and whose people Israel were), which were given to the seed of David; such were the grounds upon which, by faith, the people's hopes were founded. That which the Lord Himself is, was the foundation. Since the celebration of His name, prophetically, in Psa. 83, it is the name of Jehovah that gives its force and its thoughts to faith. Christ, as we have seen in the four last Psalms, was the means by which this name could be manifested in blessing. Through Him, righteousness and peace were united, God was fully glorified, and this people, for whom Christ had stood before Jehovah, under the weight of their burden, could now be blessed. The connection between the 1st verse of this Psalm and the 19th, is striking with respect to Christ's being the depository of all blessing. The word "mercies" (v. 1), is the same as "holy one" (v. 19). All these mercies center in this depository of mercy.

This Psalm closes the third book.

The Fourth Book

The fourth book of the Psalms treats essentially of the bringing in of the First-begotten into the world; and that, in connection with the authority of Jehovah, the true God, over the whole earth. But at the same time setting His throne in Zion in the midst of Israel, according to His promises.

This book commences with a Psalm, in which the Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of the remnant of Israel, reminds Jehovah of the way in which He had been the dwelling-place of His people in all generations. He, Jehovah, God, before the Creation, disposed of man according to His good pleasure. A thousand years in His sight were but a watch in the night, and Israel who were as grass (compare Isa. 40) are consumed by His anger. Nevertheless although their days were consumed in the wrath of God, faith was now at work in their hearts; they acknowledge that He who smote them was their God in all generations; and therefore, counting upon His faithfulness, they say "How long?" appealing to His mercy, for it is to that they look, that they may rejoice and be glad all their days. They pray that He will make them amends for their long affliction, by days of happiness flowing from His goodness, that His work and His glory may appear unto them, and His beauty be upon them. This evidently embraces the whole of Israel, as the family in whom Jehovah delighted; the heart of the people having a holy sense of what He was for them, in the midst of their distress. Consequently, it will be observed that the name of Jehovah, in this book, shines through everything, like the sun which arises to bring the true light into the darkness, shedding its rays on every side. It is this, together with the bringing in of the first-begotten, which characterizes this book: that is to say, the glory of the name of Jehovah, and the revelation of the various relations which this name involved, in its glory.

Psa. 91, is the Messiah's identification with this people, taking Jehovah their God for His God. It is a very remarkable Psalm. It opens by putting-as it were-in their place, all the names by which God was known before He revealed Himself as Father. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. These are the names revealed to Abraham. Almighty-for his daily faith; Most High-in the blessing of Melchizedec. Thus, he who trusted in the promises contained in this name of blessing, should enjoy the Almighty protection of the God of Abraham for the present time. Nebuchadnezzar, when brought to repentance, acknowledges God by this name of Most High. Where is this secret place of the Almighty? The Messiah declares that He will take Jehovah (the God of Israel) for His refuge, for His God, in Him will He trust. This indeed is where the true God, the Most High, is to be found. The Spirit declares, verse 3-8, the consequences of this. However it may be translated, verse 9 interrupts the sequence of the Psalm, and is addressed, I think, to the Messiah by the Spirit speaking by the mouth of Israel. In the preceding Psalm, Jehovah had been celebrated as the dwelling-place of Israel in all generations, so that here they naturally speak of Him as their refuge; and the Spirit speaking through them, goes on to announce the glorious consequences of this-a position which is true for all, but especially that of the Messiah. In verse 14, the Lord Himself crowns the discourse, by declaring the results of the Messiah's faith in His Name. Thus Israel and the Messiah Himself place themselves under the wings of Jehovah. Observe here, that faith being in exercise, and the

remnant looked at in this aspect, Jehovah is always the name that is used. It is He who is Elohim.

In Psa. 92 this blessed union between Israel and the Messiah, of interests and of position, and of the faith which sets forth the names of Jehovah, the Almighty, and the Most High, has for its natural consequence that the Messiah, the Head of the people, acknowledges in their name how good it is to give thanks unto Jehovah, and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High. His works are great, for He is what His Name is. His thoughts are very deep. The fool does not understand this. The wicked shall be destroyed. Jehovah shall be most high for evermore. " My horn shall be exalted," saith the Messiah, in the Spirit of prophecy; " Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies: the righteous shall be planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God, and shall bring forth fruit, to show that Jehovah is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him." The meaning and the application of this Psalm are evident. These three Psalms form a very remarkable kind of introduction to this book.

From Psa. 93 to Psa. 100, is one of the most striking series, displaying the whole progress of the events connected with the bringing in of the First-begotten (Heb. 1:6). The first is the thesis, or the state of things which is established as the result of all that is revealed in the Psalms that follow. Jehovah reigneth; the world is established by His power. The floods have lifted up their waves against this Rock of Ages, but He has been mightier than they. His testimonies are proved to be very sure. Holiness is the perpetual characteristic of His house. It is Jehovah; and His throne is like Himself.

In Psa. 94 the remnant of Israel in the last days, entreat Jehovah to come forth in vengeance to deliver them, and to put an end to the triumph of the wicked. The object of affliction for God's elect is to preserve them, until the pit is digged for the wicked. Jehovah will defend those that trust in Him, and will cut off the wicked in their iniquity. In verse 20 we have a striking appeal to God, that for His own glory He will cut off the wicked, the Antichrist. The faithful ask if the throne of God shall be set up beside the throne of one whose very principle is wickedness? God must either renounce His throne of glory on earth, or cut off the throne of iniquity.

In Psa. 95 is the last call upon the Jews to repent. While it is called to-day, before the Master of the house rises up. A call ever in season; but which the patience of God continues till the last moment.

Psa. 96 calls on the Gentiles to submit themselves to forsake their idols, and to come and sing the new song, of millennial joy in the earth, which is blessed by Jehovah, under His reign and His scepter of righteous judgment.

In Psa. 97 He comes with clouds and darkness, with power and with all the brightness of His glory. All the heavenly powers are called to come and worship the First-begotten on His glorious presentation to the world. Idolatry is confounded; Zion is filled with joy on account of Jehovah's judgments which are being executed in the earth. It is the deliverance of the righteous.

In Psa. 98 judgment has been executed. Jehovah has made known His salvation to Israel, and displayed His righteousness to the heathen. Their joy will break forth, and shall be, as it were, the herald of Jehovah who will judge the world in righteousness.

In Psa. 99 He has taken His place on His throne in the earth. He sits between the cherubims. He is great in Zion, and high above all the people. The Spirit recalls His dealings with Israel in the

beginning. It is the same Jehovah; and the remnant, now become the people, invite the peoples to the worship of the Holy One, the God of Israel.

Psa. 100 is the invitation to all the ends of the earth to come and worship with joy, and gladness, and thanksgivings, that God who has indeed proved by His dealings with Israel that His mercy endureth forever. Israel is His people, the work of His hands. This remarkable series ends here.

Psa. 101 gives the principles of the Messiah's kingdom on earth, when He takes the reigns of government into His own hands.

Psa. 102 is of the highest interest, combining Christ's most complete humiliation with the testimony to His eternal Divinity. The occasion of the latter revelation is this:-After the touching expression of the isolation and deep abasement of the Lord (lifted up as man in His Messiah character, to be cast down the more thoroughly as despised and rejected by man, and forsaken under God's wrath; and that in the presence of Jehovah's glorious eternal continuance), the Messiah in perfect confidence taking up this latter thought in the spirit of prophecy, declares that the time to favor and re-establish Zion is come, for the servants of Jehovah take pleasure in her stones. He has turned their hearts to favor the dust thereof. So the heathen shall be gathered to the name of Jehovah, and shall fear His name and His glory; for when Jehovah shall build up Zion He shall appear in His glory. Jehovah will hear the cry of the destitute, and the groaning of the prisoners. He will deliver those that are appointed to death, looking down from the height of heaven to declare His name at Jerusalem. And shall the Messiah alone be deprived of His portion in this joy, He who was cut off in the midst of His days? This is the touching question that brings out the Savior's divine glory. We know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that verse 25 is the reply to this question, declaring the eternal divinity of the Messiah as Creator, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth." The 28th verse establishes the perpetual blessing of His servants and of their seed.

Psa. 103 and 104 go together in this sense, that the first celebrates what Jehovah is for Israel in His millennial manifestation, the second, that which He is for creation, as recognized by faith, in the full development of His character as Jehovah. These Psalms are spoken prophetically in anticipation, but it is in this character they celebrate Him. The case of the paralytic man, in Luke 4, was the manifestation of this power in the person of the Son of man. He healed disease in proof that He could pardon sin. But although He who could accomplish this deliverance was there, we know that Jerusalem knew not the time of her visitation (comp. Isa. 55:7,9). The invitation to confidence in that; the accomplishment of which, is celebrated here.

This book ends with two Psalms that establish two great principles of the ways of God, manifested in His government of Israel. Psa. 105 reminds Israel (on whose behalf God-remembered the covenant of His promises to fulfill them, verses 7, 9), of Jehovah's dealings in grace and power, and how God had guided, visited, and delivered them; how He had judged their enemies since the days of Abraham until He had brought them into Canaan, that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. In a word, the whole history of this people is an expression of the power of God exercised in their favor, according to the promises made to Abraham.

Psa. 106, on the contrary, declares all the constant rebellion of the people in the face of God's mercies, their ingratitude and unbelief; and yet that in spite of their repeated sins, God, full of

compassion, heard them whenever they cried unto Him in their distress. He remembered His covenant and pitied them according to the multitude of His mercies. It is on this basis of the perfect goodness and unfailing faithfulness of God, that faith or the prophetic Spirit of Christ places itself; the mercy of Jehovah endureth forever. Who can utter His mighty acts? The righteous, those who walk (come what will) in integrity are blessed, and all the desire of the Humble One is to find Himself the object of what He knows Jehovah to be, and to see the prosperity of His people, and thus to glory with His inheritance. These two verses (4, 5) are extremely beautiful as the language of the Spirit of Christ. At the close of the Psalm the enduring and patient mercy of God is applied to the circumstances of the Jews at the end, in the desire of faith which rests upon their being gathered out from their dispersion among the heathen. This Psalm concludes the fourth book.

The Fifth Book

Psa. 107 celebrates the wished-for deliverance. But those who return have still many trials to pass through. This Psalm commences the fifth and last book, which is specially occupied with the feelings and thoughts of those who are brought back, with respect to the ways of God, to the circumstances of those who have been delivered, and to the spirit suitable to them, as distinguishing them from the wicked. The book ends with songs of praise. God is considered here, as well as in the latter part of the fourth book, under the three aspects of the God of Israel—the Creator, who governs creation in providence, and the refuge of the humble and the oppressed. That which God was for Israel in the beginning is recalled to mind. He is ever the same. What He then was, is His memorial forever. This is eminently the experience of the remnant in the last days. But when deliverance is at hand and partly accomplished, or fully celebrated. Christ speaks by His Spirit, and there are Psalms of which the full value is only realized in His person, and others which relate to Him. Psa. 110 is a direct prophecy of the place of glory and judgment procured for Him by Israel's rejection.

This first Psalm the 107, gives us a picture of God's dealings with men, judged because of their foolishness, yet finding their resource in God on turning towards Him. Dealings exemplified in Israel, redeemed and restored, but still under discipline in their land (according to Isa. 18) although finally brought into full blessing. We must observe, that it is when God shall have brought Israel back, that is to say, when the Jews shall, in His providence, have re-entered their land, that the dealings of God with them there, as a responsible people, re-commence. It is there that they will suffer the most, and will be, as a people, in conflict with the nations; and there that they will at length receive salvation and deliverance from Jehovah.

In Psa. 108 faith seeks, in the exaltation of Jehovah, the deliverance of the people, according to God's own rights—rights which He vindicates by judging the nations who possess the land of Israel, Edom in particular. God asserting His rights over the land, and making use of Israel as His instrument with respect to the nations; after having delivered him as His beloved. These two Psalms give us the two parts of Israel's restoration; first, their return and subsequent oppression, and then their triumph (as the vessel of God's rights over the earth) when God alone is their refuge, and vain the help of man.

Psa. 109 is the judgment of the wicked man, full of iniquity and pride; and in general that of the wicked Jews, who are apostate in Israel. We know that this was fulfilled in Judas, with respect to the person of Jesus; the character of the wicked Jews at the end, is seen in principle in Judas. But the poor shall be delivered.

The application of Psa. 110 to the Lord is well known. On His rejection by Israel, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, He awaits the moment ordained of God for the judgment of the earth. His scepter shall come out of Zion. He rules in the midst of His enemies, and His people are willing in this day of His power. It is the beginning of a new day, which gives its youth to surround the Lord the King in holy pomp. According to Jehovah's unchangeable oath, He is a

priest forever after the order of Melchizedec, that is to say, according to the power of an endless life. Son of God, the anointed King in Zion, King of peace and King of righteousness, He especially possesses this character. Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, to bless the Most High God on the part of the people of the seed of Abraham, and to bless the people on the part of God. How shall these things be accomplished? Adonai, the Lord, at the right hand of Jehovah, shall Himself strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen. He shall fill the earth with the dead bodies. He shall wound the head over a great country. In a word, He shall execute judgment in the midst of the nations. Having undergone the humiliation appointed by God, having dwelt in this dry and thirsty land where no water is, to receive there such refreshings as might be granted Him by the way; therefore shall He be highly exalted above all. We have a principle here which is very important in studying the Psalms. It is this-although the spirit of prophecy sometimes throws itself entirely into the circumstances to which the Prophecy relates, so that we must also place ourselves in them, to be able to understand it; nevertheless, we must sometimes admit also its action upon the heart of the speaker. When in spirit he says, "My Lord," to shut out entirely that which passes in the heart of the prophet, would be to lose one element of interpretation. But still the Spirit in the heart of the prophet connects itself with the subject of the prophecy, whatever the occasion of it may have been. We may also remark that the Church is taken no notice of here. Christ, rejected of the Jews, and seated at the right hand of the glory of God, until His enemies are made His footstool, is the subject. Nothing is said of what He does for His friends. He is looked at as the Messiah-but instead of being the Messiah received by the Jews, He is the Messiah in this new position which brings out the glory of His person, i.e., at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and coming thence to set up His rightful throne in Zion, acting in power towards His enemies, and the rod of His strength issuing from Zion.

Psa. 111 celebrates the effect of the deliverance which Jehovah has thus accomplished; or rather that which the Lord was shown to be in this deliverance.

Psa. 112, on the contrary, celebrates the character of the righteous man, who fears and who waits for him; rehearsing the blessings that attend such a walk as this, even in the midst of these circumstances.

Psa. 113 makes known that the glory of this God, the Savior of His people, who has stooped from heaven to behold the poor of His people and to raise them up, shall shine forth hereafter to the ends of the earth, even as it is already exalted above the heavens.

Psa. 114 recalls the coming forth from Egypt, and apostrophizes the Red Sea and Jordan in a most striking manner, demanding of them what it was in the midst of Israel that terrified and drove them back. The object of this was to make it known that it was the same God who now manifested His presence on earth in the midst of His people.

Psa. 115 answers to the exhortation in Joel 2 It is, in the main, the same appeal as that in Psa. 42 and 43, only that the chronological circumstances are more in view there. Faith here sets itself morally in the presence of God. It is not for their own glory that the people seek God's intervention; the name of Jehovah is at stake, since the enemy insults them by, daring to say, "Where is their God?" But He is in the heavens, and their idols are but vanity. From the 9th verse, Israel, the house of Aaron, those that fear Jehovah, are invited to put their trust in Him, because He is

mindful of His people. He will bless and increase them. He has given the earth unto the children of men. Now, the dead could not praise Him; but we, say the faithful among the people, we will praise Jehovah. This is faith acknowledging what Jehovah is for His people, on the occasion of this cry, "Where is now their God?" a cry which brings out their faith in what He is.

In Psa. 116, the faithful one (pre-eminently Christ) has been heard. The word which is translated "haste," signifies distress of soul. When He was "greatly afflicted." But generally in this Psalm it is the practical effect produced in the soul by the favor of having been heard in the depth of distress. He will pay his vows unto Jehovah in the courts of His house at Jerusalem, in the presence of all the people. The name of Jehovah had been his refuge, he knows what the Lord is; and his soul, delivered by Him, enters into rest. The fruit in a faithful heart, of being thus delivered, is not at the first moment to rejoice in the deliverance, but to bless the Lord who delivered him.

In Psa. 117, the remnant call upon all the nations to praise Jehovah, because of the deliverance He has granted to His people. They acknowledge these two principles, the loving-kindness of the Lord and His unchangeable truth.

Psa. 118 calls on Israel, as such, to praise Jehovah; Aaron, also, and all those that fear Jehovah-Israel, that is to say, the people, looked at again in their relations as a people. Those who fear the Lord (doubtless, those in Israel, first, of all, but the expression admits all those who do so), and that, because of Jehovah's faithfulness in hearing the prayer of the humble. We again find the solemn form of words, which expresses a deep sense of this faithfulness. It is the Spirit of prophecy in all the faithful of that day, but pre-eminently in Christ in Spirit. The faithful have found that it is better to trust in Jehovah than in princes. This characterizes them-all nations compassed them about; they are destroyed; the enemy, Satan, has done his worst (verse 13), but Jehovah was their help. Jehovah Himself has chastened, but He has not given them over unto death. The Lord is the strength and song of the faithful; He is become their salvation. It is Christ primarily who speaks in Spirit as the Head of His people in the last days. Faith, as it always does, sees first the instruments (verses 10, 11, 12), then the adversary (verse 13), and finally, the chastening of the Lord (verse 18). Compare Job's case, in which all this is developed, and that of Christ Himself. In the Lord's case, there were the chiefs of Israel and Judas. It was Satan's hour, who came as the prince of this world. But Jesus received it all from the hand of His Father only, and in obedience. At length (verses 19, 20, 21), deliverance is complete, joy and gladness are in the tabernacles of the righteous. The righteous (Christ above all) enter into the gates of righteousness in Jerusalem-the gates of the Lord. Oppressed and exercised (Christ above all has this character), this place belongs to Him, the righteous Messiah and the righteous Jehovah, and by grace to the remnant with Messiah. There, in Israel, He praises Jehovah who has delivered Him, Now it is that the Stone, which the builders refused, is become the Head-stone of the corner. In verse 23, Israel speaks and acknowledges the Lord's hand, and the day which He has made for His glory. Hosanna resounds from other lips than those of little children, namely, from those whose hearts have been exercised before Jehovah; they bless Him who comes in the name of Jehovah. Their house shall be no longer desolate. Its gates are truly the gates of the Lord, into which the righteous have entered, and where He is known. (Compare Matt. 21:13,15,16, then 22, the people judged; the Pharisees in verse 15; the Sadducees, verse 23; the lawyers, verse 35; the Pharisees being judged by that which regarded the rejection of His person, according to Psa. 110; finally, the rejection of His messengers, the Apostles, looked at as sent to the nation, and the judgment, chap.

23:37-39). The true God is Jehovah, who has revealed His light to Israel; and they worship Him as their God with sacrifices of thanksgiving, testifying by this Psalm to the truth-of which they are a hearty witness, and one that cannot be gainsaid-that His mercy endureth forever.

Psa. 119 sets before us the law written in Israel's heart; and as many other Psalms have shown us either the circumstances they were in, or the effects of grace in Israel's heart with respect to the circumstances, this Psalm displays the effect of grace in writing the law upon their heart, making them sensible of their wanderings, and attaching them to it with ardent desires and affections. Humbled and cast down, they delight themselves in the law, even when it is scorned by the great ones of the earth.

Psa. 120 commences the series of Psalms entitled Mahaloth, or songs of degrees. Psalms which recapitulate, by way of memorial, the various feelings which the faithful have experienced during the painful circumstances through which they have passed, and which have, at length, brought them to worship in the temple of God. In the first of these Psalms, the faithful Israelite calls to mind the distress of his soul when exposed to the spirit of lying, and in exile among those that hated peace. He cried unto Jehovah from thence, and He heard him.

In Psa. 121, he reckons on the never-failing kindness of Jehovah to Israel, and proclaims that He who keeps Israel, will watch over and preserve the faithful (Christ above all) henceforth and for evermore.

Psa. 122 describes the joy of the faithful heart, when it was proposed to go up to the house of the Lord. This reminds him of all the privileges of the beloved city, and all its joys in connection with the Lord who dwelt there; and Christ declares in Spirit that now He will seek the peace of Jerusalem, for His brethren's sake, and because of the house of the God of Israel; identifying himself with the people by saying, " Our God."

Psa. 123 shows us the remnant waiting upon God as their only hope, whilst overwhelmed by the utter contempt of those who were at ease without God.

Psa. 124 celebrates their deliverance by Jehovah. If he were not there overwhelmed by the torrent of the wicked who were ready to swallow them up, the remnant confess that they are like a bird escaped out of the snare of the fowler; and that, through the interposition of the mighty hand of Jehovah, the Creator of all things.

In Psa. 125 the remnant tranquilly assure themselves of the portion of the faithful. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so does Jehovah from henceforth surround His people to protect them. The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon them. The upright in heart are the objects of Jehovah's favor. He will judge the wicked, even in Israel; but His peace shall be upon Israel.

Psa. 126 declares the joy of the remnant when deliverance by the hand of God had put an end to the captivity of Zion. It was like a dream to them. Jehovah had done great things for this poor remnant. The heathen were forced to acknowledge it. Nevertheless, they still prayed for the full re-establishment of Israel in peace; although they could even now say that those who sowed in tears should reap in joy.

In Psa. 127 being still in these circumstances, the faithful have learned the vanity of all human effort and carefulness. It is Jehovah who must build the house, Jehovah must keep the city. In

truth, the events which had occurred had thoroughly taught them this lesson.

The house which they had built for themselves, had been laid waste by the heathen; the city in which they had thought themselves secure had been taken. But God gives rest to His beloved, such rest as man with all his efforts cannot obtain. It is He who establishes His people in peace, and by whose blessing they shall be joyfully surrounded with children.

In Psa. 128 this blessing shall rest upon every one of those that fear Jehovah and walk in His ways. Blessed and happy, each one shall enjoy it in his own house and family. His blessing shall come out of Zion, and he shall see the prosperity of the beloved city all the days of his life. He shall see his children's children and peace upon Israel. It is evident that all these Psalms apply to Israel, and to the temporal blessings assured to the faithful remnant in the last days. Blessings conditionally true at all times, they are now accomplished and assured to them for the future by the intervention and protection of Jehovah, in the day of Israel's distress.

In Psa. 129 the faithful can review all Israel's afflictions from the beginning; but the Lord is righteous. He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The enemies of Zion shall be like the grass that withers on the house-top without blessing.

Psa. 130. This Psalm changes the subject. As we have more than once seen, the first thing for Israel is deliverance through Jehovah's favor, upon their return to Him. But this deliverance is followed by a deep sense of sin as between themselves and Jehovah. And now it is not their enemies that are in question, but their God. It is between Israel and Jehovah. This is the subject of Psa. 130 The Faithful One, brought into God's presence, confesses his sin, as it is in the sight of God. But, through grace, He acknowledges also this precious truth, that there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared-that man may draw near unto Him. While, therefore, the soul is cast down by a sense of sin, it can yet wait upon God and trust in His Word. The manifestation of the Lord's grace is more desired by him, than the dawn of day by those who are distressed in darkness, and watch for the morning which shall deliver and comfort them. Finally, there is an exhortation to Israel to trust in Jehovah.. With Him is mercy and plenteous redemption. He will redeem Israel from all their sins. This is more than delivering them from their enemies.

In Psa. 131 the meekness, of which Christ was the perfect pattern, in an obedience that sought nothing beyond the will of God, and thus was perfect wisdom in man, and a submission in the midst of trouble, waiting upon God, is pointed out here as characterizing the faithful. The period of Israel's deliverance is also clearly marked.

In Psa. 132 we have at length the triumph. The steps are ascended (for it is supposed that these songs of degrees were sung in going up the steps of the entrance into the temple), and they call to mind the time when Israel was ruined and judged-Shiloh forsaken of God-the Ark lost. God, in His sovereign grace, raised up David and put it into his heart to seek out an habitation for Jehovah, a dwelling-place for the mighty God or Jacob. The ardent desire that filled the heart of God's servant is touchingly depicted. One can understand the need felt by him who knew Jehovah, who had experienced His mercy and faithfulness, should desire to honor Him, and to re-establish His dwelling-place in the midst of Israel, where His foot-stool could be approached in worship. It was a more important, a more decisive moment, and one of deeper import, than that in which Moses set up the Tabernacle. The latter had been forsaken, for God's abiding in the Tabernacle depended on

the faithfulness of the people: But although-until the Messiah -nothing could have any stability, yet that which David did, was, in principle, the re-establishment of blessing in grace, when man had entirely failed in keeping that blessing. Its re-establishment by promise and election, could not be forfeited. The energy of David-an imperfect type of the deliverance of Israel, and of the setting up of the Lord's glory in the midst of this people by Christ Himself-could not be satisfied until the Ark of God was established, not in the forsaken Tabernacle, but in the seat of royalty which God had chosen. It is this desire, with the Lord's reply to it, which this Psalm expresses. A reply which in every point goes beyond all that the Faithful One had desired. Observe that it is the rest of God which is here spoken of. His rest must be in the midst of His people. The Tabernacle did not admit of this. God, in His grace, journeyed with His people. But He would rest in the rest of His people. Accordingly, it is not said, " Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered"; nor " Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel," as was said in the wilderness (Num. 10:35, 36). But, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest; Thou and the Ark of Thy strength" (verse 8). This difference is very remarkable, and characterizes the moment and the position of which this Psalm speaks. As to the way in which God's reply exceeds the desire of His people, compare v. 8 with 13, 14; v. 9 with 16; and v. 10 with 17, 18. A precious testimony to our hearts. That which David did, according to the grace given to a man, shall be accomplished in the last days by His power, of whom David was but the type.

In Psa. 133 we have the joy of Israel re-united under one Head (Hos. 1:11, Ezek. 37:21,22). But here it is the moral joy that flows from this union. It is in Zion that the Lord has commanded blessing and life for evermore.

Psa. 134 The servants of the Lord established in order and in peace in the Temple, praise His name there; and by the Spirit of prophecy, pronounce blessing in the name of the Lord that made Heaven and earth, upon the faithful; and that, out of Zion, where He has taken up His abode in peace and in glory. This is the fullness of Israel's blessing, and with this the Psalms of Degrees conclude. It appears to me that in Psa. 134, it is the Messiah in Spirit who, having arranged the Priests and Levites in joy in the Temple, exhorts them to praise the Lord; and that verse 3 is addressed to Him, as man, in their midst on earth. A perfectly beautiful exordium of the account of all that has placed Israel in rest.

In Psa. 135, Israel, now in full peace, occupy themselves according to the invitation of the preceding Psalm, with the praises of the Lord in His House, for His praise is " pleasant," because He had chosen Jacob, He who is great above all Gods; who does whatsoever He pleases in heaven and in earth, and in all places; who, as Creator, does what He will with all that He has created; who has interposed in behalf of His people by judging their adversaries, in order that Israel might possess their land. In verses 13 and 14, we find two passages united, which bring out in a very remarkable way the position to which these Psalms apply, and that Israel is looked upon according to the promises made of old, the power of God's redemption and His final intervention, after all the rebellion of this people, are the subject of the Psalms. Compare with verse 13, Ex. 3:15; the latter part of this verse is quoted. He who had given promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was their God, who was come down to redeem His people, who had said that the name of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, was His name 'and His memorial forever, was now giving a proof of this, by the deliverance and everlasting blessing of His people who were the object of these promises. With verse 14, compare Deut. 32:36; in which God makes known that He

will interpose on His people's behalf when, on account of their rebellion, they are overwhelmed by the power of their enemies. The God who had forsaken them for their iniquities, will deliver them for the glory of His name, when there is no other remedy. Only, grace does not recall either the iniquity or the distress. The Lord has Himself judged His people, and it is all over. The idols are but vanity; Deut. 32:37,38. Finally, the prophetic Spirit calls on the people and those who draw nigh to God, in their several classes, to praise and bless Jehovah out of Zion, Jehovah which dwelleth. at Jerusalem.

Psa. 136 While celebrating the praises of Jehovah as the Creator, Redeemer, and Protector, who chose His people as a precious jewel, who remembered them in their low estate and raised them up, this Psalm re-iterates the phrase-sacred at all times to faith since Israel's first ruin, and especially intended for the period here spoken of-" His mercy endureth forever."

From Psa. 137 to Psa. 143, the principal subjects of distress to the faithful are recalled in their leading features until their deliverance. Through this deliverance, wrought by the Messiah, all is triumph. This series begins with Babylon, where it may be said that Israel has been in captivity since Nebuchadnezzar. For although the possessors of the imperial power have changed, it is still the times of the Gentiles-a period not yet fulfilled. One cannot doubt that this Psalm was written at the time of the Babylonish captivity; but until the restoration of Jerusalem by the Messiah, the harp of Israel, responsive to the Spirit of Christ, still hangs upon the willows that grow on the banks of the rivers which enrich the land of their captivity. At present, no doubt, the believing Jew enjoys the heavenly calling, and shares a better hope. But here we find the Jews on their own proper ground, remembering Zion and Jerusalem according to God. They wait for the execution of judgment. The relentless enmity of Edom in the last days is very clearly marked in the prophets. See Obadiah. Babylon is to be distinguished from the enemies that attack Jerusalem and the Jews. The Jew is a captive in this system of abominations, he had been given up into the hands of the Gentiles, to whom God had committed the empire; and there will he be found at the end. Other enemies will attack them, but alas! Caesar is their king. The heart, however, of the faithful is grieved at their captivity, instead of relying upon the strength of the wicked one.

Psa. 138 celebrates the effect that Israel's deliverance produces in the heart of the kings of the earth. Babylon is to be entirely destroyed; but the kings of the earth shall hear the words of the Lord. The worshipper goes up to the temple in peace. The word of God has been fulfilled in such a manner, that it is • magnified above all His name. His power has been great, His righteousness has been displayed; but the poor Jew, who had trusted throughout in His word, experiences its entire accomplishment. Jehovah has heard his cry. The revelations of God will astonish all the kings of the earth. They shall praise the Lord and sing of His ways, for great shall be His glory. But, however highly he may be exalted, the Lord thinks of the humble and despises the proud. This is the confidence of the faithful in all their trouble. The Lord will leave nothing unfulfilled of all that He has spoken. His mercy endureth forever. He is a faithful Creator. This Psalm throws much light on that expression of the Apostle Peter, and shows us, too, the believer's position. The glory reflected upon the name of the Lord, even in the heart of the kings of the earth, through His faithfulness to His word, is brought out in full relief by this Psalm in a very remarkable manner.

Psa. 139. The manner in which God penetrates all things in His creature is very strikingly depicted in this well-known Psalm. But from the eleventh verse, the place of the worshipper being now in

grace and in peace, he can rest in God's perfect knowledge. A faithful Creator, as we have seen, He takes knowledge of the works of His hands. His thoughts, like His knowledge, are infinite. The moral import of this Psalm is very extensive. It contains the four elements of the soul's moral relations with God, which are developed in the history of Israel, and the fourth of which is realized exclusively in their favor at the end, but which apply to man in general; for after all, the history of Israel is but a specimen, in which, for our instruction, the Lord gives the history of man, and of His dealings with him. The first of these elements, is the way in which man, when taught by the Spirit of Christ, is conscious that God searches him even to his inmost thoughts. Everything is thoroughly laid bare before Him. A solemn, yet simple thought. Compare the end of Heb. 4. The second is, that taught by the same Spirit, we may rest in Him who thus knows us. Precious thought! How should he not know that which He has created! We were the object of God's creative will, and thus a part of His glory. The Spirit of Christ imparts this thought to faith. The third element is, that if God searches our thoughts, He gives us to know His own, by the spirit of Christ, v. 17, 18; they are infinitely precious to us. What a change! Now that grace is known, there is no seeking to escape from the mind and the eye of God, who searches us. It is ourselves who, in peace, search into and delight ourselves in His thoughts, knowing that we are the objects of the faithful Creator's care. One consequence of this, important in itself as well as to him who is thus instructed of the Lord, and which historically becomes necessary for his happiness, is (the fourth element), that God being what He is, having such thoughts, He will destroy the wicked. Considered morally, according to the nature of God, yet responsibly, the faithful man hates the wicked as though they were his own enemies; for here, it is the government of God on earth that is the question, and the relation of man as instructed in the mind of God, fashioned morally by his knowledge of the mind of God. Finally, after these four general elements, there is the desire of a soul in subjection to God and trusting entirely in Him, that nothing contrary to God should be allowed in his heart. He is conscious now that it is an immense privilege to be searched. by God, in order to attain a condition that is suitable to eternal relationship with God. God alone can do this. He is now no longer dreaded. It is the greatest favor to be fashioned for this eternal relationship. Such a desire implies a perfect grace and full confidence in that grace. I have said that, in this Psalm, it is man with God. But it supposes-as do all the Psalms-the energy of the Spirit of Christ in man, without which he cannot enter at all into these relations. The verses from 13 to 16, in type or mystery, apply to the body of Christ, the Church, which was its place of light and life in pure grace in the midst of this history of the relations of God with man as light, and light and life, and at last judge, of God, who searches in order to purify His people. The way everlasting is the hidden or eternal path, instead of that which is after the sight of the eyes and the desires of the heart, or according to human wisdom. It is that path according to the nature and precepts of God alone, which is, therefore, hidden from the heart of fallen man, but which, by its moral nature, is eternal. The same word in the original is used in Eccl. 3:17; but, it appears to me in a different sense (compare 8:17). Man sees things in detail, each in its season, but as a whole-as God sees them--they are beyond man's reach, although he has a heart that desires and seeks to know as he is known. But he has not the key to all this.

A few remarks will suffice for the four following Psalms. Not that they are devoid of interest, but because there is little difficulty in them to any one who has read and understood the preceding Psalms. We may observe that Psa. 140 speaks of the violent man and not of the deceitful man. It is an enemy with whom Israel is at open war. Doubtless these proud ones had laid snares; but

their character is violence, whether in tongue or in act. This Psalm is an appeal to Jehovah, against the last proud enemies who fight against the faithful at the end.

Psa. 141 is the ardent desire of the righteous man, still left in Israel, to be kept in the right path when overwhelmed by calamity and in the presence of the wicked. He distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked in Israel. The 6th verse proves the interest which the Lord again takes in blessing Israel. In verse 5, we see the spirit of intercession in the faithful one, and in fact the Lord's share in all these sentiments of the remnant, for in both verses it is the Spirit of Christ that speaks in the faithful one.

Psa. 142 applies fully to Christ alone. Nevertheless, the righteous are in the same position. His consolation is that when there was no help for Him in man, and His soul was overwhelmed within Him, His path was known, i.e. acknowledged by God. This is a depth of consolation which, to be complete, supposes perfect faith, like that -of Christ; but which has power, in measure, over the hearts of the saints, who are in the same circumstances; that is to say, when rejected by all, with the consciousness that the path they walk in is owned of God..

In Psa. 143 the faith of the believer is tested, and in extreme distress he seeks the face of the Lord, in order that he may distinguish the persecutions of the enemy from the judgments of God...A very interesting thought, and one of great importance to many souls. Faith learns how to do this, by drawing near to God. At first he feared this judgment, thus acknowledging that if God entered into judgment it was all over with him, and with every living' man. He implores the Lord to manifest Himself unto Him, remembering His dealings in mercy and grace, and the days of blessing, for his trust is in God, and he takes refuge with Him; he seeks His will for guidance, he is the servant of the Lord; to see His face, to hear His voice, is all his desire. And observe, that there is no thought of assuring himself of his position by thinking of his conduct, if God should judge. e. If God enters into judgment, all is lost; the upright man who is taught of God, thinks of it only to condemn himself. His only hope is that God will be unto him that which He has revealed Himself to be. His distress is that which he presents to God. No doubt this applies literally to Israel. But Israel returns according to the grace that saves us, and in this respect the principle is the same for all. It is God who is celebrated, God who is sought; and the only plea is that the heart has none other to look to or to seek than God.

Psa. 144, under the figure of David, it is the Messiah who asks for the execution of judgment, and who owns' that it is the Lord's strength that enables Him to obtain the victory over all His enemies, in order that full blessing may rest upon His people. Happy the people that is in such a case, whose God is Jehovah. There is a remarkable passage in this Psalm, which is thrice repeated in the word, " What is man?" It is found in Psa. 8 where it applies to the counsels of God fulfilled in the man Christ; and in Job 7:17, where he complains that God visits him, and says in his vexation that man is too insignificant for God to take notice of him and of his ways. And again here, where the Messiah in the name of Israel demands judgment. Why should God, be His patience ever so great, pause before so insignificant a creature as man, and delay to execute judgment for the blessing of the people who put their trust in Him? It had been said, in Psa. 2 " Ask, and I will give thee the heathen; thou shalt _break them with a rod of iron." This was according to the spirit of prophecy. He now asks for it, that the blessing may come. In John 17 He leaves out the world entirely, in His petition; and only presents His own people in prayer to His Father.

Psa. 145 reveals the intercourse between Messiah and the Jews, and finally all flesh, praising the Lord during the millennium. He is the Creator and the God of Providence, and at the same time He hears the cry of those that fear Him and delivers them. The three constant subjects here of praise-Israel, creation, and the deliverance of the oppressed who wait upon Him. The following Psalms are a series of hallelujahs.

In Psa. 146, man, even princes, are but vanity. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in Jehovah his God. And, again, He is the only Creator-faithful to His word, executing judgment for the oppressed, the deliverer of all the afflicted, overthrowing the wicked. He, the God of Zion, shall reign forever. The application of this Psalm to the circumstances and the deliverance of the Jews in the last days, is evident. The heart of the faithful is full of it; it is Christ Himself who leads these praises in...the great congregation (see Psa. 22:25). For His heart takes part in all that happens to Israel.

In Psa. 147 the whole congregation is more seen here. It is "our God," and again, it is He who builds up Jerusalem, and gathers together the outcasts of Israel, the Comforter of the broken-hearted, the Sovereign Creator of heaven and earth, who yet takes pleasure in those that fear Him. It is He who blesses Jerusalem, and establishes it with strength; who does what He pleases in heaven and earth, but who has shown His word unto Jacob and His statutes unto Israel, which He has done to no other nation. They have not known His judgments. The immediate and distinctive application of all these Psalms to Israel, as the nation in whom Jehovah will unfold His ways, and make Himself known in the last days, is clear and unequivocal.

Psa. 148 extends the sphere of praise, calling on all the heavenly beings to praise Jehovah; and then in verse 7, the earth and all its inhabitants, for His glory is above the earth and heaven. Verse 14 gives also the special relations of Israel with the Lord, in a peculiar manner. The intimacy of the Church is not found in these praises. It is not the Father, it is not the Bridegroom of our souls. It is Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth. It is the righteous government of the Most High, of the God of Israel, worthy of all praise and of all glory. But the affections of one who, being joined to the Lord, is but one Spirit, are quite another thing. Such a one recognizes the truth, the rightfulness of all this, its perfection in its place, but it is not his place.

Psa. 149 takes up the joy and the praises of Israel in particular, and the judgment which it is given them to execute upon the enemy. This last part shows how unsuitable it is to put the Church in the position of those who offer up these praises. It is suitable to Israel, because it is through the destruction of their enemy that they have deliverance. The righteous judgment of God's government is the subject. The Church, belonging to heaven, having lived in grace on the earth, quits it to meet the Lord in the air, leaving her enemies down here. In the glory-even in the earthly and heavenly-this distinction continues. Of the earthly Jerusalem it is said "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish;" while in the heavenly Jerusalem the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. It is beautiful to see this distinctiveness of grace continuing even in glory.

Psalm 150 is a kind of chorus, the force of which is evident; it is rather to be felt than explained. It will be observed that in the whole of this last book, it is always Jehovah. That is to say, the relation is acknowledged, and God is known in His relation to Israel, and by the name that is sacred to this relation. If we study the relationship which the Lord has entered into with Israel, in order to glorify

this name, and which are set before us prophetically in the Psalms, we shall find that a fresh light is thrown upon the spiritual character of the Gospels' which enables us to understand the way in which the Jews, devoted as they were to their ceremonies and proud of their traditional privileges, must have been offended by the presence of One whose perfection judged their moral condition. Rejected by them-but according to the counsels of God, for the accomplishment of redemption, and the bringing in of the Church, united to Him in the glory He assumed in heaven-He will perform all the promises of God to Israel, His elect people on earth, when He shall return. There will be a prepared heart in a remnant of this people, in the midst of unparalleled distress; a distress which the Lord has personally anticipated, and in which He sympathizes with the remnant. The Psalms give a voice in their hearts to this sympathy, until, interposing in power, He displays all the glory of Jehovah's name, the Creator, the Governor of the earth, the Judge of the wicked, faithful to His promises, kind and compassionate to His people, condescending to the humble and meek. It is, therefore, always necessary to distinguish the Church, which is united to the Lord before His manifestation, while He is still hidden in God. Let us remark in conclusion, that this last book is not so much the connected historical order of the last days, as the expression of the various sentiments of the faithful remnant during that period. We always find in it the name of Jehovah, that is to say, the relations of Israel with Jehovah are recognized by faith, although not yet re-established in fact. And all the sentiments which this produces, whether of sorrow, of encouragement, or of joy, find their expression in this last book. It is a moral supplement to the historical contents of the preceding books, and always supposes the last days and the personal exercise of faith in that which Jehovah is unto this faith.

I feel how imperfect is this development of that which is contained in the Book of Psalms, so rich in precious sentiments. I only hope that some principles are set forth which will assist in understanding them, and some keys to their application in reading the Psalms themselves.

Job

The Book of Job will not require a long examination-not that it fails in interest, but because, when the general idea is once laid hold of, it is the detail which is interesting, and detail, is not our present object.

In the Book of Job we have one portion of those exercises of heart which this division of the Holy Book supplies. These are not joyful exercises, but those of a heart that, journeying through a world in which the power of evil is found, and not being dead to the flesh, not having that divine knowledge which the Gospel furnishes, not possessing Christ in resurrection, is not capable of enjoying in peace the fruit of God's perfect love, whatever its own conflicts may be; but which struggles with the evil or with the non-enjoyment of the only real good, even while desiring to possess it.

This division contains the Books of Job, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs. The Proverbs have a peculiar character; they guide us through this evil by the wise man's experience. These books differ very much from each other. We shall examine each in its place.

In Job we have man put to the test. We might say, with our present knowledge, man renewed by grace, an upright man, and righteous in his ways, in order to show whether he can stand before God in presence of the power of evil, whether he can be righteous in his own person before God. On the other hand we find the dealings of God, by which He searches the heart, and gives it the consciousness of its true state before Him.

All this is so much the more instructive from its being set before us outside of all economy, all especial revelation on God's part. It is the godly man, such as one of Noah's descendants would be, who had not lost the knowledge of the true God, when sin was again spreading in the world, and idolatry was setting in. But the Judge was there to punish it. Job was encompassed with blessings, and possessed real piety. Satan, the accuser of the servants of God, goes to and fro in the earth seeking occasion for evil, and presents himself before the Lord among His mighty angels, the "bene-Elohim;" and God states the case of Job, the subject of His government in blessing, faithful in his walk. Satan attributes the piety of Job to this manifest favor, and to his prosperity. God gives all this into the hands of Satan, who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies; and they attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise. But Job, dwelling neither on the instruments employed, nor on Satan, receives this bitter cup from the hand of God without murmuring. Satan suggests again that man will, in fact, give up everything if he can preserve himself. God leaves everything to Satan, except the life of His servant. Satan smites Job with a dreadful disease; but Job submits himself under the hand of God, fully recognizing His sovereignty. Satan had exhausted his means of injuring Job, and we hear nothing more of him. But the depths of Job's heart were not yet reached, and to do this was the purpose of God, whatever Satan's thoughts may have been. Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety, he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety, the

conscience has never been really set before God. - Peace -such as can never be shaken-and real liberty are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature, the attraction of His grace has been felt; nevertheless, God and His love are not known. If Satan is foiled-the grace of God having kept Job's heart from murmuring-God has yet His own work to accomplish. That, which the tempest that Satan had raised against Job failed in doing, is brought about by the sympathy of his friends. Poor heart of man! The uprightness, and even the patience of Job had been manifested, and Satan had no more to say. But God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him. God did this with Job; revealing at the same time that He acted in grace in these cases for the good of the soul which He loved.

If we compare the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms we shall often find the appreciation of circumstances expressed in almost identical terms; but instead of bitter complaints, and reproaches addressed to God, we find the submission of a heart which acknowledges that God is perfect in all His ways. Job was upright, but he made this his righteousness; which evidently proves that he, had never been really in the presence of God. The consequence of this was that, although he reasoned more correctly than his friends, he attributed injustice to God and a desire to harass him without cause. See chap. 19, 23:10, 13; 13:15-18; 16:12. We find also in 29 that his heart had dwelt upon his upright and benevolent walk with complacency, commending himself, and feeding his self-love with it. "When the eye saw me it gave witness to me." And therefore God brings him to say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself." It is with these chapters 29-31, which express his good opinion of himself, that Job ends his discourse; he had told his whole heart out. He was self-satisfied: he used the grace of God to make himself lovely in his own eyes. If (chap. 9) he confesses man's iniquity, it is because it is useless to attempt being just with such a God. The Sixth chapter, as well as the whole of his discourse, proves that it was the presence and, the language of his friends that were the means of bringing out all that was in his heart. We see also in chap. 30 that the pride of his heart was detected. As to the friends of Job, they do not call for any extended remarks. They urge the doctrine that God's earthly government is a full measure and manifestation of His righteousness, and of the righteousness of man, which should correspond with it. A doctrine which proves a total ignorance of what God's righteousness is, and of His ways; as well as the absence of all real knowledge of what God is. We do not see either that the feelings of their hearts were influenced by communion with God. Their argument is a false and cold estimate of the exact justice of His government as an adequate manifestation of His relation with man. Although Job was not before God in his estimate of himself, he judges rightly in these respects. He shows that although God shows His disapprobation of the wicked yet that their circumstances overthrow the argument of his friends. We see in Job a heart which, although rebellious, depends upon God, and would rejoice to find Him. We see too that when he can extricate himself by a few words from his friends, who, he is quite sensible, understand nothing of his case, nor of the dealings of God, he turns to God although he does not find Him, and although lie complains that His hand is heavy upon him. That is to say, we see one who has tasted that God is gracious, whose heart, wounded indeed and unsubdued, yet claims those qualities for God-because it knows Him-which the cold reasonings of his friends could not ascribe to Him; a heart which complains bitterly of God, but which knows that could it once come near Him, it would find Him all that it had declared Him to be, and not such as they had declared Him to be; a heart

which repelled indignantly the accusation of hypocrisy-for Job was conscious that he looked to God, and that he had known God and acted with reference to Him.

But these spiritual affections of Job did not prevent his turning this consciousness of integrity into a robe of self-righteousness which hid God from Him, and even hid him from himself. He declares himself to be more righteous than God. Chapter 10:7; 16:14-17; 27:2-6. Elihu reproves him for this, and on the other hand explains the ways of God. He shows that God visits man and chastises him, in order that when subdued and broken down-if there is one who can show him the point of moral contact between his soul and God in which his soul would stand in truth before Him-God, May act in grace and blessing, and deliver him from the evil that oppresses him. Elihu goes on to show him that if God chastises, it is becoming in man to set himself before God to learn wherein he has done wrong. In short, that the ways of God are right, and He with draweth not His eyes from the righteous, but if they are in affliction He shows them their transgressions, and if they return to Him in obedience when He openeth their ear to discipline, He will give them prosperity; but that the hypocrites shall perish. The first case which Elihu brings forward is the pride and self-will of man. God chastises and humbles him. The second is that of positive transgression; but in the first case he was in the path of destruction. It was this case which needed the interpreter to place him in uprightness before God. Finally, he insists upon the incomprehensible power of God Almighty. The Lord then speaks, and addressing Job, carries on the subject. He makes Job sensible of his nothingness. Job confesses himself to be vile, and declares that he will be silent before God. The Lord resumes the discourse, and Job acknowledges that he has darkened counsel by speaking of that which he understood not. But now still more submissively, he declares openly his real condition. Formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; now his eye had seen Him, wherefore he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. This is the effect of having seen God, and of finding himself in His presence. The work of God was accomplished-the work of his perfect goodness, which would not leave Job without causing him to know himself, without bringing him into God's own presence. The object of discipline was attained, and Job is surrounded with more blessings than before.

We learn two things here, first that man cannot stand in the presence of God; and secondly, the ways of God for the instruction of the inner man.

It is also a picture of God's dealings with the Jews on the earth.

The book of Job plainly sets before us also the teaching of the Spirit as to the place which Satan occupies in the dealings of God and His government, with respect to man on the earth. We may also remark the perfect and faithful care of God, from whom (whatever may have been the malice of Satan), all this proceeded, because He saw that Job needed it. We observe that it is God who sets the case of Job before Satan, and that the latter disappears from the scene; because here it is a question of his doings on the earth and not of his inward temptations. Now, if God had stopped short in the outward afflictions, Job would have had fresh cause for self-complacency: Man might have judged that those afflictions were ample. But the evil of Job's heart consisted in his resting on the fruits of grace in himself, and this would only have increased the good opinion he already entertained of himself; God, therefore, carries on His work.

Either the sympathy of his friends (for we can bear alone and from God in His presence, that which we cannot bear when we have the opportunity of making out complaint before man), or the pride

which is not roused while we are alone, but which is wounded when others witness our misery, or perhaps the two together, upset the mind of Job, and he curses the day of his birth. The depths of his heart are displayed. It was this that he needed.

Job 35:5-11

Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man. By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?

Some Thoughts on the Book of Job

I have no idea that the uprightness of Job was mere natural uprightness. It was surely an uprightness which grace had wrought in Job's heart. It was an uprightness to which God Himself bore witness; first, by the pen of the historian in chap. 1:1; and then, in the most solemn direct statement of it, in proposing the case to Satan-" Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." One special expression of this uprightness, noted by the Holy Spirit in chap. 1, is his praying and sacrificing in verse 5 for his children; for Job said, "It may be, that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

To accomplish the purposes of God's love to Job, He [God] proposes to Satan a question concerning him; and let me say here, I believe we often have vague and unworthy thoughts of God's ways in this. We speak of God permitting this and that, and, in one sense, it is well to speak thus. "God is not tempted with evil; neither (in this sense) tempteth He any man." So far, it is well to speak of Satan as the agent, and of God as permitting his operations. But if we get the idea of Satan's originating a plan of trial, as though He were the architect of the fortunes of God's people, and think of God as looking on, and permitting what has had its origin in Satan, we get wrong, and lose the comfort and strength of what God has revealed to us. Satan originates nothing. God has plans of discipline for His children, in the conducting of which He avails Himself of the malice and envy which ever exist in the heart of 'the enemy, who is ready to do for his own wicked ends, what God would have done for ends of holiness and love, It was not Satan who invented the thought of putting Job into the furnace, and asked permission of God to carry it into effect: it was God who saw good for His own glory, and the deepening of His work of grace in Job, that he should be tried in the fire. And HE SAID TO SATAN, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" etc. The trial originated with God. God, who saw it needful for His child to be thus tried, proposed the case to Satan for his consideration!

Then there is another thing:-God's question with Job, was as to an undetected root of evil in his nature, which it needed the sifting of the enemy to bring to light. Satan's question with Job was; as to the reality-the genuineness of what God had wrought in Job. Satan said, "Self-interest was at the bottom": God said, "You may try, if you can get at it." God knew that there was a secret root of self-confidence which Satan's sifting would make manifest in the end to Job himself, the detection and cure of which would be the prelude to far fuller blessing which God had in store for His child. But with Satan, God vindicates Job. So long too as Satan's direct assaults, as the adversary-the oppressing adversary-are continued, God upholds His servant, and Satan gets no advantage. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." It was in this part of the trial that Job, through God's grace, earned the character he bears in God's record of him in the New Testament. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." When was this manifested?-After his failure and his restoration? No; there was no need for patience then. It was while the secret root of evil was still undetected in his heart, and after he was put into Satan's sieve for the detection and cure of it, that the grace was manifested, which God has been pleased

to notice with such sweet words of approval in the New Testament.

As to what the root of evil was, that was brought to light in this devoted servant of God; chap. 3:25, 26, makes this evident enough. It was not that he desired freedom from evil for himself and his children; it was not that he earnestly and anxiously sought it by prayer-real prayer to God. It was, that he thought his prayers-his solicitude-had made God his debtor, to preserve him from what he, notwithstanding, found coming upon him. It was well to desire-well to seek-well to pray. But it was not well to reckon on his having desired, sought, prayed, as the reason why he should have the object of his heart. "I was not in safety (i.e., I was not careless and remiss); neither had I rest, neither was I quiet: YET trouble came." Evidently he had trusted his anxiety, and all it led to, for preservation from that which he was anxious about? What did this betoken? That he had not learned to have entirely done with himself, and to rest in the full consciousness of God's perfect love to a perfectly good-for-nothing sinner, as the infant rests on its mother's bosom. Now God is glorified in our dread of evil-our desire to be kept from it-and prayer to Him that it may be so. But there is that which honors Him much more than this. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep." And who are they, on whose lips we hear this sweet lullaby? They of whom Job was no doubt the type. The remnant of Israel, who connect in their own persons the two distinct histories of the nation-who for all these centuries have been at school to learn this lesson; and the generation that shall yet be born-the afflicted and poor people who shall trust in the name of the Lord, and over whom "God will rejoice with joy-silent in His love, joying over them with singing." Think of the process through which they learn thus to rest in God's love, while He is silent in His love over the one thus sleeping in His bosom.

I have spoken of the root of evil disclosed in chap. 3:25, 26. But this was only the root. As the root may be concealed beneath the surface of the earth, and need warmth and moisture to cause it to put forth its latent properties, and these never be discernible till stem; blossom, and fruit exist, as well as the unseen root from which they spring; so in Job's case. The state of soul expressed in those verses had existed in Job's best and happiest days; but it needed all the deep sorrows that he passed through under the hand of God, by the agency of Satan, to make this manifest. The fruits we have in such passages as those which follow:-" God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but He hath broken me asunder: He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for His mark. His archers compass me round about, He cleaveth my reins asunder, and cloth not spare; He poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, He runneth upon me like a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure " (16:11-17). " He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and Thou regardest me not; Thou art become cruel to me; with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me" (30:19-21). " When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness" (30:26). See also the whole of chap. 31, especially verse 35-37, " Oh that one would hear me I behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. I would declare unto Him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto Him." What an attitude for mortal man to take with God

And yet it must be remembered, that along with the above and many similar words that fell from Job's lips, there were others of a widely different character. The whole of chap. 9 is perhaps as beautiful and touching an expression of the state of a soul humbled and gracious through grace working in it, yet ignorant of redemption, as can anywhere be found.

But immediately after, as he continues his strain in chap. 10, he begins to call God himself, in question (see verses 1 to 8, or rather the whole of the chapter). The same admixture of good and evil is very observable in 13. The 23 chap., too, affords affecting proof of the confusion of Job's thoughts.. The estimate he has of God's tenderness and condescension is wonderful; but he talks of using it to come to his seat and argue with him (ver. 4 and 5, also 7). He is confident in his own integrity (11, 12); still he cannot find God, and knows it is vain to attempt to turn him. Altogether it is a wonderful chapter, and shows how God could say of Job, that he had spoken of Him the thing that was right, even while the great question between Him and Job was as to his judging God's ways, instead of bowing implicitly to God's judgment of him.

Then besides, Job was not what Satan had represented, nor had he done what Satan laid to his charge. Chapter 28 shows blessedly how Job was in the secret place of separation from evil to God, which Satan could neither see nor have access to. "Where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air." "God understandeth the place thereof," however, while "death and destruction have but heard the fame thereof with their ears." And what was this way of understanding-this place of wisdom? "And unto man he saith, Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." In this place Job was hid. God himself had declared that he was a perfect man and upright, fearing God, and eschewing evil. Grace had wrought this in Job; but when wrought, nature discerned, recognized, and relied upon it; and all the trial through which he passed (whether direct from Satan's hand or through the accusations of his friends) demonstrated on the one hand the reality of what grace had wrought; but manifested, on the other, Job's reliance on the fruits of grace, instead of utter self abasement, and entire reliance on the fountain of grace in God himself. The controversy with his friends closes in chap. 31, where he indignantly repels all their accusations, and invokes the interposition of the Almighty, declaring his readiness as a prince to meet him, and declare to him the number of his steps.

Here God begins to act; first, in the ministration of Elihu (type of Christ in his humiliation); then speaking Himself immediately to Job. To Elihu Job makes no reply; he does not answer him as he had done the others. After all the varied display in chaps. 38 and 39, of who He is that condescends thus to speak to Job out of the whirlwind, the Lord, in chap. xl., explicitly informs Job what the point of the controversy with him is. "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it." Satan misjudged Job, and God had made that manifest. Eliphaz and the others have falsely accused Job, and they are put to silence. Elihu has reasoned with him on God's behalf, urging the very thing now spoken to Job by God himself. But now he hears God's own voice, he can neither contend as he had done with the three, nor be silent as he had been before Elihu; he acknowledges his vileness, but so shrinks from the presence of Him whose interposition he had invoked, that he would gladly be excused any further conference. "Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." But Job cannot escape thus; he has called in question the rightness of God's ways, and called on God to clear them up, and terrible as is His voice now he does hear it, he must hear it to the end.

Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, "Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment-wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Now this was the whole matter. Job's reliance on the fruits of grace, his hope to have been because of these preserved from evil (evil however which he still dreaded), betrayed him, when that evil had come upon him, into the disputing Whether God had acted righteously in allowing all this to be. And now God meets him as above. And observe how He goes on to deal with him. It is the declaration of His own wondrous works, putting it to Job's conscience where he must be to have sat in judgment thus on God's ways, not the explanation of those ways, and his reasons for them, that we have in these chapters. If, as I suppose, the account of leviathan be a symbolic description of the power of him, in whose hands Job had been to be thus sifted, even here it is not the explaining to Job why or how it was he had been given into his hands; but the assertion of God's glory, as the Maker of this terrible one, and Job is left to infer God's right to use the creature of his power as it pleases him. Be this as it may, however, this dealing of God was effectual. He entirely bows-he is willing to hear all God has to say to him-he takes unfeignedly the place of self-loathing and self-abhorrence; and he owns that he has uttered what he understood not, things too wonderful for him, which he knew not. The root of the evil having been thus laid bare, and Job having been brought to see and abhor himself in God's presence, instead of vindicating himself and calling God's ways in question, the controversy is at an end. God has no further question with him; and it becomes manifest that His only object, "the end of the Lord," in raising this question with Job, was really that his servant might have greater blessing on a surer basis, and enjoyed with more quiet unquestioning confidence-confidence NOT that he had so prayed and sought, and that, therefore, God must answer-but that having been proved altogether vile-so vile as even to have condemned God, that he himself might be righteous; God was so good; His love and grace so perfect, as to have restored him twofold all that he had before; he could hold it now not on the tenure of his having so prayed that God must needs continue it to him, but that, being so vile and worthless, God had notwithstanding given all this. The knowledge of his own evil must have wrought two ways: first, should God take all away a second time he could, not have a word to say; self-abhorrence has no complaints to make of any but self, least of all can it complain of God; secondly, if such vileness had not hindered God from giving, what should induce him to resume what he had bestowed.

John 4

"With Thee is the fountain of life."

Who is that weary man, so lone and pale,

Beneath the shade that falls on Jacob's well?

A lowly pilgrim, from the noon-tide heat,

He sitteth there to rest his aching feet.

No more he seems: but heavenly hosts attend

And wait on Him, where'er His footsteps bend.

They looked with wonder when they sang his birth,

The greatest marvel ever seen on earth.

That humble man is Israel's promised King,

Though for His head a crown of thorns they'll bring.

Yes, He Immanuel is, The Eternal Word,

Of heaven and earth, of man and angels, Lord,

The Eternal Son hung on a woman's breast,

The mighty God beside the well takes rest,

...My soul tread softly! For 'tis holy ground,

No finite mind can this deep mystery sound,

But worship and adore the wondrous love

That could the blessed God so freely move

Towards thee a sinner, and an enemy!

Yes, Lord, Thou hast revealed this grace to me.

But see - a woman comes, unconscious, who

Sits by the water, and as careless too.

He asks to drink, and coldly she replies,

Yet gazes on the stranger with surprise,

For there was something in His eye and tone,

That ever marked Him as the Holy One.
Ah! Didst thou dream, poor sinner, that for thee,
Thus faint and weary, He's content to be,
That for the joy of giving thee to know
The living fountains from His heart that flow,
The garden's agony, the Cross, the grave,
He'll suffer all, His guilty ones to save.
But thou didst know, the groveling heart was won,
And found a treasure, ere the setting sun,
Thy happiest hour, thou couldst rejoicing tell,
That hour of noon, which brought thee to the well,
Alone with Jesus, - from His lips to hear
What drew the publicans and sinners near,
The gracious words for which our spirits yearn.
O blessed Lord! We too would sit and learn,
And drink abundantly, yea, drink forever,
Pleasures of pure delight from God's own river!
Personne

The Kingdom of God and of Heaven: the Church and the Dispensation

The expression the "kingdom of Heaven" is only found in St. Matthew; and when the Spirit of God would speak of what was already come to pass when Christ was on earth, He always changes the expression, and says "Kingdom of God;" thus in 12:28. Never, on the other hand, do we find such an expression, as "for the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink;" because although the Kingdom of Heaven is necessarily the Kingdom of God, the expression, the Kingdom of Heaven refers to an order of things in the dispensations of God, and contains an allusion, I doubt not, to Dan. 7. It is on this account that this expression occurs in St. Matthew, a gospel which constantly looks at things in a Jewish aspect, and which is peculiarly occupied in showing the accomplishment of the prophecies and promises made to the Jews. Hence it is always said, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus himself thus speaks, whilst it is said, "the Kingdom of God is among you "-for the King was there; but it was not the Kingdom of Heaven, so long as the King was upon earth. From the time of the exaltation of Jesus, this Kingdom of Heaven has taken a special character, by reason of the temporary rejection of the Jews; and it is this which is explained in the 13th chap. of St. Matthew, this rejection of the people having been stated at the end of the 12th chapter.

The rejection of Peter's testimony, Acts 3, by the Jews postponed the times of refreshing, according to the counsels of God; but Peter's word was, " Repent in order that the times of refreshing may come."

It is not exact to speak of the Church as the Spiritual Kingdom. The saints are in subjection it is true: _ but Christ is never called the King of the Church; we come to the throne of the grace of God. There is one passage in the Revelation which might be cited, 15:4, "King of Saints," but this passage is so uncertain that nothing can be founded thereon. That Christ exercises royal authority over the Church, is what can be sustained by not one passage of Scripture; and the instruction of Matt. 13 makes this distinction important. The Church has no reference, no identity whatsoever with the kingdom, except that here below it exists in the field over which the authority of the kingdom is exercised. Hereafter she will reign with the Lord over the same field.

We often hear of corrupting the kingdom, of a pure kingdom--the kingdom become Babylon,-from those whose thoughts and phraseology are not subject to Scripture.

It is an evil to speak thus of the kingdom, as if it was a certain number of persons in such or such a state. The kingdom of heaven is a government, a reign; the King is there; His authority is there. He bears, for a long while, abuses in His kingdom; but His kingdom, His reign, cannot possibly be Babylon. Who would think of Christ being King in Babylon? True is it that the enemy acts in the kingdom whilst men sleep, because they are left there under responsibility; and this it is which makes so suitable the well-understood word dispensation, because the question is then only about man and his position, where God has placed him under responsibility: while the words kingdom

and reign embrace also the government of the King, the sovereignty of God Himself. The kingdom was in the midst of the Pharisees, because Christ was there; the kingdom was at hand when the Apostles went forth in testimony in Israel (Matt. chap. x. '7.) The Church is never the Kingdom. The kingdom includes the King;"and it is inaccurate to speak of the corruption of the kingdom. There are according to the sovereign counsels of God, certain scandals permitted in the kingdom; abuses which the King will remove at a later period, when He will take His great power and act as King. It is because, in truth, the principles of the kingdom are always the principles of God, that the Apostle can say, that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; and one can, for the same reason, preach the kingdom of God, although Satan may sow in the field, over which the kingdom extended. The Church, here below, can corrupt itself, because the flesh is found in those who compose it, although the chastenings and faithful grace of God may preserve it for the glory, into which neither flesh nor blood shall enter.

If, now, we turn to the church, it is indeed the body of Christ; but the word of God speaks of the church here below, and calls the assembly of believers here below the church, the house of God, in the which we have need of instruction how to behave, and wherein there is an energy of ministry by the which the body increases. I cannot give up this Scriptural application of the word because I see, on the other hand, that in the end the whole church will be gathered together on high by the faithful love of God. I consider it an evil thing to destroy the idea of an assembly here below, and of the responsibility of that assembly. If it be said, " But the body of Christ upon earth never has been really assembled here below; therefore there never has been a church upon earth, and there has never anywhere been seen upon earth an assembly which could be called, in the full and absolute sense of the term, the church or assembly of God"-I have nothing to say as to what man may call the full and absolute sense of the term; but for the Scriptural sense, which is much more important, there can be no doubt. For the Lord added to the church (not to a church) such as should be saved; and Timothy learned how to conduct himself in the church of the Living God. For myself I am quite content with that which I find in the word. I would only remark, further, that it behooves us to be careful when speaking of such subjects as the kingdom or the church because of the place which Christ holds in relation to such.

Let us now speak of the term " the dispensation or economy" in which some find a difficulty. The word is simple enough, and signifies, in the original, the administration of a house; by extension, it designates the entire order of anything arranged by God, as when we say " animal economy," "vegetable economy." The two words of which it is compounded are οίκος house, and νεμω to distribute, feed, etc.; and thus, in a house, there was an economos (steward) and an economy; a man who arranged, distributed, fed the family; and the order, as a whole thence resulting, was the economy, the administration of the house. Thus, when God has established a certain order of things on the earth, one is wont to call it, accurately enough as it seems to me, an economy. In Eph. 1, the Spirit Himself uses it. It is possible that there is a slight shade between the Scripture and the conventional uses of this word; in general, the use of the word in Scripture is more closely connected with its original sense, and contains more the idea of an active administration. The word dispensation is often enough used in this sense, and has the same etymological signification; God dispenses His gifts.

In the conventional sense economy (or dispensation) is an order of things established by God: the Jewish economy, the existing economy, etc. But, up to the time of Christ's coming, these

economies or dispensations are, as to their course, left to man and his responsibility, although God acts secretly to overrule all. See, for instance, how the Lord speaks of this dispensation; "the kingdom of God is 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 knew not how; for the earth bringeth forth of itself; first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear; but when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." As to all that appears to the eye, everything goes on without the intervention of Christ, from the seed-time to the harvest.

Well, the time which intervenes between seed-time and harvest, is what is ordinarily called the present economy. It may be called the economy of the Church, because it is the time during which the Church is called and subsists here below, in contrast with the Jews and the discipline of the law; and we see that although in truth God causes the wheat to ripen, in appearance He leaves everything to its own course. Thus Satan could act in the midst of all this; man might sleep, and this state of things might become corrupted; and, in fact, it is corrupted, even as Israel also was corrupted; so also this economy, this order of things is in a fallen state.

According to 1 Tim. 4, and other Scriptures, the apostasy of this state of things has been partly spoken of I do not press the use of the expression; but I would notice that in this connection there is not the same objection to be made, as when the word apostasy is applied to the kingdom. The kingdom includes the government itself, and the King and the harvest; while in ordinary parlance, the word economy does not present the same difficulty; the King puts an end to the existing dispensations, when he begins to reap in his kingdom.

We find the word in its primitive sense used by Paul of the ministry entrusted to him (Eph. 3:2), "If ye have heard of the dispensation (οικονομια) of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Here we have the primitive sense of the word; it is used of a person to whom one has entrusted the administration of his house.

In the 1 Cor. 9:16 and 17, the office of evangelist is the administration (οικονομια) dispensation committed to him. Clearly, here, as in the preceding, passage (in Eph. 3:2.) we have an idea quite distinct in its extent from that in which the word is commonly understood when used of the existing dispensation-that certainly was not committed to Paul's keeping. The Apostle used the word again in 1 Cor. 4 in a similar sense, applying it to his ministry.

The word says three things as to the existing economy.

First. By the existence and principles of this economy the world is placed in a new relationship toward God.

The Gentiles are no longer "dogs under the table" in contrast with "the children." It is the time of salvation for the Jew first, and after that for the Greek. Salvation is vouchsafed to the Gentiles: the fall of the Jews has been the reconciliation of the world. If the Church has not been faithful in acting according to that grace, in making it of avail to the poor world, so much the worse for her.-

Secondly. Those who are called, but not elect, all the baptized, are placed in direct relationship with the Lord, and are responsible in general (I say in general, because the circumstances are various), for the privileges of Christianity. If those who really enjoyed these privileges have left to Satan the occasion of corrupting; or, if others have been able to enter by reason of the corruption

which was already introduced, so much the worse for them and for the assembly. This is Christendom.

Thirdly. There is the body of Christ; those who are united to Him, who participate in His life, who will be saved in spite of all the difficulties they may encounter by the way.

The Gentiles have not, as a body, been grafted in. Those who believed stood by faith. Those who came in without real faith will be judged according to the privileges which they have abused; and, before the end, God will send the gospel of the kingdom, in order that the judgment may not take effect upon all, without a testimony having been rendered to that judgment.

I would remark, that the ways of God towards Israel, and towards the world, and the salvation of individuals, must be kept distinct. The three points above noticed, as connected with the dispensation, bring out that responsibility of the Church in which she has completely failed. She ought to have been one, in order that the world might believe: such she has not been. She ought to have been a testimony to all the nations: such a testimony she has not given. And, instead of being the source of blessing to the world, as she ought to have been, the world has been a source of evil to her; for here for the Church, properly speaking, for true Christians, Instead of being the light of the world, the Church has become, upon her own confession, the invisible Church.

On this account, alas! one can speak, correctly enough, of Christendom, and of the Gentiles" grafted into the place of the Jews; because that which God had grafted into the place of Jewish branches, is become a worldly system; has failed in faithfulness; and is become, in the modern sense, Christendom; the little seed become a great tree, where the birds of the air make their nests.

Christians, at the commencement, were not faithful; the consequence has been that the testimony and Christian profession, as a whole, have been spoiled. If it were a question about the taste of wine, one bottle of the best wine put into a ton of water might, indeed, give occasion to many reasonings, as to whether or not there was there what we could call good wine. Those who love to drink such would not hesitate long in settling the question.

Some may separate from evil, and refuse to share the responsibility of the state of things which surrounds them; as for me, I bear the burden: yes, the burden of the responsibility of the Church here below; I speak not of unbelievers, nor of the members of the body of Christ; I speak of the state of the Church, nor do I speak merely of the unfaithfulness of the true members. The glory of Christ is not manifested. The Church does not shine before the world. The glory of Christ, is, as it were, concealed, trailed in the dust; the enemies triumph. The power of the enemy has been morally successful in the greater number of cases, as the enemies of Israel were successful when Israel was unfaithful; and there are not only individual unfaithfulnesses to deplore, but a state of things which dishonors God in the world. The question which lies at the bottom of the whole matter is the manifestation of the glory of Christ upon the earth by the Church. Was the Church responsible to manifest Christ's glory? Ought one to be ashamed if she has not done so? If No is the answer, I am myself deceived; but if YES be the answer, the opposite system is profound iniquity, iniquity of which they that are in it are not conscious, I am persuaded; but which nevertheless is not the less iniquity, one which leaves the Church without a hope on the part of those who hold it.

The Lord's Table and the Pulpit

That the pulpit commands the Lord's table amongst Christians of nearly every persuasion is obvious to all, or in other words, that the minister, or acknowledged teacher in modern churches, assumes the prerogative of presiding at the Lord's table, and dispensing the eucharist as a matter of right. The sanction of antiquity is pleaded in its favor. The plea of being necessary to order, insisted upon, and it is but of recent date that Christians have been led to question all this as incompatible with the universal priesthood of believers, and the sovereign presence of the Holy Ghost in the body the Church. Much has been written on both sides of the question. Diversity of judgment exists-collision has taken place, and the truth has been assailed under various pretexts, and with a show of reason. Now truth is harmonious with itself; gives place to all the members of the body of Christ, and displaces none; cherishes a becoming regard for the ministration of the word of God, and for the few whom he in grace endows with power to minister it, yet rigidly maintains the unity of the body as indwelt by the Spirit. It advances in the foreground the assertion, "Ye being many members, are one body," with "having therefore gifts differing according to the measure of the gift of Christ," combining respect for the parts with integrity of the whole. A capital error is committed when this distinction is not perceived, and the advocates of either extreme are wide of the mark, where the integrity of the body is assailed on behalf of those gifted amongst its members; and these, on the other hand, disregarded, or little thought of in the grand principle of the universal priesthood of believers. The body exists in its members, and the members make up the body.

The sadly fallen condition of the Church is advanced by some as a reason for limiting the exercise of its functions; and, again, the same ground is advanced by others for abandoning specific relations in the assertion of the rights of all. In political bodies, the fitness of the members of one state for the exercise of legislative capacity may be reasoned about; but, in "the body, the Church," it is far otherwise. It exists in the power which confers its privileges, and is manifestly healthy or otherwise as this is perceived. Its life and union with its Head is communicated by the blessed Spirit which manifestly develops it. It is not a question of power, but apprehension of the power, and unfeigned obedience to the word which is a guide to the life created by it, as such Scriptures as 1 Peter 1:23, and Acts 20:32 show. In the former passage life-creating power is ascribed to it. In the latter, the source of nourishment. It is impossible to overvalue the weight of scripture testimony as to the sovereign rule of the Holy Ghost in the body, the Church; it sets aside clerical pretension without personal controversy, and, where rightly apprehended, leads to the abnegation of human distinction in the clearer demarcation of that which is divine. It brings us into an atmosphere of light and blessing, liberty and joy. The dignity of the calling confers the lowliness of spirit befitting it; for "before honor is humility."

And in honoring God the Spirit, we are reminded of our life in and by Him, and reverence and godly fear are alike pleasure and duty. The right perception of this truth secures everything to us-harmonious disposition of parts, with the integrity of the whole. Circumstances never alter it, time cannot impair it. As eternal is its source, so enduring is its character, and (hidden or

manifested) it is ceaselessly accomplishing the purpose of God, calling into being the members of Christ's mystical body, and guarding the life thus bestowed. But still the Church has a mission to fulfill: to witness to the grace which gave her such existence, and walk worthy of Him who hath called her into His kingdom and glory. And in what does service, true unfeigned service to the body of Christ, and that for His sake, consist?

What is the object of gift? What purpose is embodied in the liberty of action in its members? Is it not as in Eph. 4:13. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" and in verse 15, "speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The purpose of ministry then is the development of the body; and this is accomplished by the various gifts diffused through its parts. The displacing of any is the injury of the whole. The standard of judgment is the written word; the guide to exercise gift is the written word; conduct befitting the place assigned is laid down in the written word. The duties of members to one another are found in the written word. Official assumption condemns itself; for, if there is real power, the place is imperatively assigned in the word. Neglecting to acknowledge such power is alike culpable and rebuked in the word. To prevent disorder by human arrangement, is to put down the flesh by setting up the flesh, in other words, to control the table by the authority of the pulpit. It is easy to say, the presence of the Spirit is a delusion, but difficult to prove it according to God's word. It is easy to prove from God's word pulpit authority over the Lord's table a delusion. But whence has arisen this confusion? We would concede to the advocates of either side earnestness and zeal for the Lord's glory. That with some the abuse has been worse than the assumed remedy, and the attempted order by human control appeared the only alternative for existing disorder. We have, it may be to learn, how to combine the diligent use of means so as to maintain gift in its place, and a proper place for gift. How to maintain order without appointing to office, and rule without clerisy. Innumerable difficulties beset the path; but as the path of faith, this must be anticipated. Faith of a right stamp is never discouraged by trials; it grows stronger by every defeat, attributes failure to the weakness of man, and maintains intact principles which are divine, retreats, though vanquished, to the place whence it started to renew, again, the struggle for attainment, less confident in the resources of the creature, and more dependent on the grace and bounty of God. Yet failure has its regrets; want of success is damping to ardor; and, unless the embers are kindled afresh by the Holy Spirit, despondency is the consequence. Still "He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

Two evils have manifestly appeared, on the one hand, lack of discernment that the Holy Ghost works by instrumentality, and bestows gifts to men, and this too for the well being of the body; on the other hand, abuse of these blessings to the assumption of lordship over God's heritage by those possessing them. Where is the remedy? and how is it to be applied? The position is of God, "wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." "I will send you the Holy Ghost, the comforter, and He shall abide with you forever." What greater blessings could be bestowed? What firmer confidence excited than in such absolute assurance of divine presence. and divine aid? Still there is sad failure in it all. Does this spring from the fallen and ruined

condition of the church? for such manifestly is the case; or is it that this real state of things has not been sufficiently apprehended? The fact of visible ruin is manifest; does this sanction contentment with a continued had condition of things? Are we supinely to indulge in an acknowledged low state, tolerating laxity because of weakness, and finding an apology in the ruined condition of the Church for visible failure? It surely should not be so! Certainly in the Scripture great principles involve detail.

" The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness," etc. Here the great fact of the grace of God manifested, elicited holy living, in other words "detail." "The high vocation wherewith ye are called," sought corresponding effects in detail. "That ye walk worthy...with all lowliness and meekness." "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." Exalted privilege! But here again, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "And every man that path this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure." Here again, great facts involve corresponding results-a holy calling, a holy life:- this in detail.

Surely, then, the position of saints gathered together in the presence of the Lord, and having the promise of the Holy Ghost involves detail, that is, in those serving in word, and doctrine having a place, and that for the dispensing of the word. What, though we have lost the power to act as Timothy, and Titus were exhorted to by the Apostle in the setting apart of elders, and ordaining officers in the church, we have the word to guide us as to recognition of such whom the Head of the church may still give to us. Liberty to exercise ministry does not confer power, but allows its exercise when it exists. The universal priesthood of believers is maintained by assistants from the ranks, and these again have rank too in the body for whom they exist. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they are ours; if able, to rejoice over; and if diligent, to be grateful for. The stimulus to service in the kingdom of grace is recognition of the loving bond which unites, golden chains to bind in mutual good-will the teachers and the taught. The former seeking by prayer the blessing of the body, the latter supporting by prayer those thus in service, reciprocal benefits one to the other, sustaining and being sustained, blessing and being blessed, caring and being cared for. Such tenderness of union did once prevail, in the flood-tide of blessing, in the harvest of the church; and if we are but the gleaners (fit likeness of our poverty), yet our fellow-sufferings demand fellow-sympathy; our general weakness, corresponding forbearance; if, but feebly apprehending the position of some, yet doubtless it is no time for disregarding any. Again, there is mistaken use as to principles. Some say our principles give right to all Christians as such, and because such, to association with us. God forbid our platform should not be wide enough to embrace all believers; but are we not separated unto holiness; and what are we seeking, but growth in grace? And surely some sympathy is needed, some sense of our condition on behalf of those soliciting fellowship. " They that feared the Lord spice often one to another." And (Psa. 119:63,) made conscience of obedience and trembled at His word, sought communion as a means of growth in godliness, not merely as a speculative right-got together to watch and pray together, keep guard over one another, submitting to God in the first place, and to His word as their rule in the rest, admonishing one another, stimulating one another; the greater need, the greater care, and sense of ruin leading to increased watchfulness over one another. Principles and results can never be separated; the

one exist for the other. Apart, they are a nonentity. But what are the results? Surely enough to break a heart of stone, but when broken, fitter to receive divine impression, and holy impulse. Back to our hiding place, not again to leave shelter with uncertain aim and mangled proportions of God's word, hut here and there a few knitting together in a fellowship of humiliation, making use of the knowledge of where we have failed in the past, to avoid shipwreck in the future; having a good conscience towards God and towards all men. A hearty few thus aiming at a definite something, strict over themselves and watchful over one another, having life in Christ, seeking how to spend it for His, enlarged in their spirit from the contemplation of boundless love, tender to the weak, and examples for the strong-separated by holiness, not unmindful of principles, but never resting contented in them without realizing results. What might not such be used to accomplish? Surely, we may pray the Head of the Church to awaken His people. Heaven is a holy, happy place; for the will of God is the only rule there. Heaven on earth is only experienced as the will of God is the sole guide of His people. His will is revealed in His word. Negatively we are taught what to avoid. Positively instructed in what is to be done.

Nor has the Spirit of God rest but in the fullest control of body, soul and spirit, sitting enthroned in the citadel of the human heart renewed by grace, and bowed into willing submission by the Omnipotence of love. " The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Connecting Luke 14 and 15

While all who have tasted Grace, as set forth in the green pastures of the Scriptures, know and own the fifteenth of Luke as indeed affording; a bright expression of that Grace,-I have thought that the fullness of the contents of this blessed portion can be little understood if it be studied apart from chap. 14.

Chapter 15 contains a vivid, and I do not doubt, an intentional contrast to chap. 14. A few remarks will elucidate the truth of this.

In chap. 13 we see the putting forward, by the Lord, of His thoughts as to Judaism as it then existed around Him. In ver. 22, He was " journeying towards Jerusalem," " teaching," when the question was raised, " Are there few that be saved?" His answer was an exhortation to strive to enter at the straight gate, spite of its difficulties-and a solemn warning that " workers of iniquity" would be excluded, notwithstanding the place of privilege they might in this world have stood in; while those who, in this world, had not shared the same privileges might be found admitted from the east, west, north, and south (ver. 29). Hereupon (striking truth of what the Lord had been saying) a Pharisee (ver. 31) warns the Lord to beware of Herod, " Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." The Lord's answer shows that the evil was not confined to Herod; the place of privilege, Jerusalem, was in question,-He gives its character and bids it a sort of farewell. " It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen cloth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But if Jerusalem was, for its sin and wickedness, made manifest in then filling up its guilt by the rejection of Messiah,-about to be rejected; mercy could not be prevented. That mercy which would even have gathered the inhabitants of Jerusalem to itself-which turned not back from proclaiming mercy even to them, such as they were-must have some objects to vent itself upon, objects whose very blessing would be the expression of what it, in itself was, the mercy of the Living God. It was meet and right for the Lord to linger among Israel, the people of the Lord--the chosen race; but if they took this place of rejecting him, others there were none to whom he could speak as having an outward standing before God. Let Israel prove that it could not attain to blessing by its own obedience of works, and Christ would not present that truth to another people, but go on to show what the real ground and root of the matter of man's blessing was;-not in man himself, but in God.

In chap. 14 we have, then, a series of lessons laid down by our Lord, which naturally flowed out of His wisdom in the then divinely ordered series of incidences which occurred: all the instruction of which tends to this great point, that He could see nothing in man on which any confidence could be placed for salvation. The best things, in man and of man, get their expression in this chapter; and get their expression too most fairly. They express themselves towards Him the One who was

about to be rejected by Jerusalem; but He knew what was in man; and he knew that there was nothing in man which could be, when placed in the light, an adequate resting point for the salvation which He had to give, nothing in man which could be an adequate ground for the flowing in of salvation. And He not only saw this, but willed that we should know that He, the Savior, saw it, and would that we also should see it and know it too.

Chapter 14 When religion is in fashion-and it was so was turning from Jerusalem, but vindicating God, mercy, and the principles of heaven (His own principles as the servant of heaven) to bring men there, and God's principles of preparing blessing for sinners in resurrection. What a time, what a good occasion, for a man to take part with him! We read of but one that did so. Struck by the blessedness of the truth he heard, and of the mind of Him from whom it flowed, there was one who practically committed himself to avowed fellowship with the Lord-with a "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

Here was a simple putting forth, though but in an exclamation, of his taste for, his heart's joy in, what was so heavenly. Surely he that thus spake was a blessed man; but Christ's mind was fully set upon bringing out what the ground of blessing is, that on which it turns; at this time he was not occupied with the preciousness of the fruits in a man of being blessed (as in chap. 16) but of the ground of the plea for blessing and mercy's flowing forth--the WHY mercy must show itself. Christ, therefore, goes on with the thought he had broached before-not praising the man, but plainly showing that God's blessing will not be shared upon the ground that man has a taste for God, a will to share His blessedness, freely offered and presented before man, as it may be as a free gift.

" Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper,

and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and chewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

How could the Lord more plainly and forcibly have set forth than He does here, the truth, that possession of a place in heaven is not to be any man's upon the ground of his willing, but only and solely upon the ground of God's showing mercy?

There was a mighty One who made a great feast, and bade many-marked his recognized circle by invitations; just as God had recognized a relationship with Israel in all that Christ and the prophets had said among them. It was no little thing to be so recognized of such a One. But when all is ready, all provided at the cost of the Inviter alone-and when the word reaches the bidden guests, " Come, for all things are now ready"-this made evident, alas! that there was no will, no taste, in the bidden, for the company, presence, or feast of their Inviter. Each turns to his own way; and so

entirely do the things of self govern them, that they care not to dishonor and to expose themselves, if they can but have the indulgence of the lust of the moment. There is something too reckless in their course, for it to suit any save man-self-sufficient, self-complacent, self-exalting man. My piece of new ground, my new oxen, my recently married wife, sways more mightily on man's heart to turn him, if left to himself, from God, than the feast or the honor of being invited, than the place or the person of the Inviter, sways to incline man to go in. He must make them willing, or they will not come in. But when they all had made excuse-when none would go in upon the honorable plea, " I have been invited and go, as counting it an honor to be invited-when the mighty One had not His table furnished with guests of His select, recognized circle-He would not have His table dishonored; He sends out another invitation: any that need a meal may now come; and after that another mission goes forth, to compel all, of all sorts, to come in, for His table must be filled.

Marvelous and marked contrast between going to the feast as one who had been invited as worthy, and whose taste led him thither-and the going as one of the poor, maimed, halt, and blind, found in the streets and lanes, called by an insulted Lord; or as one compelled to come in that the house might be filled.

Man's will, man's (fallen man's) taste finds its lure, its bait (not in God, but) in the world, when "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" have their answer.

But if man's getting into heavenly blessing is not of him that willeth, neither is it of him that runneth: this we see next.

"And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Was the mob following the Lord wrong? Most surely not, if they indeed had taken His yoke on them and were learning of Him. To take a step or two after Him, in one's own strength, for the sake of a few loaves and fishes, or as carried along in a stream of senseless popular excitement-this, man could do. Loaves and fish are baits attractive enough for man; man can be acted upon en masse by popular feeling. But how long would this last? How far would this carry man in the wake of Him whose energy was not that of brute force, but of self-renouncing obedience to the will of another, unto death, the death of the cross? He who had left the glory of the Father's bosom, for a pilgrimage through such a world as this to the cross, knew that man's energy was not enough to enable man to renounce the loves of the human heart, without which none could follow Him. He was going to give up not only what was in itself bad, but to give up, to yield up, what was most good-even that which He must, if indeed He were perfect, have willed to keep: " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." His obedience in suffering was the expression of His strength: He had moral power over Himself: He knew man had not-that the heart of man was not above itself, sunk in sin as it was; and He warned that His path led where no human energy could suffice. Man has not power above himself. Blessing cannot come by man's running: first, because the course of the blessed One lay through death; but, secondly, because the work itself and the hinderers to its accomplishment are too many for human power or wisdom.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

If Israel found the walls of Jerusalem and its towers hard in themselves to be reared, and impossible for them to complete, whilst the adversary was unrebuked and his power set aside by special aid from God-the task in hand was more mighty far, the enemy more openly in the field to prevent. The refuge of eternal salvation who should build, who triumph over the tyranny of the old serpent? This was not work for man. Human resources, wisdom, energy, and action are as inefficient in such things as is man's will.

The process was now ended, and the judgment of Him who judges righteous judgment could be recorded in the hearing of those who were around him. The creature (as a creature of the Creator) is saltless salt, that has lost its savor-fit neither for the land nor yet for the dung-heap; but which men cast out. Who could gainsay the word? Who reverse the judgment? But if that was the just, natural judgment, as to what was fit to be done with the creature, looked at in relationship to its Creator (it having lost all its saltiness), this could not prevent God having the right to pick up saltless salt, if He so willed. Not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy: He will have mercy on whom

He will have mercy, and compassion on whom He will have compassion. It is God that showed mercy, because He is the God of mercy; and it is meet that He should act worthily of Himself; and maintain his own prerogative of doing as seemeth Him right. Oh, the blessedness of such a basis for one's rest before God, ground that it would have been as presumptuous to have thought of as it would have been blasphemous to have said, "If I have sinned, God must bear the penalty"-though such was the free grace of God, that He willed to show mercy; willed to give His Son, that Just one, to bear the sins of us, the unjust. What sin never dared to suggest, Grace stooped to proclaim and to accomplish.

The effect of the pressing thus of man's incompetency and God's claims is remarkable. The poor publicans and sinners, who had no righteousness of their own, bowed to the truth and drew near to Him who was thus showing them what utterly condemned them; the scribes and pharisees (worse in themselves than the publicans and sinners-for they added self-righteousness and guile to the sin they had in common with all men) hardened themselves even to judge the Lord, the appointed Judge of all. They were not cut down in their own consciences, so as to become guilty before God, so they felt free to condemn Christ for such intercourse with sinners: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." But even such hardness could not hinder Him who saw how the springs of mercy were in God Himself; and how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had all and each their part in mercy; and how, if earth understood it not, heaven and they that had its mind delighted in it-from unfolding the real strength of Mercy. In the fourteenth chapter, he will allow nothing good to be in man; but sets aside every appearance of man's identifying himself with Him

or with God: man is saltless salt, nor will, nor taste, nor power to keep or to get any place before God would Christ own in man. In the fifteenth chapter, in the presence of self-condemned sinners, in the teeth of judges, as self-righteous as they were self-constituted, Christ insists upon God and Heaven as being the grand plea for mercy. And it is this which is to me the distinctive point of chapter 15; it does not present the blessedness of the sinner saved by grace, which is the great aim of this chapter; but, on the contrary, a much higher and more important truth, namely, that while earth might not understand, a lost soul being found, heaven (in the highest range of it) did; for the Shepherd (true Shepherd of Israel) had those there that could: fully sympathize with him, in His joy in the fruit of the travail of his soul, in a lost one found. The One from whom all light flows (Spirit of Light) has, in Heaven, those who can sympathize with Him, as no angel can, in a lost thing found.

The joy (v. 10) is " in the presence of the angels of God," not in the angels in the presence of God, though that, of course, is true too; but here, it is said to be in the presence of the angels of God; that is, as I understand, in God, who is in their presence, and they are, through grace, in His. And thirdly, the depth of the spring of mercy is shown up in the third parable.

The thought of this chap. 15, then, seems to me to be rather that Heaven and God delight in mercy, that mercy is suited to Heaven and to God, than that the inhabitant of earth and the poor sinner may find mercy or that they that find it are blessed. Preciously true is this last statement; but it is one which may be known apart from the Divine, Eternal, and Heavenly fullness, which I think this chapter presents of the suitability of mercy to God Himself and to Heaven.

Nehemiah

The Book of Nehemiah will require but few remarks; but it is important to establish its import. It is a necessary link in the history of God's dealings, in the recital of His patience and loving-kindness towards Jerusalem, which He had chosen.

In Ezra, we have seen the temple rebuilt and the authority of the law re-established among the people who are again separated from the Gentiles, and set apart for God.

In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitively prove their subjection to the Gentiles.

Through grace, faith had again set up the altar, and the Gentiles had had nothing to do with it except by voluntary service; but, when the city is to be rebuilt, it is the governor appointed by the Gentiles who holds the prominent place, God having touched the heart of these Gentiles and disposed them to favor His people. We see, in Nehemiah himself, a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling, disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also, in Nehemiah, a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles.

The time in which Nehemiah labored for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which awaken the energy of faith and even the energy of man, imparting to it their own luster. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason, pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by a work, apparently so insignificant, but which is not the less the work of God; and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faint-heartedness of fellow-laborers (4: 8, 10, 11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him.

It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office, he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people.

In the midst, however, of all this faithfulness, we perceive the influence of the Gentile power controlling the whole state of things. Nehemiah's arrival and even his conduct are marked with this influence. It was not faith alone that was in action, but a protecting power also (comp. Ezra 8:22, Neh. 7-9). Nevertheless, the separation from all that was not Jewish, is carefully maintained (2:20; 7:65; 9:2; 10:30; 13:1, 3, 29, 30).

This history spews us first of all how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews who had so long left Jerusalem desolate are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance

which characterizes true faith when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it, because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time.

Let us remark, that in times of difficulty, faith does not show itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be; and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found. God blesses the labors of the faithful Nehemiah, and Jerusalem is once more encompassed by walls; a less touching condition than when the city of God was defended by the altar of God, which was a testimony to His presence and to the faith of those who erected it; but a condition that proved the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God who, nevertheless, while outwardly reestablishing them, revoked no part of the judgment pronounced on His people and His city. He who rebuilt the walls was but the vicegerent of a foreign king; and it was the security of the people and that which uprightness of heart required of them, to acknowledge this; and it was done (chap. 9:37). Still God blesses them. Nehemiah recurs to the numbering of the people according to the register of their genealogies that was drawn up at their first return from captivity, an already distant period. Thus the people are again placed in their cities.

By means of Ezra and Nehemiah, the law resumes its authority, and that at the people's own request; for God had prepared their hearts. Accordingly, God had gathered them together on the first day of the seventh month. It was really the trumpet of God, although the people were unconscious of it, that gathered them to this new moon which shone again in grace, whatever might be the clouds that veiled its feeble light. The people's hearts were touched by the testimony of the law, and they wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra bade them rejoice, for the day was holy. Doubtless these men of God were right. Since God was restoring His people, it became them to rejoice and give thanks.

The second day, continuing to search into the Holy Book, they found that Israel ought to keep a feast on the fifteenth day of this same month. On restoration from chastening, when the Church finds itself again before God, it often happens that precepts are recollected, which had been long forgotten and lost, during the apparently better days of God's people; and with the precepts, the blessing that attends their fulfillment is recovered also. Since Joshua, the children of Israel had not followed these ordinances of the law. What a lesson! This feast of Tabernacles was kept with great gladness, a touching expression of the interest with which God marked the return of His people; a partial return it is true, and soon beclouded (and even the hope to which it craved rise was entirely destroyed by the rejection of the Messiah, who should have been its crown), yet of great value, as the firstfruits in grace of that restoration which will accompany Israel's turning of heart to Christ, as manifested by their saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" The gladness was sincere and real; but everything was imperfect. The tenth day had not its antitype. Israel's humiliation had, as yet, no connection with that death which at once filled up their iniquity, and atoned for it. Their joy was well-founded. It was yet but transient.

On the twenty-fourth day, the people came together to humble themselves in a manner that became their position, and they separated themselves from all strangers. Beginning with the

blessing promised to Abraham, they relate all the tokens of God's grace bestowed upon Israel, the frequent unfaithfulness of which they had afterward been guilty, and-a true expression of heartfelt repentance-they acknowledge, without any disguise, their condition (chap. 9:36, 37); and undertake to obey the law (chap. 10) to separate themselves entirely from the people of the land, and faithfully to perform all that the service of the house of God required.

All this gives a very distinct character to their position. Acknowledging the promise made to Abraham, and the bringing in of the people to Canaan by virtue of this promise, they place themselves again under the obligations of the law, while confessing the goodness of God who had spared them. They do not see beyond a conditional and Mosaic restoration. Neither the Messiah nor the New Covenant have any place as the foundation of their joy or of their hope. They are, and they continue to be, in bondage to the Gentiles.

This was Israel's condition until, in the sovereign mercy of God, the Messiah was presented to them. The Messiah could have brought them out of this position and gathered them under His wings; but they would not.

It is this position that the Book of Nehemiah definitely brought out. It is the king's commandment that provides for the maintenance of the singers. A Jew was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people (chap. 11:23, 24).

We have already seen that gladness was the portion of the people; a joy which acknowledged God, for God had preserved the people and had blessed them. But the princes of the people had immediately relapsed into unfaithfulness; and during Nehemiah's absence, the chambers of the temple, in which the offerings had been formerly kept, were given up to Tobiah, that subtle and persevering enemy of God's people. But at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the joy of the people and the faithfulness of Nehemiah brought them back to the written word, and Israel separated themselves again from the mixed multitude. Tobiah is driven out of the temple. The observance of the Sabbath is again enforced. Those who had married strange wives, and whose children spake partly the language of strangers and partly that of the Jews, are put under the curse and sharply rebuked and chastised. The order and the cleansing, according to the law, are re-established; and this leading thought of the Book, as to the people's condition, closes the narrative.

That which we have said, will give an idea of the great principle of this book.

I will add a few more remarks in this place.

The Book of Nehemiah places Israel, or rather the Jews, in the position they were to hold in their land until the coining of the Messiah; separate from the nations, faithful in keeping the law, but deprived of the privileges which had belonged to them as the people of God; under the yoke of the Gentiles, capable of rendering unto God the things that were God's, but deprived of His presence in their midst, as they had formerly- enjoyed it in the temple; and, finally, bound to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. When the messenger of the covenant came, the Son of God, who could have cleansed the temple and placed the glory there, they received Him not; and they continue under the burden of the consequences of this rejection. This is now their condition until the coining of Christ.

It is this which gives the Book of Nehemiah its importance. Nehemiah's faith embraced those promises of God which were connected with His government, such, for instance, as those contained in Lev. 26. But his faith went no farther (see chap. 1). There was blessing upon this faith, and it accomplished the purposes of God; but it left Israel where they were. The precious phrase, "His mercy endureth forever," is not found in this book. Nehemiah's faith did not rise so high. He is himself the servant of the Gentiles, and he acknowledges them. Such trust in God as is expressed in the words just quoted, was linked with the altar and the temple, where the Lord was everything to faith, and the Gentiles nothing, except as enemies (Ezra 3; 4).

Although it leaves the Jews in a much better condition than that in which they had previously stood, through the good hand of God upon them for immediate blessing, yet the Book of Nehemiah has no prophetic future, no future for faith. The Jews are still Lo-Ammi (not my people). The presence of God, sitting between the cherubim, was not with them, nor could it be, seeing that God had removed His throne into the midst of the Gentiles. I speak of His presence in the temple, the habitation of His glory. Set thus in blessing and under responsibility, the Messiah's coming was to put everything to the proof. The result disclosed an empty house, swept and garnished, from which the unclean spirit had gone out, but in which there was nothing. The unclean spirit will return, and others worse than himself with him. Having rejected Christ, this unhappy people will receive the antichrist; but this was only manifested by the coming of Christ.

In Nehemiah, the people are only set, meanwhile, in this place of blessing. The prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai are connected with the work of Zerubbabel, and not with that of Nehemiah; with the simple faith that reared the altar as the means of blessing and safety. There (Zech. 1:16), the Lord could say that He had returned. to Jerusalem with mercies; but it is " after the glory " that He will come to dwell there (2:8-13). The prophecy encourages them by blessing, and promises them the coming of Christ, and the presence of the Lord at a still future period. Chapter 8 of the same prophet connects these two things together, to encourage the people to walk uprightly; but it will be seen, in reading it, that the fulfillment is clearly marked as taking place at the end of the age; the rejection of Christ (chap. 11), becoming the occasion of the judgments that were to fall upon them, and to give occasion, in a still more striking manner, for that sovereign grace which will use the power of the rejected Messiah, for the deliverance of His people, when they are utterly ruined in consequence of their sin.

The prophecy of Malachi, which was uttered after this, declares and denounces the corruption already brought in, and the coming of the-Lord in judgment.

To these remarks it may be added, that neither in Zechariah nor in Haggai, does the Lord call the people my people. It is said, prophetically, that this shall be the case in the time to come in the latter days, when Christ shall come to establish come, glory. But the judgment pronounced in Hosea has never been revoked, and there is not one expression used that could gainsay it.

The Book of Nehemiah gives us, then, the partial and outward re-establishment of the Jews in the land, without either the throne of God or the throne of David, while waiting for the manifestation of the Messiah, and His coming to seek for the fruit of so much grace; in a word, their restoration, in order that He may be presented to them. The people are provisionally in the land, on God's part, but under the power of the Gentiles who possess the throne.

One Thing I Do

The life of Christ in the soul, and the presence of a rejected and glorified Christ before the soul, are the elements by which God associates us with His own objects, and sustains a testimony to these objects, in the world.

All real testimony for Christ in a world that has rejected Him, and all true service for His name-that is, the whole living power of Christianity in the world-has this simple ground for its spring.

This is enunciated, not as if it were a truth unknown and unacknowledged by those who are Christ's, but on account of the need there is, in the present day, for the mind to be recalled from man's complex thoughts, to God's simple power, of a living Christianity, in the world.

" Christ in you,, the hope of glory," expresses infinitely more than a doctrine or a dogma. It is the simple exponent of a living and a transforming power.

Nothing is more false in Christianity than the notion of "the imitation of Christ." A single sentence from an epistle teaches more, as to this, than whole volumes of "a' Kempis." Christ must "live in me," if I am to live like Christ or for Christ. All else is pitiful mimicry. It is worse. It is to caricature Christ to the world, by an attempt to exhibit Him, while His real character and glory are unknown.

For what was Christ in His moral walk in this world? And what is Christ, as despised and rejected by the world, and about to be manifested in glory? I do not speak of His essential Godhead, which all who are orthodox, allow, as giving efficacy to His sacrifice, and validity to their hopes of heaven. But Christ's blessed person and glory have another aspect than this; and His cross has another power. "That I may know Him" indicates the one; and, " by which I am crucified to the world," introduces to the other.

But what was the moral exhibition of the life of Christ here-if it was not a life whose every spring of action, and every motive and feeling and affection, was not so entirely from above-from heaven-as to be the utter reverse, and the rebuke, of all that has its spring from this debased and corrupted and corrupting world? I do not speak of " the moral sublime" of Christ's character, which has won the admiration of infidels, and the conception of which-to their own condemnation-they have pronounced to be divine; but of that detailed, delineated, portraiture, which the Gospels give of His every-day life, where as the loved and owned of God, He is the despised and rejected of the world.

How can I be called to exhibit this; or how can I take my place with Him relatively to the world, if I am not, by His grace, put relatively in His position toward heaven? and if all the springs of heaven's life and purity, and heaven's fellowship, and heaven's abiding peace, and sustaining joy, are not made mine?

But this is the real power of Christianity.

It is this which the full heart of Christ unfolds to his disciples, when, rejected by the world, His love puts them in the place of continuing a witness for God in the world when He is gone.

" Power from on high " to witness for Christ is another thing from that which the fourteenth of John, and the connected chapters, unfold. There, it is an absent Christ preparing for his disciples a home in heaven, but assuring them of his return; the certain knowledge of the Father, from what they had seen in Him; unlimited power of request in his name, and His own pledged love for the fulfillment; the presence of " another Comforter," not so much the power of witness as the companion of their solitude, and to make them know the unutterable depth of the union Of the Father and the Son, and their living union with Him; so that henceforth their life was knit up with His, " because I live ye shall live also;" and finally (though these are but the scanty streamlets from that gushing fountain), He tells them His place in the world is now to be theirs; but not to be theirs amidst its coldness and hatred and scorn, without " His peace;" and more-nor without the visits of His love to cheer their obedient hearts, while they were sent into the world, in the sad consciousness that the world was not their place, but heaven.

It is this which explains that brief epitome of a Christian's course in the world, "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked." May our hearts learn, in the only way in which it can be learned, its heavenly power! " The kingdom of God is not in word but in power." _

Few who have any heart for Christ, have ever gazed upon the picture of the Apostle's "imitation of Christ," presented in this third of Philippians, without a just admiration. But few indeed have penetrated the secret of that blessed exhibition, so as to become followers of him as he was of Christ.

It has been observed that "every man, perhaps, at some period of his life, has been a hero in purpose; and in Christianity alas how prone are we to live for Christ in purpose rather than in act! It is a rare exhibition of the Gospel to see a man intent upon "doing one thing."

But let us look at the unfolding of those springs of action which formed the beauty of this moral exhibition of Christ in the Apostle. Too often the mind misses, by dwelling upon the exfoliation, what it was the intention of the Spirit in the Apostle to disclose; which evidently, here, was not the result, but the hidden spring, of a life of unlimited consecration to its object.

What he relinquished in his course is plain; what was his estimation of present things is equally marked; what was his future expectation is alike defined. He could say, "Our conversation is in heaven"-which was saying much, if its force be understood. He could further add, "from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"-which stamped the sacred unworldly character on his hope. But his sorrow was unmitigated when he thought of "the Cross of Christ," being associated with a lower aim, in " minding earthly things."

But how did he reach this altitude? And what set in motion, and kept in motion, these unworldly sympathies? There is but one simple and unchanging element, whether lie be looked at in the outset of his course, its continuance, or its close. And the issue or result is as simple as its spring. If Christ was the spring of his action, the end of his action was also Christ.

It was the revelation of Christ in his soul that at first detached him from the world, and from self, and from all that self holds dear. it was the same undimmed View of Christ that kept him with unquenched ardor of affection following in the path of his rejection, and spending himself in unwearied service for that which was dear to Christ in the midst of an unfeeling and hostile world.

It was simply and alone the same blessed Christ in glory that brightened the future of his soul, and filled the horizon of his earnest and unflinching hope. " Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ," tells of the goal on which his eye was fixed. "That I may know Him," in a single gush, reveals the first and last and only absorbing passion of his heart.

But is this the Christ we know? Is it the selfsame sun that warmed and cheered and brightened the day of Paul's earnest labor, which still shines for us? Or is it that, from length of time, his beams reach us but obliquely, which glowed in their zenith in the Apostle's day? Or is it that our hearts have, with the world, grown old, and with their feeble, palsied motion, say that the time is past, for them to revive beneath his genial glow?

It is not thus. But we have left the mountain-top, where still he pours his fervid beams, and have got down into the fogs and vapors and dampness of the marshy plains below.

" Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," is a truth that can stay the heart when all around is putting on the tokens of decay, and that which bears the name of Christ is verging fast towards Laodicean lukewarmness and rejection. But Christ must have a witness in the world till he comes again. And the truth that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are," may well turn the lonely drooping heart in confidence to Elijah's God, despite of Israel's apostasy, and Ahab's wickedness, and Jezebel's corruption.

But the moral picture of our chapter is before our gaze.

" No confidence in the flesh," is a leading feature in it, and one, if our souls would copy, we must not forget. It is the obverse of the medal, with its other inscription, " our conversation is in heaven."

It is the first expression, the essential condition of being so owned of God, as to have "His Son revealed in us." "Christ in you the hope of glory," taught one who was not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles, that he was " NOTHING." And when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, immediately He "conferred not with flesh and blood"-so that the expression, " We are the circumcision," or those who are acknowledged of God as in connection with Himself, is necessarily followed by, "who serve God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

It is a negative effect, it is true; but as such it is essential to the possession and the display of God's grace and Christ's power.

Nothing but the bright revelation of a dying, living, crucified, glorious Christ-a Christ whose love brought Him from heaven's glory to "the dust of death" for us; a Christ whom the world has rejected, and who now beckons us onward to His glory from the throne of our God, can ever produce this effect in us of, "no confidence in the flesh;" but this revelation, when true and bright to the soul, does and can. It alike displaces the claims and pretensions of a righteous or of a sinful self. It can, and must do so, because, " It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

It is not the world, whether in its riches, its ease, its reputation, or its esteem, that is in prominence here. That is a thing so alien from the thoughts of the Apostle, and has so utterly lost any hold it might have had on his affections, that he has only tears when he mentions those who imagined it could for a moment be associated with the cross. He dismisses such a thought with the stern

declaration, "that those who mind earthly things" are "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

That blight of Christianity which has so thickly settled down upon all that bears the name of Christ now, was seen only by the Apostle in absolute and deadly antagonism to the cross. And his emphatic condemnation of it is heard in the brief expression, "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me."

But in this "no confidence in the flesh," we see the cross, and the glory turning all that could be a ground of confidence, in natural descent-in the participation of divine ordinances-in the exactitude of religious observances, and the perfection of moral virtues-into "loss for Christ"; and "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord," turning everything he had lost for him, in comparison, into a heap of "dung."

"The righteousness which is of God by faith" "the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ," puts utterly outside the righteousness of self, or that which is by the law; and that through being "found IN HIM.;" while the power of Christ's resurrection draws him on through a life of suffering, as the legitimate road to "the resurrection from the dead." And if he seeks to be made conformable to Christ's death here, it is because he sees in it the moral pathway to the glory, along which his soul is bounding, like a courser, to his goal.

His detailed life amidst such burning desires, such a contempt of the world, such unearthly motives, was still, in one sense, common-place enough; it had only this of pre-eminence in it, that in the ratio in which heaven and glory-CHRIST-possessed his soul, the world heaped upon him its neglect and contempt, and scorn. "Even unto this present hour [he says] we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

But did He sigh, that he was thus cast off by the world? No! He had neither time nor heart to think of it, except when some laggard soul, still lingering in the world, needed to be reminded that He who possesses heaven's glory, traveled to it through the world's scorn: and that our God has called us to the same inheritance, "by glory and by virtue."

One point was in his eye: one object, and one alone, bounded his view-"Our conversation is in heaven; from whence, also we look for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ"-and though every step was bringing him nearer to it, nothing did He think He had attained while this was still before.

His own and the church's relationship to Christ he had fully earned; the ultimate object for which Christ had laid hold on him was kept steadily before his mind, and neither successes nor disasters could stop him from reaching onward, until he himself had laid hold on this, "not as though I had already attained.... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

But is he content to be lonely in this ardent race? No! See how he stretches a friendly hand to those who, through faintness, are dropping in the rear, and says, in effect,--"Come on-come on!"-"Brethren, be followers together of me." And see him, too, casting a lingering look towards those who have stopped in their course, through "minding earthly things." He weeps at their condition,

and sorrowfully vents the word of warning, "They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ...their glory is their shame." But he cannot stop. He dashes away the tears which, when looking downwards, dimmed with sorrow his eyes; and again looking upward and onward, his face beaming with the brightness of eternal hope, he exclaims-" Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself".

Conclusion

Beloved brethren in the Lord, is this the simple character of the Christianity we profess? Is Christ so simply, so singly the object of our souls, as to be the power of the displacement of all that we have clung to in the past; all that would entangle us, and make us turn our backs on the Cross, in the present; and. all the schemes and expectations, the fears or anticipations of the future?

To his heart, whose aspirations have for a while arrested the current of our thoughts, CHRIST was all this. And, Oh! may the precious grace of that God who separated him from his mother's womb and called him by His grace, and was pleased to reveal His Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen, make it the one object of our souls that CHRIST may be thus revealed, restored, to our hearts! Too often the measure of practical godliness which may mark us--the reading of the word, our prayer, our self-denial--look not beyond ourselves; or at least not beyond the limit or that service on which the heart may be set for Christ. These things are necessary to maintain a tone of piety, and to keep the heart from being driven backward by the world's adverse current. But this is not "conversation, in heaven." This is not CHRIST filling, from the, center to the circumference, our affections and our hearts! This is not "CHRIST dwelling in our hearts by faith!" This is not, with the Apostle, to do "One Thing!"

There is a hand that can remove every film from our darkened vision, and make us "with unveiled face [to] behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and be thus] changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:"-then, and then only, shall we be able to say, " This one thing I do!"

Paradox

The Gentiles were received as a body-but not as a body were the Gentiles received. Both these statements are in a sense true. The house of Stephanas, or any other such, was not grafted as if it were the body of the Gentiles; yet, at the same time, God represents the whole of the Gentiles who were received as a body, responsible to God; and this the Gentiles will understand, when they are punished, in a frightful manner, by the just judgment of God.

Introduction to the Prophets

We enter now, dear reader, into the field of prophecy; a vast and important field-whether in view of the moral instruction that it contains, or on account of the great events that are announced in it, or through its development of God's government, and by this means, its revelation of that which He Himself is. The Lord and His dealings, and the Messiah, shine through the whole, Israel always forms the inner circle, or chief platform, on which these dealings are developed, and with which the Messiah is immediately in relation. Outside of, and behind this, the nations are gathered; instruments of the judgments of God; and finally the subjects of His universal government; made subject to the Messiah, who, however, will assert His especial claim to Israel as his own people.

It is evident that the Church is outside of this scene. In it there is neither Jew nor Gentile; in it the Father knows the objects of His eternal election, as His beloved children, and Christ glorified on high, knows it as His body and His Bride. Prophecy treats of the earth, and of the government of God.. If we measure things, not by our importance, but by the importance of the manifestation of God; whatever develops His ways, as unfolded in His government, will have much importance in our eyes. There can be no doubt that the Church is a still more elevated subject, because God has there displayed the whole secret of His eternal love. But if we remember, that it is not only the sphere of action that is in question, but He who acts therein; the dealings of God with Israel and the earth will then assume their true importance in our eyes. These are the subjects of prophecy.

This portion of the Word is divided into two parts. The prophecies that refer to Israel during the time that they are owned of God, and consequently that concern the future glory also. form one part. The other consists of those prophecies which make known that which happens during the rejection of God's people, but which make it known in view of the blessing of this very people. This distinction flows from the fact, that the throne of God, sitting between the cherubims, has been taken away from Jerusalem, and the dominion of the earth committed to the Gentiles. The period of this dominion is called " the times of the Gentiles." The former class of prophecies apply to that which precedes and that which is subsequent to this period. The latter refer to this period itself. There is a moment of transition, during which the restoration of the people is in question, when the end of the times of the Gentiles draws near; a moment especially in view in those prophecies which relate to this period. But the general history of the period itself, is given in diverse forms. The interval between the return from captivity, and the coming of Jesus has a special character. For the Gentiles had the dominion, and nevertheless Judah was at Jerusalem, expecting the Messiah. God favored His people with the testimony of prophets, who addressed themselves especially to this state of things, viz., Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; which have consequently an especial character suited to the position in which the people are then found, to God's ways towards them. There is another prophet who holds a peculiar place, i.e., Jonah. His was the last testimony addressed immediately to the Gentiles, to show that God still bore them in mind, and governed all things supremely, although He had already called Israel to be a separate people unto Himself.

Christ is the center of all these prophecies, whatever their character may be. It is the Spirit of Christ that speaks in them. One of the two divisions I have mentioned, is of much greater extent than the other. Daniel alone, in the Old Testament, gives us the detail of the times of the Gentiles, with the exception of some particular revelations in Zechariah. There is a very striking difference between the two classes of prophecies. That which belongs to the time when Israel is acknowledged, is addressed to the people, to their conscience, and to their heart. That which gives the history of the times of the Gentiles, while it is a revelation for the people, is not addressed to them. In the books of the three prophets who prophesied after the captivity, neither Israel nor Judah are ever called the people of God, except in promises for the future, when the Messiah will re-establish blessing.

There is yet another principle, simple, but important to our understanding of the prophets. Whatever figures the Spirit of God may use in depicting the ways of God or those of the enemy, the subject of the prophecy is never a figure. I am not speaking of those prophecies in which all is symbol. This remark could not be applied to them. Moreover a symbol is not the same thing as a figure. It is a collection of the moral or historical qualities, or of both, which belong to a prophetic object, in order to present God's idea of that object. Certain elements which compose this symbol may be figures; but the symbol itself, correctly speaking, is not a figure, but a striking whole, made up of the qualities that morally compose the thing described. Accordingly, nothing is more instructive than a well-understood symbol. It is the perfect idea which God gives us of the way in which He looks upon the object represented by the symbol; His view of its moral character.

Let us now consider the writings of the Prophets.

Isaiah

Isaiah takes the first place. And in fact, he is the most complete of all the prophets, and perhaps the most rich. The whole circle of God's thoughts with respect to Israel is more given here. Other prophets are occupied with certain portions only of the history of this people.

We will give here the division of this book into subjects. There is in the beginning an appearance of confusion, nevertheless it helps to explain the moral bearing of the book.

And here what a scene presents itself to our view-sorrowful in one aspect, yet at the same time lovely and glorious, like the first glimmerings of dawn after a long and cold night of darkness, telling of the bright day which soon will rise over a scene, the beauties of which are faintly perceived, mingled with the darkness that still obscures them. A scene that shall be vivified by the warmth, and glitter in the brightness of the glorious sun that will soon enlighten it. One rejoices in this partial light; it tells of the goodness, the energy, and the intentions of that God who has created all things for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace and glory. But one longs for the manifestation of the fullness of this accomplishment, when all will repose in the effects of this goodness. Such is prophecy. It is sorrowful, because it unveils the sin, the ungrateful folly of God's people. But it reveals the heart of One who is unwearied in love, who loves this people, who seeks their good, although He feels their sin according to His love. It is the heart of God that speaks. These two characters of prophecy throw light upon the two-fold end it has in view, and help us to understand its bearing. First of all it addresses itself to the actual state of the people, and shows them their sin; it always, therefore, supposes the people to be in a fallen condition. When they peacefully enjoy the blessings of God, there is no need of displaying their condition to them. But in the second place, during the period in which the people are still acknowledged, it speaks of present restoration on their repentance, to encourage them to return to the Lord; and it proclaims deliverance. But God well knew the hearts of His people, and that they would not yield to His call. To sustain the faith of the remnant, faithful amidst this unbelief, and for the instruction of His people at all times, He adds promises which will assuredly be fulfilled by the coming of Messiah. These promises are sometimes connected with the circumstances of a near and partial deliverance, sometimes with the consummation of the people's iniquity in the rejection of Christ come in humiliation. It is important to be able to distinguish between that which refers to those circumstances which were near at hand, and that which speaks of the full deliverance shown in perspective through those circumstances. This is the difficult part of the interpretation of Prophecy. I would add, that although the subject of prophecy is not a figure, yet figures are not only largely used, but they are often intermingled with literal expressions, so that in explaining the prophetic books, one cannot make an exact rule to distinguish between figure and letter. The aid of the Holy Ghost is necessary, as is always the case, to find the true sense of the passage. What I have said is equally applicable to other parts of Scripture, and in the most solemn circumstances. Psa. 22, for instance, is a continual mixture of figures, which represent the moral character of certain facts, with other facts recited in the simplicity of the letter. There is no difficulty in understanding it. "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, they pierced my hands

and my feet." The word dogs gives the character of those present. This way of speaking is found in all languages. For instance, it would be said, " He gave a fine picture of virtue." Picture is a figure. I say this in order that a difficulty may not be made of that which belongs to the nature of human language.

I come now to the contents of the book. It is thus divided: The four first chapters are apart, forming a kind of introduction; the fifth also stands alone; it judges the people in view of the care that God has bestowed upon them. But we shall find this judgment resumed in detail in the 8th verse of chap. 9. In chap. 6 we have the judgment of the people in view of the Messiah's coming glory. Consequently there is a remnant acknowledged. Chapter 7 formally introduces the Messiah, Immanuel, the son of David; and the judgment upon the house of David after the flesh; so that there is an assured hope, but at the same time judgment upon the last human support of the people. In chap. 8 we have the desolating Assyrian, who overruns the land, but also Immanuel, who finally brings his schemes to naught. Meantime, there is a remnant, separate from the people, and attached to this Immanuel; and the circumstances of anguish through which the apostate people must pass are alluded to, which terminate in the full blessing of Immanuel's presence. This closes with the 7th verse of chap. 9. So that we have here in fact the whole history of the Jews in relation with Christ. In the 8th verse the Spirit resumes the general national history, interrupted by this essential episode of the introduction of Immanuel. He resumes it from the time then present, pointing out the different judgments of the Lord, until He introduces the last instrument of these judgments, the Assyrian. The rod of the Lord. And here the immediate deliverance is presented as an encouragement to faith, and as prefiguring the final destruction of the power that will be the rod of Jehovah in the last days: the Lord having smitten the desolater. Chapter 11 presents the offspring of David, at first in His intrinsic moral character, and then in the results of his reign as to full blessing and the presence of the Lord established again in Zion in the midst of Israel. Thus the whole history of the people is given us in its grand features, until their establishment in blessing as the people of God, having the Lord in their midst. From chap. 13 to the end of chap. 27 we find the judgment of the Gentiles; whether Babylon or the other nations, especially of those which were at all times in relation with Israel; the position of Israel, not only in the midst of them, but of all the nations in the last days (this is chap. 18); and finally, the judgment of the whole world (24), and the full millennial blessing of Israel (25-27). From chap. 28 to chap. 35 we have the detail of all that happens to the Jews in the last days. Each revelation closes with a testimony to the glory of God in Israel. In the chapters 36 to 39 the Spirit relates the history of a part of Hezekiah's reign. It contains three principal subjects. The resurrection of the Son of David as from death. The destruction of the Assyrian, without his having been able to attack Jerusalem; and the captivity in Babylon. These are the three grand foundations of the whole history and state of the Jews in the last days. From chap. 40 to the end, is a very distinct part of the prophecy, in which God reveals the consolation His people and their moral relations with Himself, in view of the position in which He has placed the nation, whether as His elect Servant in the presence of the Gentiles, or in connection with Christ, the only true elect Servant who has fulfilled His will. This gives occasion to the revelation of a remnant who hearken to this true Servant, and to the history of the circumstances that the remnant pass through; and, therefore, at the same time, to that of the people's condition in the last days; ending with the manifestation of the Lord in judgment. The position of Israel with respect to the idolatrous nations gives occasion also to the introduction of Babylon, of its destruction, and the deliverance of captive Israel by Cyrus. This idolatry is one of

the subjects on which the Lord pleads with His people. Another and yet graver subject is that of the rejection of Christ. For more detail we must wait till these chapters come under examination. And this we will now commence.

Prophecy supposes that the people of God are in a bad condition, even when they are still acknowledged, and prophecy addressed to them. There is no need of addressing powerful testimony to a people who are walking happily in the ways of the Lord; nor of sustaining the faith of a tried remnant by hopes founded on the unchangeable faithfulness and the purposes of God, when all are enjoying in perfect peace the fruits of His present goodness-attached, as a consequence, to the faithfulness of the people. The proof of this simple and easily understood principle, is found in each of the prophets. It does not appear that the prophets, whose prophecies we possess in the inspired volume, wrought any miracles. The law was then in force, its authority outwardly acknowledged, there was nothing to establish, and the Lord's authority was the basis of the public system of religion in the land, according to the institutions appointed by Himself in connection with the temple. It was on practical duty that the prophets insisted. In the midst of the ten apostate tribes, Elijah and Elisha wrought miracles to re-establish the authority of the Lord. Such is the faithfulness of the Lord, and His patience towards His people! A new object of faith requires miracles. That which is founded on the already acknowledged Word, and which does not demand the practical reception of this new object, requires none, whatever the increase of light may be. The Word commends itself to the conscience in those who are taught of God; and if there are new revelations, they are to the comfort of those who have received the practical testimony and have thus recognized the authority of one who speaks on the part of God.

The first chapter of Isaiah begins with a testimony to the sad condition of the people. It was all wounds and corruption. It was useless to chastise them any more. Their ceremonies were an abomination to the Lord. He desired righteousness. Nevertheless the people are called to repentance, and are assured that blessing should follow repentance. Such is the position which prophecy gives them. But God knew the people, who with their princes were wicked and corrupt; and God declares what will take place. He will execute judgment, and thus cleanse the people and re-establish blessing. The two great principles are thus laid down. Blessing consequent upon repentance. But, in fact, it will be blessing brought in by judgment. Thus re-established, Zion, the mountain of the Lord, will be the center of blessing and peace to all the nations (chapter 2:1-4). This puts the invitation to the people into the prophet's mouth, to come and walk in the light of the Lord. Why has He forsaken His people? Because they have learned the ways of the heathen. Well, the day of the Lord shall be upon all the glory of man, and upon all the idols. They shall cease from man, for God's own people on the earth, the place of His rest shall be judged and smitten by their God. But in that day shall the Branch of the Lord be glorious, and the earth shall be blessed. He who smites binds up the wound by introducing the Messiah, and by Him blessing the earth. The remnant will be holy when the cleansing of Jerusalem shall have been accomplished by the judgment and the fire of the Lord. Jerusalem shall be protected and glorified by the manifestation of the Lord's presence, like the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Such is the form in which the introduction to this prophecy is presented with much force and clearness. After this the Spirit of God begins to plead with the people, taking two distinct grounds; namely, that which God had done for His people, and the coming of the Lord in the person of Christ. Had the people made a suitable return to the care which the Lord had lavished upon them? Were they in a

condition to receive the Lord in their midst? Chapter 5 takes up the first question, which addresses itself to the responsibility of the people, in view of the care and the government of God. What could He have done for His vine that He had not done? It has produced Him but wild grapes. He makes known the consequences of this according to His righteous government. His hedge, the protection with which He had surrounded it, shall be taken away, and it shall be left a prey to the ravages of the heathen. God, in pleading with Israel, shows them their sins in detail. Then His hand is stretched forth against His people, and terrible judgments fall upon them. Nevertheless "His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." He will bring mighty strangers against them, whose progress nothing can arrest, who will carry the people into captivity. There shall be sorrow and mourning in the land, and the light of their heavens shall be darkened. In the first instance this will be Nebuchadnezzar, and even Shalmaneser; but still more fully will it be the nations that come against Jerusalem in the last days, and capture it, after having overrun and invaded all the land. We shall have the details of this further on. But it was in the counsels of God that His presence should be established in glory in the midst of His people, and this will be accomplished in Christ, at the end of the age. In the sixth chapter, the prophet sees this glory. That it is the glory of Christ, is taught us by John, in the twelfth chapter of his gospel. The prophet feels at once the incompatibility of the people's condition with the manifestation of this glory. Unclean lips cannot celebrate it. But a live coal from the altar cleanses his own lips, and he consecrates himself to the Lord's message. As to that which concerns the glory of Christ, the heart of the people is made fat until there is entire desolation. Nevertheless, there shall be a remnant, a holy seed, which shall be like the sap of a tree that has lost its leaves. We have then the judgment of the people under two aspects. First, that of God's government. In this point of view, the people being altogether guilty, are given up to the Gentiles. Secondly, in view of the glory of the Lord's presence according to His purposes of grace, the people were unfit for it. But here, as the purposes of God were in question, there is a remnant according to election, in whom the glory shall be re-established. This distinction must be made when the government of God and His outward dealings are in question.

In chap. 5 there is no remnant. It is simply the public and complete judgment of the nation. In chap. 6 God acts within, in His own relations with the people. We find a remnant and the assured re-establishment of the people, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Here, also, we find Christ. But this requires farther development; and it is given in a remarkable manner in the next prophecy, comprised in chapters 7-9 to the end of the seventh verse. Certain promises were attached to the family of David, in which -as we saw when examining the book of Samuel-God had renewed the hopes of Israel, when the links between Himself and the people were broken by the taking of the Ark, and He had forsaken His place at Shiloh. Now the house of David, the last sustainment of the people in responsibility, has also failed in faithfulness. Ahaz has forsaken the Lord, and set up the altar of a strange god in the temple of the Lord. In chap. 7 the Spirit of God directs the prophet to the king, and addresses him. Isaiah was to go and meet him, with Shearjashub his son, a symbolical child, whose name signifies, "The remnant shall return." But the Lord seeks first to encourage this branch of David to act in faith, and thus to glorify God, as He did with respect to the people in chap. 1. He announces to the king that the designs of Rezin and Pekah shall come to naught, and even proposes to him to ask a sign. But Ahaz is too far from the Lord to avail himself of this. And again, as He had done with respect to the people, the Lord declares that which shall happen to the family of David, and the people under their rule. The two points of this prophetic announcement are-the gift of Immanuel, the Virgin's son, and the complete

desolation of the land by the Assyrian. These are the keys to the whole prophecy. Nevertheless, there shall be a remnant. The 16th verse refers to Shearjashub; but this prophecy goes further. In chap. 8 the second prophetic child announces by his name the approaching appearance of this enemy and his ravages; and then, since the people despised the promises made to the family of David, and rejoiced in the flesh, the Lord would take the thing in hand. Consequently, we have the whole sequel of the people's history, of the directions given to the remnant, and of God's intervention in power for the establishment of full blessing, in the person of the Messiah.

In chap. 7, where the responsibility of the family of David is the subject, Immanuel is promised as a sign; but the success of the Assyrian is complete, without any reverse. Immanuel once brought in, all is changed; the land is His. The Assyrian reaches even to the neck, because the waters of Shiloah had been despised. But Immanuel secured all. Thus the prophetic Spirit passes on to the events of the last days, of which Sennacherib was but a type. He exhibits all the designs and confederacies of the nations brought to naught, because Immanuel-God (is) with us. It is the complete deliverance of Israel in the last days. And as to the remnant, what course are they to follow? They are not to be troubled by the fear of the people, nor to join them in their confederacies; but to sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and give Him all His true importance in their hearts. He will be their sanctuary in the day of their trouble. But who, then, is this Immanuel, this Lord of Hosts? We well know. This brings in, then, the whole history of the rejection of Christ, and the position of the remnant and of the nation in consequence, and of the final intervention of the power of God. The passage is too clear to need much explanation. I will point out its principal subjects. Christ becomes personally a stumbling-stone. In consequence of this, the testimony of God is deposited exclusively in the hands and the hearts of His disciples, God's elect remnant. He hides His face from Jacob; but according to the Spirit of prophecy, this remnant waits for Him and seeks Him. Meanwhile, He and the children whom the Lord has given Him, are for signs to the two houses of Israel (comp. Rom 11:1-8). Those (the nation) who reject the stone, are in rebellion and anguish in Immanuel's land; they are given up to desolation. Nevertheless, this distress is not like the former ravages of the Assyrian, because the Messiah, having appeared, has taken in hand the cause of His people according to the counsels of God. The Spirit of prophecy passes at once from His appearance as Light to the results of the deliverance which He will accomplish in the last days. The yoke of the Assyrian being broken, all the brightness of the glory of the divine person of the Messiah shines out in the blessing of His people. These two subjects, the Messiah and the Assyrian, form the bases of all the prophecy that speaks of Israel, when this people are the recognized object of God's dealings. It may be noticed that the Assyrian appears here twice; the second time in connection with a gathering together of the nations. The first time, chap. 7, he is the Lord's instrument for the chastisement of Israel, and he does his own will without any question of his being broken. The second time (chap. 8) he fills the land; but the assembly of the nations gathered together against Israel is broken and brought to nothing. This expectation of the Lord's intervention, without sharing the fears of the world in the last days, or seeking that strength which the world think to find in confederation, but, on the contrary, resting absolutely on the Lord alone, contains in principle a valuable instruction for the present day.

In the eighth verse of chap. 9, the Spirit resumes the general history of Israel, without any special introduction of the Messiah till towards the end. This prophecy closes with the twelfth chapter. Although the pride of Ephraim is mentioned, yet Jacob or Israel is looked at as a whole. The

different phases of chastisement or of distress are in ver. 8-12, 13-17, 18-21, and chap. 10:1-4. The Assyrian then reappears, as being properly the rod of the Lord; and it is announced, that when God shall have accomplished all that he had determined with respect to Zion (an accomplishment not here revealed), He will break the rod that he has used, and then the remnant shall seek the Lord, and shall " stay upon" Him. This is the final act of the great drama of God's dealings with respect to Israel. There is a consumption decreed of God for the land. But, when at length the Assyrian lifts up his hand, the Lord comes in and smites him. And the indignation of the Lord and His anger against Israel, which, till now, had never been turned away, will come to an end in the destruction of this rod that magnified itself against the Lord who used it. The 25th verse is in contrast with the 12th, 17th, 21st of chap. 9, and the 4th of chap. 10. Sennacherib was a type of this. But it is a prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian in the last days, when the indignation against Israel shall cease. Consequently we have, in chaps. 11 and 12, the Messiah and His reign, the source of the millennial blessing of the people of God. The first verses of chap. 11, give His character; afterward it is the effect of His reign. With chap. 12, one division of the whole book closes. That which commences with chap. 13, continues to the end of chap. 27, which describes the same millennial condition, but in a more extended sphere. because the world-of which these chapters speak-is brought in; while chaps. 5-12, were in especial connection with Israel. These chapters connect events that were then at hand, with the end of the age. It is only by thoroughly apprehending this, that we can understand them. The reason of this is simple: the nations are looked at in reference to Israel. But time is not reckoned with respect to Israel, from the Babylonish captivity until the last days. The introduction of the Messiah as a stone of stumbling, has been already considered. In the eyes of the prophet, Babylon represents the imperial throne of the world, in contrast with the throne of God at Jerusalem. Babylon will be overthrown, and God will again bless Israel. This will be the judgment of this present age, of the world. It is represented here, in that destruction of Babylon which was at hand. But this judgment will not be completed until, the times of the Gentiles being ended, Israel shall be delivered. The character of the king of Babylon is described here in very remarkable language, chap. 14:12, 13. It is the spirit of Babylon, and still more especially in its last representative; even in Nebuchadnezzar himself, even when they built the tower of Babel. The destruction of the Assyrian then takes place in the earth, and-although the house of David had had its scepter broken-Philistia shall be judged and subdued, and the Lord will found Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in Him.

But in Israel's territory, or in connection with this people, some nations still remain; and God must dispose of these in order that Israel may enjoy the full blessing, and the result of the promises. Babylon, being an immense system which takes the place of the throne of David, is seen as a whole. The nations, whose judgments are here related (although there is allusion to events nearer the time of the prophecy), are looked at as in the last days, when God resumes His throne of judgment, in order to re-establish His people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar has taken Tiro, and subdued Egypt. The Assyrian has overthrown Damascus, and led Ephraim captive. But, as a whole it is given here, in connection with the last days. Even in the preceding chapter, the destruction of the Assyrian is placed after the fall of the king of Babylon. Yet historically, the Assyrian had been subdued by Babylon; and the overthrow of Sennacherib had taken place many years before this epoch. But prophecy always looks to the accomplishment of God's purposes. Here there are, generally, no details with respect to the instruments employed by God. They are found elsewhere.

15 and 16. Moab is judged. He is warned that the throne of David shall be established, and the oppressor consumed out of the land. In chap. 17 we have the invasion of armies from the north, the assembled nations. Damascus is overthrown. Israel shall be but as a few berries on the outmost branches. Nevertheless they shall look to their Maker, and the gathered nations shall perish before the manifested power of God. The outline of this last invasion of Israel gives rise to a brief, but very clear prophecy of their condition in the last days. Chapter 18, they shall be restored by means of some powerful nation; but the Lord stands apart. Then, when Israel shall begin to bud as a vine in the land, they shall be given up as a prey to the nations. Nevertheless, in that time they shall be brought as an offering to the Lord, and shall themselves bring an offering too.

Chaps. 19 and 20. Egypt shall be smitten in that day; but the Lord will heal it. Egypt, Assyria and Israel shall together be blessed of the Lord. Chapter 20 teaches us that it will be Assyria that leads Egypt captive (compare Dan. 11 at the end). It will be observed here, that in general, from chap. 13 to 17 there is deliverance. The scepter of the wicked is broken (chap. 14:5). The throne of David will be established in mercy (chap. xvi. 5). The Assyrian is destroyed-the Philistines subdued-Zion founded by the Lord-Damascus reduced. The latter event introduces the evils of the last days. Only, as we have remarked, the gathering of the nations is for their destruction (Mic. 4:11-13). Chapter 18 resuming the subject of chap. 17 shows us Israel as they are to be in their land in the last days.

The chapters following do not, like the previous ones, tell of deliverance, but of the invasion and overrunning of the nations before-mentioned-the overflowing scourge. Egypt is overrun as well as Ethiopia, in which Israel had trusted. Babylon is overcome-Dumah and Kedar destroyed; Jerusalem is ravaged -Tire falls. In short, it is a universal overthrow, the scene of which is the land of Canaan, but in which the whole world is included (chap. 24:4). Even the powers of heaven are overturned, as well as the kings of the earth upon the earth, giving place to the establishment of Zion, the mountain of the Lord, as the center of power and blessing. The power of the serpent, the dragon that is in the sea being annihilated.

After this outline, attention must be given to some details. It will be observed that Babylon and Jerusalem fall (chap. 21), one after the other, Jerusalem the last. Now it is quite evident that this connection of events is yet future. That which is said of Babylon and Jerusalem, may have found its occasion in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and partly in the condition of Jerusalem when threatened by Sennacherib. But Babylon is named in a manner that gives no clue whatever to its condition. The " desert of the sea" is a singular term to describe a city. But a dreadful invasion is before the prophet's eyes, and Babylon falls. It comes like a whirlwind of the south, and the power of Babylon is at an end; we are not told in what manner. Jerusalem, the valley of vision, is ravaged. The Persians and the Medes who were the invaders of the preceding chapter, re-appear here as attacking Jerusalem. There is no fighting outside, but the city being taken, its inhabitants are bound or slain within it. This chapter contains moral instruction of the deepest importance. In the first place, all the wisdom of man is insufficient to ward off evil, if not accompanied by the power of God. When the city of God is in question, this wisdom, exercised in forgetfulness of the God who built and founded the city of His holiness, is an unpardonable sin (chap. 22:11). Again, historically speaking, that which is related here was done by Hezekiah, of whom it is said he prospered in all his works. Outward blessing attended his labors. But at the same time the condition of the people, even with respect to these labors, was such that God could not pardon it.

This is often the case. Outward faith in the work of God, blessed by Him--corruption as to state of heart in the thing, which God will assuredly judge. This is when the people of God lean upon human means. We see also here one who held a settled office, according to man, in the government of the house of David, set aside with shame, and one chosen of God taking his place, all glory being given to him; a remarkable prefiguration of the setting aside of the false Christ, and the establishment of the true, in the last days. This prophecy gives room to suppose that the nations will attack Jerusalem when the Babylon of history is a desert. That which is Babylon in those days shall fall. Nevertheless, Jerusalem, the object of the prophecies, shall be taken, its government changed; the usurper must yield his place to the chosen One of God.

The burden of Tere shows us all the pride of human glory stained, and all the honorable of the earth brought into contempt. The occasion is the capture of Tere by Nebuchadnezzar, but the prophecy goes farther--even to the days when her merchandise shall be holiness to the Lord.

Chapter 24 sets before us the overturning of everything in the earth. The land of Israel is first in view. But there, all the elements of all the systems of this world will be gathered together and judged. We have already remarked that this extends to the judicial overthrow of the powers of wickedness in the heavenlies, as well as of the kings of the earth upon the earth. The succeeding chapters skew us with what intent. Before examining them, let us retrace the objects of the judgments we have spoken of: let us retrace them in their moral order. We have Babylon, the power of organized corruption, where the people of God are captive. The public, open enemy of God and His people, the Assyrian. The inward enemy, the Philistine. Then Moab, the pride of man. Damascus is that which has been the enemy of God's people but allied with the apostate part of that people against the faithful part. From all these the people are delivered. Afterward, under judgment, we find Egypt, or the world, in its state of nature, the wisdom of which is lost in confusion--Babylon now desert in the midst of the nations--Dumah, the liberty, the independence of man--Jerusalem, the professing people--Tere, the glory of the world--and finally, all that is on the earth--spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

Chaps. 24 and 26 take the form of a song, in which the effect of God's intervention is celebrated. Let us observe its principal subjects. God is faithful. He accomplishes His purposes. He has brought the city of human pride to naught through His power. All the strong organization of man's pride is destroyed. God has been the strength of the poor among His people in the day of their distress, and the power of the enemy has been brought low. He will execute justice in Zion for all people. He will take away the vail that is upon their heart. The resurrection of the faithful will have taken place. I say, the faithful; for it is death swallowed up in victory. Moreover 1 Cor. 15 applies it thus. The rebuke of His people (Israel) shall be entirely taken away. The remnant (verses 9-12) celebrate their deliverance; they had waited for God, and the power of the Lord shall be displayed on their behalf. Moab, their haughty neighbor, shall be subdued. In chap. 26 the remnant sing in praise of the character of this deliverance. They have a strong city, but its bulwarks are the salvation of God. The strength of man has no place here; it is the foot of the poor that treads down the lofty city. It is the judgment that the righteous God executes Himself. The remnant had waited for Him in the way of His judgments. The long suffering of grace was in vain; it is only when the judgments of God are in the earth, that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Even when the hand of the Lord was lifted up to strike, they did not see. But they shall see, in spite of themselves, and they shall be ashamed. The fire of the Lord's jealousy shall devour them; they

shall not rise. But Israel shall be raised, as from the dead, by the power of the Lord. Finally, the Lord invites His people to hide themselves a little moment, while He comes out of His place to execute vengeance. The power of Satan in this world and among men, shall be destroyed, Israel preserved, and watered as the vine of the Lord. He had smitten Israel, but only in measure. Nevertheless, the people shall be fully judged; and then the lord will gather His dispersed, one by one. In the succeeding chapters we have the details of that which will happen to Israel in their own land, when invaded by the Gentiles in the last days. We shall find a complete and glorious deliverance of the remnant amidst the most terrible judgments.

Chapter 28 sets before us the first elements of these final scenes in the history of this wonderful people. The scourge comes from the north. Ephraim is invaded as by an overflowing torrent, by a tempest of hail that smites and destroys; he is trodden underfoot. But in that day the Lord shall be for a crown of glory to the residue of His people. The people, morally besotted, do not hear. And this is the sentence of the Lord, who turns to Jerusalem. There they had made a covenant with death and the powers of darkness, that they might escape the overflowing torrent, but the covenant shall be disannulled, the scourge shall overtake them, they shall be trodden down, and smitten by this terrible rod. We have then this revelation, that when Ephraim shall be invaded by this terrible scourge, the princes of Jerusalem will seek to preserve themselves from it, by making a covenant with the power of evil. But it shall come to naught. The waters shall overflow and sweep away the refuge of lies. Jerusalem, as well as Ephraim, undergoes the consequences of the assault of the enemy.

But the Messiah is the elect corner-stone, the sure foundation for the remnant; he that believes in him shall not be confounded. Thus Ephraim is invaded and Jerusalem taken. There is a consumption determined by the Lord upon the whole earth.

Chapter 29 Jerusalem is reduced to the last extremity. But this time the Lord appears for her deliverance, and the multitude of her enemies disappear as a dream of the night. Everything is dark and gloomy as to the people, all is morally overturned, and soon God will overturn everything by His power, and change the forest into Carmel (i.e. a fruitful field). Henceforth Jacob shall no more be weak and feeble. The meek shall be blessed, the deaf shall hear the word. The terrible one and the blasphemer shall be consumed before the Lord. There are two parts then in this history, two attacks. The first succeeds against Ephraim and against Jerusalem. The second does not succeed. Jerusalem is brought very low, but the Lord appears and she is delivered. The spirit of scorn and unbelief were marked in chap. 28. The spirit of blindness in chap. 29. The effect of this unbelief is manifested in chap. 30. The people put their trust in man, according to the wisdom of man. They look to Egypt for help; but in vain. This contempt of the Lord, accompanied by an absolute refusal to hearken to His word, which called on the people to trust quietly in Him, added yet more to their iniquity. God allows the evil, therefore, to go on to the full; but it is in order then to give free course to His grace. The 18th verse is a marvelous testimony to the ways of the Lord. He allowed the chastisement to be fully accomplished, that nothing might be left for Him but perfect grace. Grace and glory will abound, when the Lord shall bind up the breach of His people and heal their wound. At the end of the chapter we have the intervention of the Lord against this last instrument of His chastisements-the rod of chap. 10. The Assyrian is destroyed, and in the place where the rod should fall on him, there shall be only songs of triumph. But Tophet, the fire of the Lord, was prepared for another also-for the king. He who shall have assumed that title in Israel,

shall be consumed also by the indignation of the Lord.

Chapter 31 The folly of trusting in an arm of flesh is again pointed out, but only while dwelling on the true means of deliverance. The Lord at Jerusalem would be in the midst of the nations as a lion among the shepherds, and would defend Jerusalem as birds hovering over it. His presence should overthrow the Assyrian, and cause him to flee; for the fire of the Lord shall be in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem. Then in chap. 32, the Messiah should reign in righteousness, and set everything morally in order. Zion would, in fact, be a wilderness until the Spirit was poured out from on high, and then it should become a Carmel; and that which before had passed for a Carmel, should be counted comparatively but a wilderness. Righteousness should be established everywhere, and peace the fruit of righteousness, when the hail should come down upon the lofty ones who bear no fruit; and the city, the organization of human pride, should be utterly abased. The last verse appears to me to speak of the blessedness of full earthly peace.

Chapters 33 and 34 announce the two last great acts of judgment. At the moment when God establishes Himself in Zion, and fills it with righteousness, a final and powerful enemy (whom I believe to be the same as the Gog of Ezekiel) comes up to spoil the land. But there are those who wait upon the Lord, and He arises, and the enemy is put to flight. They gather the spoil of those who thought to despoil Israel. In verses 14 and 15 the faithful remnant are distinguished. The Messiah appears in His beauty; and all being at peace, after the destruction of this enemy, the most distant parts of the land are open to the inhabitants of Zion, which is established in safety forever.

Chapter 34 reveals the terrible judgments which will fall upon the other nations in Edom (compare chap. 63). Here it is those who have oppressed Zion, and the vengeance that God takes on oppressors. Idumea is itself the particular object of this; but all the enemies of Israel who were associated with Edom, the armies of the nations assembled against Jerusalem, will perish by the judgment of the Lord in the land of Edom.

Chapter 35 gives a picture of the blessing that succeeds the judgment, the blessing even of the wilderness, which depends on that of Israel. The redeemed of the Lord shall go up with joy in full security to Zion, and all mourning shall pass away forever.

Chapters 36 to 39 relate the history of the invasion of Sennacherib, its result, and the sickness unto death of Hezekiah, which preceded it. An instruction for the remnant as to the manner in which the Lord should be waited on; this deliverance being as to the substance of it, a figure of that which will take place with respect to the Assyrian in the last days. The sickness of Hezekiah furnishes us with a type of the Son of David as raised from the dead - the power of Christ, which shall be perfected in a nation raised also-morally-from the dead, all their sins being pardoned. It is the outward and inward deliverance of Israel. Meanwhile, the captivity in Babylon is announced. Previously to this, we have rather had the outward history of Israel; but now we have their moral or inward history, in their place of testimony against idolatry, and in their relationship with Christ, and the separation of a remnant.

Chapter 40 The first part of that which might be called the second book of Isaiah extends from chap. 40 to the end of chap. 48. The Messiah is comparatively but little introduced here. It is rather the great question between the Lord and idols, answered first by the success of Cyrus and the

capture of Babylon. This is evidently connected in grace with the deliverance of Israel, God's witness on the earth; unworthy to be so, as the nation was. At the same time, these ways of God showed that there was no peace at all for the wicked in Israel. We will point out some details, to make all this evident. The first eight verses of chap. 40 express in a very remarkable manner the principles on which God acts. God would comfort His people, and He speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, by telling her that her warfare is accomplished. The herald proclaims the coming of the Lord. And here it is the fact, as deliverance; His rejection is not mentioned. It is spoken of later, in chapters 51 and 53. But with respect to the people, what must the prophet say? "All flesh is grass." If all flesh is to see the glory of the Lord, if He pleads in vengeance with all flesh, this is where the testimony must begin. All flesh is grass, the Lord bloweth upon it. Is it thus with the Gentiles only? No; "the people is grass." Comfort must begin with this. The grass withereth; who, then, can be trusted in? God has spoken. "The word of our God," says the faith of the remnant, says the Spirit of prophecy, "shall stand forever." Then comes the prophetic testimony to the blessedness of ransomed Zion, who proclaims to the cities of Judah the presence of the Lord-the Savior, whose tender care is then described in a touching manner. The glory of His divine majesty is contrasted with idols, to verse 26. He then challenges Israel for their unbelief. He who is the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary. The depths of His wisdom are unsearchable; but they that wait on Him renew their strength, and shall not grow weary.

Chapter 41 begins the historical details which prove this. Who raised up Cyrus to overthrow idolatry? But in the midst of the havoc he made of it, Israel is the elect servant of God, the seed of Abraham. (This title of servant is a key to the rest of the book.) He is not to fear, God will uphold him; and they that strive with him shall perish. God will hearken to his poor, and minister to their need. The besotted idolaters of the nation know nothing of what God is about to do in judgment, and for the deliverance of His people. But although Cyrus is the Lord's instrument for inflicting judgment, and for delivering His people, this is but a passing and partial thing. Above all this, there is a servant of God, His elect, who will appear in humility, and without pretention, but who shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles of the Gentiles shall receive His law. This testimony was needful, and secures the blessing of Israel by the unfailing purpose and grace of God; but nothing more is said of the Messiah in this part of the prophecy. The result of bringing in the work of the Messiah is the glory of the Lord; who alone in fact shall be glorified, and that unto the ends of the earth. In the manifestation of this glory, He, who had for a long time held His peace, will deliver His blind and deaf people, Israel, who had not understood His ways. He will magnify His law. But why, then, are the people robbed and spoiled? The Lord had given them up because of their disobedience. But now He delivers and saves them. He created them for His glory; the blind have eyes, the deaf, ears; they are witnesses that the Lord alone is God. The judgments on Babylon-the commencement and the figure of the final judgments-prove this. He had formed this people for Himself, and the people had grown weary of their God; and, as it were, had made Him to serve with their sins. But now He pardons it all, for His own glory.

Chapter 44 The Lord now reasons with His people, whom He had formed from the womb; encourages them, promises them His Spirit. Their children shall spring up as willows by the water-courses. They shall be witnesses for Him, the Lord, the King of Israel, and their Redeemer. He shows Israel the folly of idolatry, reminds him that he is Jehovah's servant, and that He will not

forget them, and assures them of the entire pardon of all their sins: even the Lord, who is the disposer of- all things, and who calls Cyrus by name to rebuild Jerusalem.

Chapter 45 enlarges upon the same subjects, dwelling on the deliverance of Israel as an everlasting deliverance, the result of which shall never be overthrown.

In chaps. 46 and 47, the application is made to Babylon and to her idols. In chap. 48, the Lord, at length, pleads with Israel. He specifies Israel bearing the name of, and descended from Judah, himself, and calling upon the name of the Lord the God of Israel; but He declares their wickedness and obstinacy. He had told them many things long before, and had made new revelations to them, that they might know that the Lord is God. But they hearkened not; they did not understand. Nevertheless, for the glory of His name, the Lord would not cut them off; but would refine them as silver. He reminds them in an affecting manner of the blessing they would have enjoyed, had they kept His commandments. Nevertheless, it is even now declared unto them, that the Lord has redeemed His people. But as for the wicked, there is no peace unto them. This continual pleading against idolatry, whilst giving instruction for that day, seems to prove that up to the end, the question of Israel, either testifying against idolatry or defiled with it themselves, will have a principal place. For the government of the world it is a primary question. The God of this world governs by means of idols: the Lord, by His own name. Israel ought to have been the witness of this. They will be unfaithful to it in the last days. This is the reason why there is so much testimony here on the subject. The Messiah is brought in, for it is He who delivers. But it is a question apart, so to say. The subject of Christ, and of the people's guilt with respect to him, begins with chap. 49, which to the end of chap. 57, forms a whole. And if one may venture to say so, Christ takes the place of Israel as the true servant of God. As He declared, "I am the true Vine." This makes an apparent difficulty but gives the true sense of chap. 49. Israel is the vessel of the glory of God on the earth, and the Spirit of prophecy in Israel calls on the isles of the Gentiles, as being thus chosen of the Lord. Verse 3: "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Then Christ, by this same prophetic Spirit, says, "Then have I labored in vain." For we know that Israel rejected Him. Verse 5, is the answer. He shall be glorious. It would be a light thing to restore the remnant of Israel. He shall be the salvation of the Lord unto the ends of the earth. Here we find a principle that is applicable to the work of Christ, even in the days of the Gospel. But for the fulfillment of the counsels of God, the succeeding verses carry us on to the millennium. Verse 7, Christ is exalted. Verse 8, He is given for a covenant of the people (Israel), to secure the blessing of the land of Canaan, and the long desolate inheritance, and then the deliverance of the captives. At length, God has comforted his people. Zion, apparently forsaken, must confess that the Lord's faithfulness is greater than that of a mother to her sucking child. Kings shall be her nursing fathers, and shall bow down to her. And although she has been the captive of the mighty, she shall be delivered, and her oppressors trodden under foot. And all flesh shall know that the Lord is her Savior. This is the result in grace of the introduction of the true servant.

Chapter 50 enters into the detail of the judgment which God brings upon Israel, and the true cause of their rejection. Nothing can be more touching, more wonderful, than the manner in which the person and the coming of the Lord are presented in this remarkable chapter, which requires not interpretation but study. The Lord, the Disposer of the heavens and the earth, has learned how to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy-laden, taking the place Himself of lowliness and humiliation. Men-sad and dreadful truth!-seized the opportunity to insult and put Him to shame.

They would none of Him. The heart pauses before such a truth, and judges itself. But soon also, thank God, it melts before that love which took occasion to introduce man in his perfection, and to adapt itself to all his need; to make him feel that it had experienced all his misery. But the Man-Christ-trusted in God throughout, and turned not away back;

Here, then, is prophetically, the cause of Israel's rejection. But, at the same time, with the help of the New Testament, we find the Christian's place in the most clear and striking manner. It is the place of Christ himself. That which Christ says here, the Apostle adopts and puts it into the mouth of the believer (Rom. 8:33-34). He is identified with Jesus in his position before God. God (thus judges faith) acknowledges Him whom the people have rejected; and by so doing have, as it were, forced God to give them a bill of divorcement. This then distinguishes the remnant—they hearken to the voice of the servant, the Messiah. We have seen the Church hidden in the person of Christ himself; here it is the faithful remnant of Israel that are specified (ver. 10). The rest shall lie down in sorrow.

The application is found in chap. 51 and 52 to the end of verse 12. In the 13th verse, a fresh division of the prophecy begins. The remnant in the last days are exhorted to have confidence. Those who follow after righteousness are a little flock, but God had called Abraham alone, and had blessed and increased him. He can do the same for the remnant (compare Ezek. 33:24), where we see in what manner carnal confidence walking in unrighteousness can imitate divine faith. The Lord will comfort Zion. Verse 4 is the second exhortation. The remnant are acknowledged as the Lord's nation. His righteousness was near; salvation and deliverance were already gone forth from Him, and should be forever. In the 7th verse there is a farther step. They are a people who know righteousness, who have the law in their heart; they are not to fear men who should be devoured by the judgments of God. But His righteousness and His salvation should be everlasting. The remnant, thus set in their place, are revealed by the Spirit of prophecy as owned of the Lord. The same Spirit speaks by the mouth of the remnant (ver. 9); to implore His intervention in power, and to claim the perfect loving-kindness of the Lord, and the assured salvation of His redeemed ones, as well as the re-establishment of Zion in everlasting joy. The remnant thus encouraged, the Spirit turns to Zion, and even as "Awake! awake!" had been addressed to the arm of the Lord, so is it now to Zion herself; oppressed and trodden under foot of strangers. The cup shall now be given to those that afflicted her. "Awake I awake!" is once more addressed to her, that she may stand up and clothe herself in strength and glory. For the Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of Israel's God. This threefold repetition of "hearken" (ver. 1, 4 and 7), followed by the threefold repetition, "Awake! Awake!" is extremely beautiful. The 11th and 12th verses of chapter 52, show that in those days Israel will be captive among apostate Gentiles, as in the days of Babylon. The 13th verse is closely connected with that which precedes. It is Christ's position in those times of glory and of deliverance wrought by the Lord. Nevertheless, it may be considered separately, because it forms a whole with respect to the Lord Himself. Christ shall be very highly exalted in those days. But what had his position been? On this subject the Spirit of prophecy enlarges. The kings shall be astonished at His glory; He whose visage had been so marred more than any man.

Chapter 53, Israel's unbelief is declared. The structure of this most interesting chapter is as follows. As we have seen in the Psalms and elsewhere, the true repentance of Israel comes after their deliverance. That is, if as judged of Jehovah their chastening is over. The glorious

manifestation of Christ as their Deliverer, produces the deep sense of their sin in having rejected Him. This is Psa. 130 It is the affliction of the day of atonement. This liii. chap. expresses it. After the first verse, the Spirit speaks by the mouth of the escaped remnant of Israel. They confess their sin in having despised Him. Nevertheless, there is faith now in the efficacy of His work (ver. 5). The first verse skews that the testimony of Christ, addressed to faith, had been rejected. They believe when they see Him. I need not comment on this chapter, which is engraved on every true Christian's heart. In verse 11, it is my belief that the two parts of Christ's work are distinguished. By his knowledge he shall bring many to righteousness, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Chapter 54 gives the result of these events to Jerusalem in those days.

Chaps. 55-57 are exhortations given in view of these things. Chapter 55, full free grace, which consequently embraces the Gentiles. For this reason, it can be applied, as a principle, to the Gospel. Its accomplishment will be in the times of blessing to the earth, through the Lord's presence. Chapter 56 gives the moral character that is necessary to enjoy the blessing, which is no longer according to the narrow legal principles of former days. His house shall, in fact, be a house of prayer for all those whose hearts are truly turned unto the God of Israel; and they shall be joyful in it. Chapter 57 denounces, we may say, on the same principle, those even in Israel, who morally walk contrary to the will of God. The righteous might perish. But it would only be taking them from the evil to come. But whether it were Israel or not, there would be no peace for the wicked. These three chapters then give the moral instruction that belongs to those days. The faithful shall be blessed, and the meek-be they who they may; the wicked shall be judged, whether of Israel or not. These moral considerations rouse the indignation of the Spirit at the condition of Israel in the days of the prophecy-their sin and their hypocrisy in pretending to serve the Lord. He denounces their trust in outward forms, and places blessing on condition of obedience. It was not that the arm of the Lord was shortened, or His ear grown heavy; but the iniquity of the people hindered blessing, and would bring judgment upon them. Yet, when all had failed, and there was no one to maintain righteousness, the Lord Himself would intervene in His sovereignty and might. He would crush His enemies and judge the isles. So that His name should be feared throughout the whole earth. The Redeemer should come to Zion, and to those that turn from transgression in Jacob. Blessing should then be permanent, and the presence of the Holy Spirit abide with the seed of Jacob forever.

Chapter 60 gives us the condition and the glory of Jerusalem in that time of blessing: all of the people thus spared would be righteous.

Chapter 61 As chapters 50 and 53 presented Christ in His sufferings, chap. 61 exhibits Him in full grace of His person, concerned in the blessing of Israel. The three preceding chapters had revealed the judgment and the intervention of the Lord, at the same time pointing out the Redeemer. We have seen the same thing in chap. 40, to the end of chap. 48 and in chap. 49, the Messiah specially introduced. it is the same thing here, from the beginning of chap. 61 to the sixth verse of chap. 63. We see, indeed, that it is Jehovah who is Christ, and Christ who is Jehovah. But there is the difference between the moral sins of Israel against Jehovah, and the rejection of Himself in the person of the Messiah, which we have seen so clearly pointed out in chap. 1. So also with respect to the repentance of the Jews; the law is written in their hearts; they turn away from iniquity; they trust in the Lord; they hearken to the Spirit of prophecy, to the Servant of the

Lord; they are delivered. But when they shall see their Redeemer in glory, then it is that the true repentance, the deep affliction shall take place, at the sight of Him whom they have despised and rejected, and who in His grace has borne their iniquities.

Chapters 61 and 62 appear to me too plain to need much remark. The manner in which the Lord stopped, in the middle of the second verse, will be observed; the time for the fulfillment of the last part of the verse not being yet come. But He could set before them that which applied to His own person in grace.

Chapter 63:1-6. We find again here the terrible judgment of chap. 34 executed by the Lord, or rather having been already executed, for He returns from it (compare 62:2). The result is the peace and blessing which we have just seen described in chap. 42. From the seventh verse we have the reasoning of the Spirit of prophecy in the mouth of the remnant, or perhaps that of the prophet, putting himself in that position. And in chapters 65 and 66 we find the Lord's answer,

Nothing can be more affecting than the way in which the Spirit lends Himself to the expression of all the feelings of a faithful Israelite's heart; or rather, in which He gives a form to the sentiments of an afflicted but trusting heart, recalling past kindnesses, overwhelmed by the present distress, acknowledging the hard-heartedness and rebellion of which they had been guilty, but appealing to the unchangeable faithfulness of God's love against the judicial blinding and hardening which the people are under. If Abraham acknowledged them not, God was their Father. Where was His strength, His tenderness, His mercies? Were they restrained? Faith recognizes through all things the link between the people and God; it acknowledges that God prepares for those that wait on Him things beyond man's conception, that He meets those who walk uprightly; and it confesses that the state of Israel is quite different, that they are sinners, not even seeking His face. But the affliction of His people, the disastrous condition into which sin had brought them, is to faith a plea with God. Whatever had happened, the people were, to faith, as the clay, and the Lord the potter. They were His people; their cities, the cities of the Lord. The house in which their fathers had worshipped was burnt up, and all was laid waste.

The two next chapters give us a full revelation of the dealings of God in answer to this appeal. First of all, God-through His grace-had been sought after by others. He had made Himself known to those who were not called by His name. The infinite and sovereign grace of God had sought out the poor Gentiles. At the same time, with infinite patience, He had stretched forth His hands to a people who would not have Him-to a people who provoked Him continually in the grossest manner. And now He declares His mind: the people that forsook Him shall be judged, He will number them with the sword, they shall bow down to the slaughter. But there shall be an elect remnant in grace, the servants of the Lord, who shall be spared and blessed (verses 11, 12, 8, 9, 13, 15). The Lord would then introduce an entirely new order of things, in which the truth of His promises should be acknowledged, and the former things should be quite forgotten. New heavens and a new earth, not as yet with respect to the physical change, but the moral order of which should be entirely new. It should not be only a new order of things on the earth, which the power of evil in the heavens might spoil, as in former days; the sources of influence from above should be changed also. The heavens should be new. Jerusalem should be blessed in the earth, and her people should enjoy the gifts of the Lord in as long a life as that of men before the flood. A man of a hundred years old should be a child; and if any one should die at that age, he must be looked

upon as cut off by the curse of God. God would always grant the prayers of His people. Peace should be established, and there should be no evil in all His holy mountain. This is the millennial state of the Jews.

Chapter 66 speaks of the judgment that introduces it, and consequently gives us more historical details. The temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem (verse 6), but the Lord does not own it-man alone being concerned in its building-neither does he acknowledge the sacrifices offered in it. He looks to the meek and contrite spirit. There were some who mocked at the hopes of these, and said, " Let the Lord display His glory!" But He will appear to their confusion, and for the blessing of those who waited for Him. Zion shall suddenly be as the mother of a people blessed in the Lord and comforted. The remnant is thus distinguished in these two chapters in the most explicit manner.

Let us retrace here the use of the word servant. First of all, it was Israel; then Christ Himself, the only true servant amidst this people; afterward, the remnant who hearkened to His words as the Servant or the Spirit of prophecy. For the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. The latter are called servants here; they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, as one whom 'his mother comforteth, and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies. For He shall come and execute judgment against all flesh. Salvation had been made known to all flesh. And now the Lord shall plead in judgment with all flesh. The unbelieving and idolatrous Israelites shall be there, confounded with the nations, all of whom God will assemble, who shall come and see His glory. He will execute judgment on the multitude by fire and by His sword. But there shall be some who through grace will escape. God will send these to the distant nations who have never seen His glory nor heard His fame. There is no question here of the election by grace for heaven. They will declare, not that grace, but the glory which they have seen, and the nations will bring back the dispersed of Israel as an offering to the Lord in His holy mountain. And the seed of Jacob and the priests whom the Lord shall choose, shall be as the new heavens and the new earth before the Lord, and all flesh shall come to worship before Him. Those who have been the objects of the Lord's judgments, who have transgressed against Him, especially it seems to me the apostate Jews, shall be an abiding testimony of the Lord's terrible judgment. For if the full blessing of His presence shall shine upon His people, it is the principle of judgment that brought it in, and that maintains it.

There remains a general remark to be made here. The sinful condition thus judged existed in the days of the prophet. The patience of God bore with it, but the principle that brought in judgment was there (witness chap. 6) until the rejection of Christ, and in a certain sense until the reception of Antichrist, coming in his own name, the evil was not fully consummated, nor the final judgment executed. But already in Ahaz the occasion had been given for pronouncing it..Thus the whole condition of Israel, the grace that received the Gentiles, the nothingness of forms and ceremonies, in a word, all the great moral principles of truth, are laid down in this part of the prophecy; and we see Stephen, Paul, the Lord Himself, making use of passages that speak of these principles, applying them to the times in which they lived. The Lord, to the hardened state of the people; Stephen, to the unprofitableness of an already judged system; Paul, to the Jews' state of condemnation, and the manifestation of grace to the Gentiles. What remains, is the accomplishment of the great result, in which these things shall be demonstrated to the world, by the judgment and the sovereign blessing of God.

As to the coming of Jesus in humiliation, we have seen it as clearly revealed as His coming in glory. In short, all the ways of God in the government of His people, with respect to their conduct under the law, to the promises made to the house of David, and at last to their treatment of Christ, the Lord in humiliation amongst His people-the government, I repeat, and the ways of God towards Israel in all these respects, are developed in the clearest and most wonderful manner in the course of this prophecy.

Proverbs

The book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth, to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here. God deigns to apply His wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life, and to show us, with His own intelligence, the consequences of all the ways in which man may walk. It is a great blessing to be provided for the labyrinth of this world, in which a false step may lead to such bitter consequences, with a book that sets forth the path of prudence and of life; and that, in connection with a wisdom which comes from God.

It is well to remember that the book of Proverbs treats of this world, and of God's government, according to which man reaps that which he has sown. This is always true, whatever may be the sovereign grace that bestows on us things beyond and infinitely above this world.

Solomon was filled with wisdom from above, but which had its exercise in this world, and its application to it; that is to say, which applied to it God's way of viewing all things, discerning the truth of all that, day by day, is developed in it. We have here the ways of God, the divine path for human conduct, the discernment of that which the heart of man produces and of its consequences; and also-for one who is subject to the Word-the means of avoiding the path of his own will and of his own foolish heart (which is unable to understand the bearing of a multitude of actions that it suggests to him), and this not by bringing him back to moral perfection, for that is not the object of the Proverbs; but to that wisdom and prudence which enable him to avoid many errors and to maintain a serious walk before God, and an habitual submission to His mind. The precepts of this book establish practical happiness in this world, by maintaining earthly relations in their integrity according to God. Now, it is not human prudence and sagacity that are enjoined. The fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom is the subject here.

There are two very distinct parts in this book. The first nine chapters, which give the great general principles; and the Proverbs, properly so called, or precepts which indicate the path in which the wise man should walk. At the end of the book is a collection made by Hezekiah.

Let us examine the first part. The grand principle is laid down at the outset. The fear of the Lord on the one side, and on the other the madness of self-will which despises the wisdom and instruction that restrain it. There are two forms in which sin, or the activity of man's will, manifests itself-violence and corruption. This was seen at the time of the deluge. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Satan is a liar and a murderer. In chapter 1 violence is pointed out as the infringement of those obligations which the will of God has laid upon us. But wisdom cries aloud that her voice may be heard, proclaiming the judgment of those who despise her ways. Chapter 2 the result of subjection of heart to the words of wisdom and an earnest search after it, is the knowledge of the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God Himself. And he who applies himself to this shall be kept; he shall not only have no part with the wicked man, but he shall be delivered from the deceitful woman-from corruption. The judgment of the earth and the prosperity of the righteous are declared. The latter principle being established, the

third chapter skews that it is not human sagacity or the prudence of man which imparts the wisdom here spoken of. Neither is it the ardent desire after prosperity and happiness manifesting itself in crooked ways; but the fear of the Lord and subjection to His Word supply the only clue to guide us safely through a world of wickedness which He governs. Chapter 4 insists on the necessity of pursuing wisdom at whatever cost; it is a path of sure reward. It warns against all association that would lead the contrary way and into ruin; adding that the heart, the lips, and the feet, are to be watched. Chapter 5 returns in detail to the corruption of heart that leads a man to forsake the wife of his youth for another. This path demoralizes the whole man. But the eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of man. In chapter 6 wisdom will not be surety for another. It is neither slothful, nor violent, nor deceitful. The strange woman should be avoided as fire; there is no reparation for adultery. In chapter 7 the house of the strange woman is the path to the grave. To curb oneself, to be firm in resisting allurements, looking to the Lord and hearkening to the words of the wise, such are the principles of life given in these chapters.

Chapter 8 the wisdom of God is active. It cries aloud, it invites men. Three principles distinguish it—discretion, or the right consideration of circumstances, instead of following self-will; hatred of evil, which evidences the fear of the Lord; and detestation of arrogance and hypocrisy in man. It is by wisdom that kings and princes rule; strength, counsel, and sound wisdom, and durable riches are found in it. Moreover, the Lord Himself acted according to His own perfect discernment of the right relations of all things to each other; that is to say, He created them according to the perfection of His own thoughts. But this leads us farther; for Christ is the wisdom of God; He is the center of all relations according to the perfections of God, and is in Himself the object of God's eternal delight. The everlasting wisdom of God is revealed and unfolded in Him. But this is not the only link. If Christ was the object of God the Father's delight, as the center and fullness of all wisdom; men have been the delight of Christ, as well as the habitable parts of the Lord's earth. It is in connection with men that Christ is seen, when considered as uniting and developing in Himself every feature of the wisdom and the counsels of God. The life that was in Him was the light of men. Christ is then the object of God the Father's delight. Christ ever found His joy in God the Father, and His delight with the sons of men and in the earth inhabited by men.

Here, then, must this wisdom be displayed. Here must the perfection of God's ways be manifested. Here must divine wisdom be a guide to the conduct of a being subject to its direction. Now, it is in Christ, the wisdom of God, that this is found. Whoso hearkens to Him finds life. Observe, here, that all-important, as this revelation is, of the display of God's wisdom in connection with men, we do not find the Church here. She is called away from this present evil age to belong to Jesus in Heaven. Christ cannot actually yet rejoice in the sons of men. When He takes possession of the earth this will be fully accomplished: this will be the Millennium. Meantime He calls on men to hear His voice. The principle of a path to be followed by hearkening to the words of wisdom, is one of the greatest importance for this world, and of the most extensive bearing. There is the path of God, in which He is known. There is but one. If we do not walk in it we shall suffer the consequences, even if really loving the Lord. But in fact wisdom has done more than this; it has formed a system, established a house of its own, upheld by the perfection of well-regulated and co-ordinate solidity. It is furnished with meat and wine, the table is spread; and, in the most public manner, wisdom invites the simple to come and partake, while pointing out to them the right way in which life is found. There is another woman—but before speaking of her, the

Spirit teaches that instruction is wasted on the scorner, he will but hate his reprover. Wisdom is wise even in relation to its enemies. There is progress for the wise and the upright, but the beginning of it is the fear of the Lord. It is the fundamental principle.

But scoffing is not the only character of evil. There is the foolish woman. This is not the activity of love which seeks the good of those who are ignorant of good. She is clamorous, sitting in the high places, at the door of her house, seeking to turn aside those who go right on their ways, and alluring those that have no understanding into the paths of deceit and sin; and they know not that her guests are the victims of death.

In chapter 10 begin the details which teach those who give ear how to avoid the snares into which the simple might fall, the path to be followed in many cases, and the consequences of men's actions. In short, that which characterizes wisdom in detail; and also, the result of God's government, whatever appearances may be for awhile. It is well to observe, that there is no question of redemption or propitiation in this book; it proposes a walk according to the wisdom of God's government.

In the final chapter, we have the character of a king according to wisdom, and that of the woman in her own house. The king who does not allow himself that which, by darkening his moral discernment through the indulgence of his lusts, would make him unfit to govern. In the woman we see the persevering and devoted industry which fills the house with riches, brings honor to its inhabitants, and removes all the cares and anxieties produced by sloth. The typical application of these two specific characters is too evident to need explanation. The example of the woman is very useful, as to the spirit of the thing, to one who labors in the Church.

Although, in this book, the wisdom produced by the fear of the Lord is only applied to this world, it is on that very account of great use to the Christian; who, in view of his heavenly privileges, might more or less forget the continual government of God. It is very important for the Christian to remember the fear of the Lord, and the effect of God's presence on the details of his conduct; and I repeat that which I said at the beginning, that it is great grace which deigns to apply divine wisdom to all the details of the life of man, in the midst of the confusion brought in by sin. Occupied with heavenly things, the Christian is less in the way of discovering by his own experience the clue to the labyrinth of evil through which he is passing. God has considered this, and He has laid down this first principle, " simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good." Thus the Christian may be ignorant of evil (if a worldling were so, he would fall into it), and yet avoid it through his knowledge of good. The wisdom of God gives him the latter; the government of God provides for all the rest. Now, in the Proverbs, we have these things in principle and in detail. I have not dwelt on the figurative character of the forms of evil. They are rather principles than figures. But the violent man of the last days, is continually found in the Psalms; and Babylon is the full accomplishment of the woman who takes the simple in her snares and leads them down to death; just as Christ is the perfect wisdom of God which leads to life. But these two things which manifest evil, proceed from the heart of man at all times since the fall. Only, we have seen that there is an active development of the wiles of the evil woman who has her own house and her own arrangements. It is not simply the principle of corruption, but an organized system: as is that of sovereign wisdom.

Responsibility to God Resulting From Revelation

"The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

One effect of the possession of a divine revelation is to put men's consciences under responsibility to God. Its happiest end is to bring the soul into association with God Himself-the God of goodness-and into a recognition and an approval of His counsels and ways.

That an authoritative communication of the mind of God must needs place those to whom it is given in a position of direct responsibility to Himself, is a truth so simple that it could never be controverted by a mind in which the true ideas of God, and a revelation from God, held their place. Still there is no principle which wrong notions of religion lead men so invariably, in practice at least, to set aside.

The reason of this, one has not far to seek, if his thoughts and inquiries are guided by revelation itself. It lies in that desire for independence and self-aggrandizement which became the indelible characteristic of man with the fall. His proud efforts to achieve his own happiness may be shown indeed to be abortive as often as he is confronted by death: yet, of universal man, may it be said, "This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings."

His necessities may be pleaded as a ground for seeking to subordinate the domain of physical nature to his control; but the lust of domination which seeks to subjugate " the bodies and the souls of men," is the bitter fruit of an ambition which has no place in the universe of God, except as the companion and the consequence of sin.

Leaving aside, however, the path of those who spurn the idea of a revelation; and of those who only quarrel with it when it crosses their pursuits; it may be asserted, that where religion is the avowed business of men, and revelation is nominally received, there is nothing so infrequent as the recognition of the truth, that authority over the minds and consciences of men belongs alone to God.

Wherever religion or a formal Christianity. is maintained, there will, of necessity, be the setting aside of this authority, because other ends are in question besides those of restoring the soul to God and God to the soul. In Popery this is the all-pervading principle, and effectually neutralizes the power of every truth which yet exists in that enormous corruption of Christianity. For while the name and authority of revelation are used as a sanction of its arrogant assumptions, responsibility directly to God, in accordance with that revelation, is utterly and universally denied.

But apart from this, the walk of faith cannot be: and the liberty of the truth ceases to exist. When "the truth makes free," its characteristic is, that of entire independence of man, in order to absolute subjection to God.

The mischief of the reverse of this can hardly be estimated, since it is essential that God should be removed to a distance, that man may come in and fill up the space.

It is not an object in itself of the spirit of God doubtless to attack evil or to expose the errors of the professed teachers of religion; but in order to guard_ the souls of God's people against yielding to their authority, this is very unsparingly done both by the prophets in the Old Testament, and also in the Gospels by Christ Himself.

It was this which called forth the reprobation of the Lord, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, of those which sat in "Moses' seat." For while he enjoins upon the multitude and his disciples subjection to them as dispensers of the law (for this is the force of "sitting in Moses' seat"), and thus establishes the authority of God's revelation in whosoever hands it may be found; He at the same time denounces woe upon woe against these "blind guides;" and deduces, their utter corruption, which he discloses in so many points, from this source; "All their works they do to be seen of men." As, in another place, He had said, "How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" And also in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew, He charges them, with making the commandment of God of none effect through their tradition: adding, in the words of the prophet, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Now it is not so much the particular errors that were taught, that are aimed at in this passage, as the ground and source from whence all error flows: "Their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men." Or, as it is quoted by the Lord, "Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Even truth ceases to have the power of truth, when it is taught by the precept of men; though error, in a greater or less degree, necessarily marks the stream that flows from man's authority as its source.

The evil of this principle, which is all but universal in the religious teaching of the present day, is, that it deprives the word of God of its just authority; puts man, in relation to the conscience, in the place of God; and extinguishes, both in the teachers and the taught, the capacity to judge aright of the revelations which the word of God contains. "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; THEREFORE will I proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." But if a right aim be not actuating the heart, the word of God cannot be allowed to speak its simple meaning. "The light that is in us becomes darkness;" and then both learning and ignorance must be content to look around for an excuse for not being able to understand what is simple enough to an obedient heart. "The secret of The Lord is with them that fear him." "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

The difficulties of revelation are not the real stumbling-blocks in the path of the enquirers after truth. Greater difficulties are overcome in the investigations of philosophy and science; because in these cases the bias of the heart offers no barrier to a just conclusion. But as regards the revelation of God, a moral condition of heart is enough to induce men "to turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables."

It was the moral condition of both the teachers and the taught, visited, no doubt, by a judicial blindness, which gave occasion for the application of the words; "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned."

Thus both learning and ignorance have at hand a ready excuse, for not being able to understand what the heart has no disposition to obey. The most opposite grounds are adduced; but this only serves to show, that it is the heart's subterfuge to get rid of a responsibility it is not prepared to own; and its effort to silence a voice, which if listened to, would only condemn.

Learning seldom owns itself at fault, or confesses that there are any arcana which it cannot penetrate, except when it is called to understand or teach the word of God.

And on the other hand, the want of learning is seldom pleaded by the illiterate as a disqualification for not understanding anything but the word of God.

But the authority of revelation being thus disposed of, and religion still pursued-for it is added, "this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me"-there remains only this, to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men."

Now it was against these "commandments of men," or the traditionary teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, that the Lord directs (Mark 7) the force of this passage of the prophet; declaring that they made the word of God of none effect through their traditions; and even stronger than this, that they rejected the commandment of God that they might keep their own tradition. And he instances a case in confirmation of the charge of so flagrant a character, as to make the sensitive heart recoil from even a momentary allowance of a principle, which might land the soul in so fearful a conclusion: "Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

But in the parallel passage in Matt. 15, the opposition is even more direct. "GOD commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But YE say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Alas! there is no corruption like that which, while it professedly honors God, under the guise of respect for tradition, sets aside the only revelation of his will, and perverts the only standard by which truth and error can be ascertained.

It matters nothing as to the importance or insignificance of the point about which tradition is concerned; its mischief is still the same.

Nothing could be more indifferent in itself than eating bread with washed or unwashed hands;-but it was in this simple matter that the principle lurked which set aside the plainest commands of the word of God, that the authority of man might be established.

The evil of the principle is this, that the teaching being from man, it reaches, and can reach, only to the notions and aims and objects of man. It never can reach, even when it does not seem to oppose, the height of God's thoughts; whether of his holiness or his grace. Consequently it can never have the authority of God by his Spirit, nor the sanction of God by his blessing: while it seems superfluous to add, that to the soul the prime blessing of the death of Christ is lost. For " he suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring-US TO GOD."

As to all apostolic, or successional, or traditional authority, the Apostle declares that he was " an Apostle not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;" and so the character Of all authoritative teaching is the same. It is directly from God, and challenges obedience to God, for which His blessed revelation is the direct and only rule. " They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them!" While in the 2nd of Peter it is said-" No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.' Why? Because "the prophecy came not in old time (or at any time) by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It is true, both in the prophet and in our Lord's application of this passage, the censure it contains falls mainly on the teachers of these traditions; but it must not be supposed that the responsibility of such a state of things rested with them alone. It is said-"This people draweth nigh unto me," etc. And again (in Jer. 5:30, 31)-" A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."

It is seldom that error is taught for error's sake. Ff the most part, it is a consequence of a previous state c corruption, in teachers and taught. Aaron, indeed, mad the object of idolatry when he fashioned the golden calf but it was only to meet the idolatrous feelings of Israel before which his heart, through lack of faith, has quailed.

Where faith does not come in to give God, at al costs, His place, as in the three Jews before the golden image in the plains of Dura, there is nothing left but to seek to lower things to a human standard, and then to cover the corruption with the pretended sanction of revelation, whose authority has in reality been destroyed.

O did the children of God but know how much hangs upon it, how would they seek that God and His revelations might remain in their integrity! For here; and here alone, is found the power to bring heaven and heavenly glory to the soul. And here too alone are the springs and power of a life and walk of faith; and here is the only power by which the poor heart of man can be delivered from the mazes of a multiform error, and the wretched trammels of a growing superstition.

But this would be "to put forth the precious from the vile," which God's mouth always does.

But if otherwise, whether the fault be most with the teachers or most with the taught, there is but this melancholy conclusion for each-" If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Thoughts on the Resurrection of Christ

Each distinct truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His work has its peculiar blessing for the Church of God. It is by rightly dividing the truth that the servant of God shows himself approved to God-" a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." In the path of humiliation of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor: " who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; " we can step by step follow Him with adoring hearts. His glory with the Father before the world was-His power and Godhead displayed in creation-His essential glory, as Son of God-all these are ever present to the believer. These truths are as much seen by faith, in Jesus, when on the cross as when on the holy mount. Again, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." How does the Spirit by the apostle make this special truth the groundwork of blessing to us (see Heb. 2:14)! So His life (Heb. 2:17; 4:15). We may say that there are stages in the path of Jesus, from glory back to glory, where the Spirit of God bids us tarry and refresh our souls, and magnify His name. Do we not well know how the varied incidents in His life-His many acts of grace and love-carry to the soul the very sense of blessing which was enjoyed so abundantly at the time. His name is as ointment poured forth; He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth His fruit in His season. How thoroughly estranged from Him must the heart be, that could use any part of His humiliation to His dishonor (yet this is Satan's way,

and man's too), when every step downwards to the last, that of the grave, is the wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.

The resurrection of Christ is a fact full of special instruction and blessing. The effect on the hearts of the disciples is thus expressed by Peter -" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The poor disciples had, by the cross and burial, been cast into gloom and despondency. The Lord had graciously forewarned them of all that would happen to Him: but their faith gave way; circumstances had shrouded their souls, and they forgot the words which would have been to them a lamp for their feet; but the resurrection to them was the renewal of all: their peace, their joy, their hopes revived when Jesus rose from the dead. " Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It became the burden of their testimony. To us it is the truth that puts us into a place beyond condemnation--one of new life, associated with Him, raised up together with Him who was delivered for our offenses, raised again for our justification. In His resurrection we have the pattern of our own: Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are His at His coming. In speaking to the Jews the Apostle could say (Acts 13:32, 33)-" And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." But it is more especially in the testimony that is borne to the person of the Lord Jesus that I would refer. Faith does pierce the veil that thickens in every step of humiliation which He voluntarily took;

and it has been the object of the Spirit of God to strengthen our souls against every assault of the enemy. Was He born of a woman? "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Was He tempted of the devil? "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Did He eat with publicans and sinners? "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son who is consecrated for evermore. When He died, was it as one subject to death? "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Did He lie in the silent tomb? "He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption." It was not possible that the Holy One should see corruption. How needful it is that in contemplating the wondrous grace of Him who voluntarily underwent all this-- who thus made Himself of no reputation--that we should have our hearts filled with God's estimate of it all. A proper knowledge of the love that led our blessed Lord into the ignominious death of the cross--into the sepulcher-- would have led His disciples to adore and worship their Lord and Master still the more, instead of into that despair, when they said, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." It is instructive to see how both the apostles Peter and Paul use the resurrection in maintaining the glory of the Lord Jesus, and both instance the death and burial of David in contrast (Acts 2:29).

"Men and Brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ; that His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption." And Acts 13:36,37, "For David, after he had served his generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption." And the verse following skews the value of this to us. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," etc. Great is the mystery of godliness.--God was manifested in the flesh.

The primary object of the Word is to glorify Christ and the abounding wisdom of God for our souls is thus displayed in the light which shines around every part of the Redeemer's work. We are lost nowhere.

If, like the disciples, led by the darkness of circumstances we get off the word, we mourn where we ought to rejoice, we dishonor Him when we ought to exalt Him. Nothing can be more precious than the way in which the Spirit of God contrasts the person of the Son with David, in circumstances so truly the same.

David, a saved sinner, the victim of death-bound in the grave --still remains its captive--every way subject to its power till the trumpet sounds.

But Jesus, the Savior, goes into the grave, not its subject (it was not possible--that He should be holden of it), but to spoil it. It contained, in Him, one who defied all its powers, either to hold or to corrupt; hence, what to us is of all value, through this man is preached to us the forgiveness of

sins.

We can repose in One, who all through his humiliation was never triumphed over, never the vanquished, but always more than conqueror.

Thus is Jesus ever set before us in the Word, and faith thus proves Him the Rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

The Word having glorified Jesus, feeds the Church. It is strength to the soul, because it honors Him. Did the scriptures falter in speaking of Him, our souls would tremble too. In whom we have redemption through his blood. When David undertook to go up against Goliath, Israel might look on with trembling hearts, when they saw the ruddy youth standing before him who had been a man of war from his youth. But when they saw the monster fall, and David standing upon him, confidence and strength would return to every man's heart, and give energy to the song--" Saul hath slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands!" Such is the confidence of our souls in Him in whom we have believed

'Tis this that nerves us to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints. 'Tis not difficult to see what will be needed for the coming struggle. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" When Joseph spake words of peace to his brethren, he took them to God's goodness, in sending him before them to Egypt. So there are times when the Lord carries our hearts away from our sins to His overruling mercy; and notwithstanding our folly and guilt, in contending about and dishonoring our Lord, we have learned more of Him, we have been driven to our hiding-place, and our souls have realized its security and strength more than ever. We have learned more of Him, and we can tell more of Him than heretofore. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

We may well understand how the resurrection was to the disciples a being begotten again to a lively hope. It restored Him whom they loved, in whom they trusted, and whom they served. Their souls breathed afresh, winter passed away, and every energy, affection, and hope reappeared. While, then, it had such blessed fruit in them, let us remember that it was because they found Him unharmed either by death or the grave; nay, that He had proved Himself the spoiler and vanquisher of both. "O Death, where is thy sting, O Grave, where is thy victory!"

M.

Thoughts on Romans 11 and the Responsibility of the Church

There are several subjects of general interest to Christians, which it might be well to examine carefully. Two more especially present themselves at this time; the one is the existence of the Church on earth, and the sense in which it may be said to be responsible for the state in which it now is, though others have been the chief means of bringing it to that state. The other is the explanation and application of the eleventh of Romans.

Before, however, entering on the subjects themselves, I would call the attention of my reader to one point, viz., that these are subjects neither of secondary importance nor of slight differences of opinion, as some would have us to believe; but subjects of the utmost moment; subjects which involve the questions of the character of our relationship with Christ, and of the responsibility of Christians with regard to our actual state; questions, I repeat it, of the most solemn nature, and which ought to interest every soul and involve the glory of Christ himself.

It has, indeed, been objected by some, that we had better not waste our time upon such questions, as being but questions of second-rate importance. But let us not be deceived. These are not secondary questions: I repeat it again. Is the existence of the Church upon earth, and our responsibility, in relationship with its existence, a matter of second-rate importance? if we must have controversy, I bless God that we have so fundamental a question to consider, and also that that which sometimes produces painful separations among Christians is by no means a slight difference of opinion;—but the denial of the existence, and the responsibility of the Church of God upon earth. That the source of divisions will be found to be there, I have the most profound conviction. God will not have the truth upon this subject set aside. Is the existence and the responsibility of the Church upon earth a nice distinction—an opinion? Is it not clear, that if any one have a clear conviction on these points, it ought to be a motive in the presence of God, the motive which will affect the whole conduct of a Christian as such; and his entire manner of seeing things. Nay, the Christian's entire conduct and mode of seeing things will be molded upon the existence of such a relationship. Could it be a matter of opinion to a woman, to know whether she was the wife of such or such a one or not? And if she is, how will she regard her responsibility? As a matter of second-rate importance? Is not the question one of morality, when relationships established by God exist? And is it not morality of the very highest kind possible, the morality which is based upon the relationship which God has established between his Son and the Church which he has given to him? Morality, I admit, which is not within the limits of man's natural responsibility, on which one could not insist when addressing the natural conscience, but which one may say forms the very life of a Christian in the most exalted part of his conduct. It is a responsibility which governs all others, and which is even the spring of them.

I would remark also, that if any one recognizes the existence of the Church for if it does not exist, there can be no question as to responsibility from connection with it—but if it exists] there is nothing uncertain or vague in our responsibility, when such a relationship exists as that which subsists between Christ and the Church. There is no need of proofs and analogies to demonstrate that the

Church is responsible if she exists. Is it needful to prove the responsibility of a woman towards her husband? What, indeed, would one say of the wife who raised such a question (and towards such a husband), and who, when one had forced oneself (spite of one's shame to be obliged to do such a thing) to recall to her her duty, spoke of the responsibility as something vague and uncertain? Is responsibility a mode.-of thought? Is not responsibility the very basis of all morality, and is it not, along with grace, also that of even every doctrine which has to do with the relationships of God with man? If it be said-" Yes, individual responsibility, every one recognizes and insists upon that." If the corporate responsibility in which each individual is involved, is that which is meant, it is well; but let care be taken lest we use this and such equivocal expressions from a desire to avoid that responsibility which refers to the state of the Church, which ought to glorify the Lord as such, according to the position in which God has placed it and its duty towards God in such position. Now I believe that to insist upon this at the present time, is the subject the most important and necessary which there can be for the Christian, and the most affecting for those who love Christ. It is a subject which brings with it consequences of the most solemn nature; I earnestly beseech my readers to pay attention to it; I speak of a testimony on the part of God. Time will show if I am mistaken, or if the testimony be of God. If it be, the culpability of those who oppose the truth on this point is in proportion to the blessing which there is in. the relationship of which that truth speaks-to its claim upon the soul. To withdraw the heart and conscience from under the influence of a relationship founded upon grace the most precious and astonishing-a relationship which should bear sway and mold every other, which it does not destroy, especially since that relationship is one known to faith only in such sort, that to enfeeble faith is to enfeeble the perception of this relation, and to call in question the responsibility which flows thence. I hold, I say, that it would hard to designate such an attempt by an epithet too strong.

But the doctrines of the presence of the Holy Spirit here below, in. the Church, and of the return of Christ, are identified with its unity upon earth, with the position of Bride, or rather of her who here below is espoused to be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ, and with the desire of his coming, which detaches us from all that is not of Him, and attaches us entirely, exclusively, to Himself.

It is easy to understand how those who are in national establishments feel themselves troubled by such a truth; they have quite another sort of unity, and with them division is that which separates from what is really union with the world, and subjection to another than Christ. That dissenters-who, faithful in separating from that which is contrary to the precepts of the gospel, have made Churches, though they have never apprehended, but contrariwise have rejected, the idea of the Church upon earth- should be opposed to it, this also is intelligible enough; but it ought not to enfeeble the power of these two great truths upon our hearts, nor alienate us from them. Division in the latter case, is sometimes in appearance less reasonable, because the evil among them is less gross than elsewhere, but they have not accepted, and still do refuse to accept these truths. They have no influence upon their manner of acting. That there should be patience there can be no doubt; but that these two immense truths should not produce effects, that they should leave those who oppose them in tranquility-will never be the case. It is well for brethren, and even for those who oppose, to understand what really is in question. Hitherto the unity and the responsibility of the Church have been denied; the return of Christ has had no practical effect upon the opponents of these doctrines; scarcely are they even now recognized as being strongly

probable-which is not such a conviction as can furnish a motive for conduct; while all the affections of the Church ought to be formed upon, and her walk regulated by these doctrines while awaiting Christ's return.

I find two things presented in the word as the great means of judging of the state of the people of God:-1st. The comparing it with the state in which God placed them at the first. 2nd. With the glory of Christ who is about to return. Compare Isa. 5 for the first, and 6 for the second,)

The two truths with which this question connects itself are: the return of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church; for the Holy Spirit is come down to earth, and this it is which gives to the.. Church its unity and corporate responsibility upon earth. It is with the, Church as with a human body, all the component elements of which are said to be entirely renewed in a very short period of time; yet the individual remains the same man: the spirit of man which is in him attaches vitally to itself, and appropriates successively new heterogeneous elements, and the unity and the person changes not.

There are three great truths which are connected with Christ, the center of all truth, or, if you please, three different positions, in which he is seen. Dead and risen;-then in heaven (with this corresponds, as its proof, the presence of the Holy Spirit upon earth, John 16); and lastly, returned to earth. Dead and risen-thus is the Church, his body, justified, risen with him. Such is the doctrine of justification; and although it is evidently true as to the whole Church, considered as a body, yet in its application day by day, and for each conscience, it is an individual matter for each. The Holy Spirit dwells, as the seal of this doctrine, in the body of the individual as in a temple. Then, in heaven Jesus is hid in God, yet crowned with honor and glory: the doctrine which thence flows, is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church upon earth, in his body; of the Holy Spirit who gives to this body its unity, and makes the terms " body of Christ. Bride of Christ-Church of Christ"-to be applicable to those who, upon earth, are united to Him who is in heaven, and who thus form a unity upon earth; the dead in Christ being for the moment out of sight. If this is understood (for one may be converted and not understand it),, one desires, as bride of Christ, the return of the Bridegroom. Justification is connected with his death and resurrection; for 'we know that his work has been accepted on high. The unity of the Church, and her waiting for Christ as is becoming for a faithful bride, this it is which is connected with the glory of Christ on high, and the presence of the Holy Spirit down here. These are the two great truths which have been specially put forward, which,, as I believe, God himself has put forward at the present moment, and which have produced so much disquietude' in those who desire to remain without the sphere of their influence-whether in the national churches or in dissent.

Having shown of how solemn a nature the subject before us is, let us now turn to Rom. 11 This chapter contains, it is true, the proof of only one of the points involved in the subject; so that, if it is lacking in evidence, 'or if it were entirely left aside, still the great truth, to wit, our position before God, would in no wise be changed. Yet the passage is important, and the making of its meaning clear is interesting to the believer.

And first, let me notice a palpably erroneous view held by some. The words, "Hath God rejected his people?" they would have to be a question-the reply to which is, " God has rejected Israel as a nation, but not as individuals.; as Paul was witness."

Now that this view is entirely wide of the thought of the Apostle and of the Holy Spirit it clear; for how could the Church have entertained the question, if Israel had been rejected as individuals, since the Church was composed in great measure of Israelites. The supposed answer to the Apostle's question is absurd. For what answer to the question " Hath God rejected his people?" is there in, " Israel was rejected as nation and not as individuals?" If Israel was rejected as a nation, and not as individuals, yet the rejection of the people was equally sure. It was a palpable fact that individuals were received; but the Apostle applies it in proof that the people were not rejected, a question which the substitution of the Church raised. He cites his own case, not to show that he had been received as an individual, but in proof of the interest he took in his nation; he was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; now what is the meaning of being of the tribe of Benjamin, if it is not the people, as people, whom God still loves? God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. What people? The people of whom He speaks in ver. 1-Israel! One cannot doubt it when one reads the end of the tenth chapter; and I ask, if the question was about the election of individuals, what ground could there be for proposing the question whether the people of God were rejected because the Church was called? No! but in that God had reserved an election from among the people of Israel, set aside for the moment on account of its sin, He had given proof that He still thought of that people; as the case of the seven thousand in the days of Elijah also showed; moreover, the verses 26-29 leave doubt upon the subject; for he affirms, while speaking of the future reception of Israel, that, although, as to the gospel, they are enemies for the sake of the Gentiles, as to election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Who would say that they who are enemies as to the gospel, yet loved for the fathers' sakes, and who thus present the proof that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, are accepted as individuals? Could any one say that this is a proof the people is rejected as a nation, though not as individuals? Would any one say that the election of individuals as to the Church is for the fathers' sakes.

I assert then, that the view referred to is altogether wide of what was in the mind of the Apostle; and attributes to him a thought which the whole chapter contradicts, and which appears altogether erroneous, if one does but take the trouble to read it; for it is clear that Israel, loved for the fathers' sakes, yet enemies as to the gospel, is not Israel loved as individuals, but quite the contrary. Paul shows that the momentary rejection of the nation was by no means God's definitively rejecting his people; that they were yet beloved for the fathers' sakes, an elect people, the gifts and calling of God being without repentance, and he proceeds almost to state the very opposite of the view referred to; for he says, " If some of the branches were broken off;" that is, he forces himself to restrict the breaking off-to some 'branches. I conclude, then, that this view transgresses against the basis of the whole meaning of the chapter, and is entirely wide of that about which the Apostle speaks.

Some would make verse 13, and those which follow, individual warning; but they are distinct from that which we find lower down. Verse 13 and what follows are no warning, but doctrine.

Lower down in the chapter, there is a warning; but here also we must take up the subject from an earlier point. That every Christian may well find profit here, I doubt not; but the warning is addressed to us not as brethren, but as being of the Gentiles. My reader should remember, that if there had not been something peculiar, there would have been no need to speak of Gentiles. Nay, one could not have done it. A Christian, once a Jew, needed warning as much as another. The Apostle speaks no longer here of the Church, considered in the principles of her relationship to

Christ; that subject closed with chapter 8. Nothing able to separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; whom He did foreknow He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son: He called them, Jews as well as Gentiles, no matter which, and He justified them, and glorified. He speaks then here of the special administration of the work of the Church upon earth, and in reference to Israel, of its condition and circumstances down here; of its relation with the ancient people of God: he asks if that people had been rejected, and what the consequences of all this for the Gentiles and for the world.

In Jesus Christ, if the question be about Christian position, eternal life, or the Church considered in her essential relationship to Christ, there was neither Jew nor Gentile; the thoughts found in this chapter can THERE have no place. If the question be about the cutting off of an individual for sinful conduct, little matters it whether he be Jew or Gentile; that has nothing to do with it, and on the other hand, there would be no question about grafting in again of the Jews more than of any others, and neither Jews nor others could be grafted in, if God had cut them off in such a manner. And if it were a question about a warning from the Apostle to Christians at Rome, and so to others elsewhere, as being brethren, it would be almost nonsense to say, " And thou, O Gentile, take heed!" Why, thou, O Gentile? Had not Christians, Jews by birth, as much need to take heed? Or could the Spirit of God, in such a warning, have made the distinction, and thus denied the principle of, the Church of God in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile? If the question is about a divine administration upon earth, then God can well make the distinction and develop his ways towards the one and the other; and it is plain that from the commencement of the ninth chapter the Apostle is occupied with and pointedly contrasts the Jews and the Gentiles, presenting us with the administration of the divine ways upon the earth. First declaring his attachment to Israel, he points out an election in the election for the earth, and further, that if God according to his sovereignty had chosen Israel (and such was Israel's boast), He had not renounced His sovereignty; and consequently, He could call the Gentiles if he would. Then he recalls to mind that the prophets had shown that a little remnant only, of Israel, at such an epoch, would be saved, and that a stone of stumbling would be laid in Zion.

Then, chap. 10 (after having anew protested his ardent desires as to the welfare of Israel as such, notwithstanding all its ignorance) he introduces Christ the end of the law, faith, the testimony by preaching, and lastly, Israel provoked to jealousy by a foolish nation; God, found of those who sought him not; and Israel rebellious and gainsaying, God having in vain stretched forth His hands to them. Then he asks, "Is then this people rejected"? God forbid. God loves them still, and has reserved a remnant of them. The Apostle then shows that their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, and the riches of the Gentiles; at the same time he presents their fall to the Gentiles received into the place of the branches cut out, as a warning, lest they also should experience a like fate, and then he declares that Israel as a whole should be again restored when the Deliverer should come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, its unbelief having ceased. Is it not perfectly evident here that the Apostle speaks not to brethren in a Church in the character of brethren? for in such case it imports little whether they be Jews or Gentiles, or rather they would be neither one nor the other; that in short he does not speak to them here simply as being brethren in Christ, but that he treats of the ways of God upon earth in reference to certain classes of persons, as of Jews and Gentiles, reckoned as such before God in the administration of his government and promises here below. It was well timed to introduce this in an epistle addressed to

Christians at Rome (moreover not addressed as a church), capital of the Gentile world, in an epistle which treats of the whole judgment of God in his relations with men, Gentiles, Jews, in Adam, by means of Moses, without law and under law, believers in Christ, possessing the Spirit, objects of all the government of God; which treats in short of the specialties of the consequences of the Gospel with regard to his promises towards the earthly people, and shows how his faithfulness to them could be reconciled with the calling of the Church for the heavens; it may be by a Gospel which declared that there was no difference, for all were sinners, and God rich over all in grace, which, however, left the Church still upon earth, and introduced into the enjoyment of the promises made to Abraham, till then exclusively the lot of the earthly people. This, in fact, needed an explanation; and the Lord, by the Spirit, gave it, in his goodness, at the same time explaining the effect produced upon the world by the temporary rejection of Israel, and warning the Gentiles received into the place of the branches which had been cut out, of the position in which they really were found as such; Gentiles, I say-remark it--and not the Church; that could not be, the elect Jews forming part of it, and they are not warned at all. In the Church for the heavens, that distinction was not known. " But thou, O Gentile," not " but thou, O professor;" but " thou, O Gentile, I speak to thee only." But why does he so speak, if it was only a solemn warning against pride, for the profit of their souls? A converted Jew or a Christian-had not he need of it? The Jew-did not he also stand by faith? This passage is found at the close of a development of the ways of God, contained, as we have just seen, in this epistle: and to make of it a simple warning, is to misapprehend all the thought of God in it, and thus to forget, that when the Church as such is spoken of, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, we are all one in Jesus Christ.

To turn the passage, as some have done, into a warning to Gentile believers really standing by faith, as such-that is to say, the election from among the Gentiles-is really to turn the cutting off of Israel and the wonderful fidelity of God in sparing an election from among that people, into a warning to the election from among the Gentiles, that they should fear to be cut off: which is mere nonsense.

Some may be assisted, by observing that there are two elections spoken of, and not merely one; and that they are contrasted-the election from among the Jews, and the election of the people, as such, beloved for the fathers' sakes, the reader will do well to weigh about what this apostle speaks; and also the importance of the subject, the effect of the ways of God in cutting off Israel and introducing the gospel-upon the world-upon the professing people of God-and upon believers. Also that " standing by faith," "grafted into the olive," and " in the goodness of God" are not expressions signifying one and the same thing. They may here apply in a general way to the same persons, though even this is not, accurately speaking, true; but they do not signify the same thing. The Jews who 'believed, for instance, were indeed in the goodness of God, according to the order of things introduced by Christ; but they were not grafted into the good olive-tree in the sense in which this is said of the Gentile. He speaks of their olive-tree, which is another proof that he speaks of the administration of things here below, and not of salvation no of the cutting off in the simple sense of loss of salvation. If the question were about the promises of life eternal in Christ risen, in contrast with the death of the soul, there would be no difference; it would be no more their olive-tree than that of the Gentiles. "Goodness unto thee" is not the state in which an individual finds himself, but the relationship in which God presents himself as being towards those who, according to the principles of the economy, are the objects of that goodness. Consequently he

speaks not of goodness towards the Jewish believers, although they were in the same goodness of God as the rest, because the Jews were there as branches by nature, although cut off, for the greater part, this time, for their unbelief. So true is this, that the Apostle speaks of grafting them in again. If it is simply an individual warning, could he that had been cut off (according to Heb. 6 which may contain an allusion to the fate of this dispensation) be grafted in again? And if the Apostle speaks of individuals only, why says he that they can be grafted in again. Is it not evident that he speaks of Jews as Jews, and that this would be accomplished if the Jews were admitted to the enjoyment of the promises at the end of the ages, although the Apostle says they (that is to say, of quite other individuals than those of that day, but yet Jews) can be grafted in again? Is it not further evident that although they partake not in the enjoyment of the heavenly blessings, that would still be true, because they will be upon their own olive-tree, enjoying the promises made to Abraham? They will be grafted therein again.

Moreover, although an individual stands by faith when he believes, such nevertheless is not all the Apostle means; it is the principle upon which he stands, and not the possession of the thing which is in question. He who possesses faith will never be cut off. In the Epistle to the Galatians, it is said, " After that faith came," that is, after the establishment of that principle of relationship with God, in place of law. Now we stand by faith, that is the principle of our relationship, the goodness of God exercises itself towards those who find themselves there. -I do not see that it is said that the grafting in is by real faith of the heart, although there be naught solid save that which is such. The sixth of Hebrews supposes the participation of all the privileges of the Christian economy without real faith of the heart, and without fruit being borne to God, and I know not who would say that Simon the magician was not grafted in, although so soon cut off. It may be said, He believed; yes. Yet just as all the professors of to-day believe, that is to say, like the Christian world. In short, I find here in the eleventh chapter, the principles of the administration of the economy, and not the state of individuals, although these principles, doubtless, are realized in the individuals who really believe in the Gospel. He speaks not of faithful Gentiles, save in the sense in which one can call professors "faithful."

The cutting off of Israel has been the reconciliation of the world. All the baptized are under the responsibility, in general, of the privileges of the economy, and will be judged accordingly; believers find their enjoyment therein, according to their faith. I add, that it is a great error to suppose that the world can lose nothing. It is true that the world will enjoy other advantages during the Millennium, far greater it may be; but the world now has the enjoyment of great advantages, which will be taken from it when the judgment takes place-when the Master of the house rises up and shuts-to the door. If, by an act of Divine judgment, the gospel can no longer be preached in any country, that country has lost a privilege; so it will be with the world. The world has not been grafted in, but the world has been placed in a new relationship towards God. Farther on, I will return to this point; in the meanwhile, I will cite a remarkable passage which applies to this subject (Luke 2:32)-Christ has been a light to lighten the Gentiles, that is, that they should be brought to light (or, literally, for the revelation of the Gentiles). They were before so entirely in obscurity, that they were as if not in existence in the sight of God, not as to the judgment of the secrets of the heart, but as to the government of the world on the part of God. " The times of this ignorance," says the apostle (Acts 17), " God winked at; but now He calls all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man

whom He hath ordained; whereof He has given a testimony, worthy of the faith of all, in raising Him from the dead." Is not this to change the position of the world before God? And if God has proposed to use His church as an instrument for this, and that she has failed, that will bring with it its result, even as to the world in reference to the government of God, although each one shall bear his own burden as to the eternal judgment (Comp. Ezek. 33).

That God will be justified, when He shall judge and condemn the world, I cannot doubt; that He will send the gospel of the kingdom at the end, the church having failed in its duty, I believe; but this changes naught as to that which God has revealed concerning His relationship to the world, as we have seen in Acts 17:30,31.

It is the government of God which is the subject of these chapters in the epistle to the Romans, and not the salvation of the individual, properly so called. In the second chapter, the apostle speaks of that of perishing without law, of being judged by the law, etc.; but to say that a sovereign disposition by God imposes no responsibility upon those to whom it is not known, is to misconceive the whole subject, although such a thought may have to the natural heart an air of great justice. Men sometimes find themselves, without excuse, under the effect of a judgment of God, occasioned by the fault of their fathers, themselves persevering in the moral consequences of the fault, though they may not have individually committed the very fault itself. See, for example, the judgment of the Spirit upon the state of the Gentiles (Rom. 1)-Having known God, they glorified Him not as God, etc. The Gentiles, of whom he speaks, had never known Him; their fathers, Noah, etc., had known Him. If fresh light came which made manifest that state, they are held responsible to quit it according to that light, and guilty, also, according to the light, of all which they do as individuals afterward; but there is then another thing: the light enables us, I say us, to see where they are who are without the light which we enjoy, and they are without excuse. On the other hand, if great privileges have been granted to a people, and they have lost the knowledge thereof, they will yet be responsible (see what Josiah said when he found the book of the law), because, according to the government of God, one is responsible according to the place in which one is found, and not according to our capability of fulfilling it. If it be not to the world that Paul addressed himself; that is not the question. Even if it were true that Paul spake only to believers, still, equally, since it is to a special class of believers which he supposes (a distinction which is impossible, if the question were about the fundamental idea of the church), he can speak to that class under a peculiar aspect, all the while that he calls them brethren (and he does that), and gives them instructions upon all that which concerned the subject on which he treats, and that is what he does. He can, at the same time, include other persons who are found in the same position without true faith, and he suggests this; he can also speak of the consequences of his doctrine on the world, as also he does. To suppose, as some have, that because he speaks to brethren he speaks only of brethren, and concerning those that are really such, seems futile; and one can see, indeed, that to verse 25 he reasons in an abstract manner, according to the train of thought which the Spirit suggests to him; and having explained all the consequences of the ways of God, using the expression, "I say, then," he then declares, addressing himself to his brethren, that he does so because he would not have them ignorant of this mystery. But he had previously developed the great principles and thought of God as to the mystery, its effect upon the world, upon the Gentiles, etc. To me it is evident, that as to the practical bearing and application of these words-"you Gentiles," though all Gentiles be liable to their application, those who are referred to in the words

of Simeon (Luke 2) are the only ones who are the object of them; the rest, as the inhabitants of Central Africa, for instance, exist not for the application of the reasoning of God in this chapter. When God will apply them so, He will take care, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, that all the Gentiles should be the objects of the judgment which will show the justice of his government; but we cannot exactly address to them these warnings; we should be right in applying to them the doctrine which Paul applies (Acts 17); there he preaches to the world, here he speaks to professor& It is not exactly the inhabitants of the countries in which the gospel has been preached who are the Gentiles " brought to light," only the light is come there to bring them into light; but it is the countries of the baptized, where Christianity is professed. In theory, all the Gentiles have been brought into light. God takes knowledge of it. It is therefore the apostle can say to the Colossians-" The gospel is come into all the world, and brings forth fruit; but as to the position of responsibility as a body, that is realized there where they have been Christianized.

To me it is clear enough, that if the faith spoken of were the faith of an individual, there could be no cutting off; but the apostle points out the principle upon which the standing is, and that by which a falling may take place, in order to show that, as the Jews, enjoying certain privileges, lost them through unbelief, a similar thing would befall the Gentiles, as to their privileges, if they should be found in the same position of unbelief; the Apostle speaks not of those " standing by faith" in order to show that those who were would be cut off; but to show the principle upon which they stood, and that if, on the contrary, that failed, they would be cut off. Now, as to a true believer that could not ever be; but for him who was in the enjoyment of privileges, who was in the goodness of God as to his position, but who had not faith, the same thing which had happened to the Jews in similar circumstances might happen to him. It is in such persons that these warnings ever find their fulfillment.

I repeat, the question is not about reception but about cutting off; there are three cases distinct, and in a measure contrasted, which are involved in three questions, and which we must distinguish in speaking of them: the World, Christendom or profession, and Believers. In repeating that man is responsible for the privileges he enjoys, I add to Acts 17 and Col. 1:6; 1 Tim. 2:5-7 (an abstraction well-known to the Apostle) and John 1:11 and 15. He was in the world, but the world knew him not-the light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. In order to confirm the principle, I would press also what I have said, that the world, the Gentiles, are placed in a new relationship toward God, and that there are privileges for which the Gentiles will be held responsible, as the Jews have been for theirs. They who have enjoyed these privileges will be beaten with many stripes, if they have not profited from them, whilst they who professed them not will be punished with few stripes. I speak of the world as in a new relationship to God, of the Gentiles who enjoy certain privileges, and of those who have not had that advantage. Can it be denied that the world or any given part is responsible for the privileges which it possesses? I do not speak now of the responsibility of those called of God, but of a universal principle, of any privilege men may enjoy, and even when the called are spoken of, the question would not be of those "standing by faith" in the sense of true believers. Is not the Christian professing body called? This is the essential point at issue; only to say more of it here would be needful to enter upon the second subject proposed. Further, it is no question about Gentiles who have had the gospel preached to them, but about that which is called the Church of baptized Gentiles, and consequently the conduct of true Christians from the commencement.

In fine, this is the substance of the eleventh chapter Up to the end of chap. 8 the Apostle sets forth the state of man, whether Jew or Gentile; the efficacy of the blood and the power of the resurrection of Christ, as well as the sweet and precious privileges of which the believer is rendered partaker in Christ, and he shows us the source and security of these privileges, God being for us and we partaking of these privileges, not only according to the eternal counsel of love, but according to the power of the eternal life, which was in Christ before the foundation of the world, and which has been communicated to us. After this full opening out of truth, the thought of Israel suggesting itself immediately to his heart, he turns to the administration of the promises here below; then he explains, in chaps. 9 and 10 that what seemed inexplicable in the substitution of the church for Israel was in perfect accordance with all that God has said and done, with His imperscriptible rights on which depended the title of Israel itself; that, moreover, what had just come to pass had been predicted; that they had stumbled upon the stone of stumbling. He asks-Has God; then, rejected his people? God forbid I, says he, am a Jew; but there is, as there was of old, an election in the midst of this very people, and that which God now does, does but put a little more forward his perfect ways and his unfailing grace. For have they stumbled that they should fall? By no means! It is but a means of introducing the Gentiles as such into the enjoyment of the promises, and thus, as he says, to excite them to jealousy (to excite, note, those who are, says he, of my flesh); for that rejection has placed God in relationship with the world, and caused the wild olive, the Gentile, to be grafted into the heritage of promise in the midst of the branches which, by nature, were of the good olive; speaking here evidently of the administration of the promises here below, for they were by nature children of wrath even as others. He calls even the unbelievers branches according to nature; but these having been cut off on account of their unbelief, there had been grafted in the midst of the Jewish believers (these also inheriting the promises equally according to the election of grace) some new branches, taken out of the wild olive, in order that they might also enjoy the promises; but let them take heed, even these branches, to recognize the grace which grafted them in. Otherwise, according to the same perfect administration of the promises here below, God could cast them off in like manner. And on the other hand, the Jews abandoning their unbelief would be grafted in again. The Gentile had reason to fear; he stands by faith; if faith fails, certainly he is no better than a Jew. The Apostle not only shows what there is to be feared, which is addressed to the conscience, and consequently, in that sense, in order that one may apply it individually; but after that, he comes to something positive. Such, then, is the thought of God; Israel is blinded for the moment, in part, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and then Israel, as a whole, as a nation, shall be saved. God will not repent of His gifts and calling. Enemies, for the Gentiles' sake, as to the gospel,-they are yet beloved for the fathers' sakes. One can see the characteristic manner in which the Gentile is taken; for he is called the wild olive: "Thou wild olive." Also he, the Gentile, is placed upon the root, not upon the trunk, nor upon the branches. He became neither Jew, nor of Israel; and for this reason, as it seems to me, he says, Thou, O Gentile, in the singular, because the question was, as to the Gentile, one of principle. As to the Jew, it was an accomplished fact that the branches had been cut off: the Church, properly so called, regarded as the corporate body of believers, could not be; and it is thus that the Apostle then presented them; and it is thus also what they really were; and the threat was so much the more inapplicable under this point of view, because there were Jews as well as Gentiles, and as to the latter it was the election from among the Gentiles which had just been brought in. In that point of view, then, I could not speak of cutting off. The election from

among the Jews,-an idea found, indeed, it is true, in the prophets, but new in the history of the people, remained upon the trunk, and the threat of cutting off could not be addressed to the election newly grafted in, except as to the individual, as being a Gentile, if he persevered not in that position. The explanation of the mystery is, that there was a partial blinding of Israel until the election from among the Gentiles should prove their real fullness; for the Church began with a remnant. Israel ended with the separation of a remnant; but that fullness once accomplished, that which was not of faith among the Gentiles, which might be found there, would be cut off.

Paul was entrusted with the revelation of the Church in its highest character of union with Christ and in its unity. The subject on which we have spoken, this eleventh chapter, was with him an episode; whilst with Peter, this subject was his ministry; he had the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and it is this which constitutes the difference in ministry of these two blessed servants of God. If their discourses and writings are studied, this will soon be seen; we need only compare Acts 3:25 and Gal. 3:16.

If I have spoken of responsibility in connection with the church, it is because the activity of the love of God, the ministry of reconciliation was entrusted to her; and the application of this doctrine of responsibility to her is practical, and goes home to our consciences; but that changes nothing in the government of God, as we have already seen in the word.

It must be borne in mind what the mystery revealed, to Paul was. It was not merely the blessing of the Gentiles; the blessing of all the families upon the earth, that had not been at all concealed. The hidden mystery was, that they, Jews and Gentiles, should be one body in Christ, enjoying spiritual blessings in heavenly places, co-heirs with Christ. This can easily be seen in the perusal of Eph. 3, compared with Col. 1:26,27, where it is Christ not come in displayed glory, but dwelling in them, the hope of glory, that is, of heavenly glory. But God was in Christ here below, in the anointed One, according- to the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. When God acted according to law, He imputed iniquity. As to the Gentiles, he passed by the times of ignorance, sin not being imputed where there was no law (Acts 17, Rom. 5) But God was in Christ reconciling the world; such was one chief thing which He was doing in Christ; a second was, not imputing their sins; a third, committing the ministry of reconciliation to others, when the Savior must needs return up on high, after having been made sin for us.

The word of God says, that the rejection of the Jews was the reconciliation of the world. The question is, not whether those who heard the gospel were responsible for what they heard, but what is the responsibility of Christendom, and of true Christians, who find themselves therein. That concerns us; and this it is which is too often a subject carefully avoided.

To suppose, as a general principle, that a body can-not exist as such, because there are yet other persons to be grafted into it, is mere self-deception. The Apostle calls the assembly a body; that was the principle of the institution; nevertheless, it was augmented every day by means of the joints and bands which minister nourishment (Eph. 4). The Apostle had no idea that a body could not increase, and finally arrive at the point that the fullness of the Gentiles should be come in. An army can recruit itself, and be always the army. I do not say that the Gentiles were grafted in by the act of an altogether exterior dispensation. That which God had established pure, Satan, availing himself of the sleep of man, had spoiled. Those who had been grafted in did not abide faithful; Christendom is the result, and we must not confound all this with the reconciliation of the

world, which is only in a special manner connected with it. Let me also recall to mind, that in setting up the kingdom of heaven, the sower recognized no other field than the world; it may be, all was not sown; but it is the object of his attention, the field of his toil, and the scene of his judgments. The Lord speaks of it as a whole. That may be an abstraction: but it is the abstraction of the Spirit of God, received and understood by those who are spiritual; for the Spirit of God makes His thoughts to enter into those who are humble of heart; he conceals these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes.

Some find it is a contradiction, to make, on the one hand, of these ways of God in the world, that with which the failure of the dispensation is connected; and on the other hand, to attach it to the failure of the Church erroneously taken, as- an existing body of Christ. But the wisdom of man is not worth much. I speak thus of a body of Christ, because in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the Spirit of God speaks of a body upon earth, increasing by that which joints and bands administer; and because I find in Jude also the point of departure, from which we come to a state which brings the judgments of God upon the wicked and rebellious, to be in this, that some have glided in among the children of God. It is of no use to question their responsibility-the fact is there. The ways of God in the world, form the point of departure in Matt. 13, and in Jude it is found in persons who have crept in among the faithful. One may consider the ways of God in the field of the sower, or one may consider, in a more detailed manner, and, so to speak, closer to the eye, the responsibility and the faults of those who were sown by the Lord in the field; the two things are equally true and important in their several places, instead of being contradictory.

I have but one word to say, in passing, upon the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church, as to the place each may have in this responsibility. If those who compose the Church and the Kingdom were the same persons, and that they have sinned-it, matters little whether they sinned as bearing the character of. the Kingdom or of the Church; they have brought in all the disorder. Christians, at least, are culpable, even if the Church be not; and if the churches, and not the Church, as some allege, still true Christians, in the churches, are culpable. Thus, it is true Christians who were responsible for these things; and that is the great question for us-if there be unity and mutual responsibility in the Church, the true body of Christ, which is composed of true Christians. True Christians allowed persons that were not so, and did not give evidence of being so, to creep in; thus was their failure; and by virtue of the unity of the body, and the mutual responsibility of its members, the body and its members are all involved in the blame of this.

There are, in the word of God, certain truths connected with the Kingdom, about which there is much confusion of thought in the minds of many. Some of these are points of great interest, which have been but slightly examined, and which are yet capable of affording real profit, if followed out.

For myself, I have learned much, while searching the Scriptures, on the subject of the kingdom of heaven. I find that the true idea presented in this expression, is-the reign of the heavens in the person of the Son of man. John the Baptist put this forward in his testimony as " at hand." The Lord did the same; yet still in the character of prophet. All this being rejected, it is the violent only who take it by force; so that it was not set up, and the Lord could say (though Himself actually present) " Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10:23). After that rejection was made manifest, and the Lord had pronounced judgment upon Israel, in the close of chap. 12, the kingdom is preached as a mystery. After this it is established in

mystery, but administered by Peter, who had the keys of it, when the king was ascended up into heaven; and, lastly, it will be made good, according to the power of its king, when Satan will be driven out of the heavenly places, and when Christ will receive the kingdom, and establish blessedness on the earth thereby.

Such is the summary of that which I have found, and present to my brethren as such. The Church, such as it is presented by Paul, does not come into mention here; in his writings it is presented as the body, the Bride of Christ, identified with Him in life, as He is in heaven, in His nature, position, and glory. The administration of the kingdom is quite another thought. Paul may speak of the gathering together of the saints here below, as a body, as the Bride, etc., because such was the extent of their privilege; of this we will speak shortly; but the thought which he attaches to the Church, is its identification with Christ. At the death of Stephen, the administration, by the Spirit, of the kingdom of which Peter had the keys, was rejected at Jerusalem, as the announcement of the kingdom, in the testimony both of John the Baptist and of the Son of man, had already been. From that time it ceased to be presented to the Jews as a people. Up to that time, the Holy Spirit acted upon the ground of the intercession of Jesus upon the cross in their favor (comp. Luke 23:34, and Acts 3:17) and as if the debt of ten thousand talents, incurred by the death of Jesus, had been remitted. The love of God still delayed to withdraw; and it is only in the 28th of Acts, that He renounces his efforts towards that people, over the smallest remnant of which He ceased not to hover. Nevertheless, the Jews, ever setting themselves in opposition to the truth preached by Paul, and withstanding the preaching to the Gentiles according to the grace of God, filled up the measure of their sin, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost: they were sold, with all that they possessed until payment should be made. From that point of time, the Gentiles are the subject of divine history. The Gentiles appear in the foreground, either as rejecting from attachment to their idols, or as receiving the testimony of grace which was proposed to them. Jerusalem, trodden under foot by them, entirely disappears from the scene; and the iniquity and conduct of the Gentiles, such as it was, becomes the object of the judgment and actions of God; meanwhile, the Jews are as if buried (see Psa. 26 Ezek. 36) yet preserved, even as the Gentiles had previously been, as if not in being. It is evident that the Gentiles professing Christianity, and the Gentiles of the four monarchies, subjected to the Beast, are the special, though not sole, objects of the ways of God, in His government; but it is on the occasion of the destruction and judgment of these in particular, that the Son of man will establish his kingdom in power, although He will subject and judge all the others afterward. Of this, the prophecies of the Old and New Testament speak plainly enough.

I have now a remark to make with regard to a view (common enough) as to the corruption of the kingdom. It is connected with a system which appears to me altogether inadmissible--a system which tends to confound Babylon and the Church together, and the kingdom with both.

I admit that Babylon took for a time the form of Christianity; but this is not, in my judgment, its sole or its exclusive form. Perhaps in the sixteenth century the reformers might be justified in speaking of it thus, because it was then the form that it took; but I think that there are other elements, and other principles in Babylon. That is not the leading idea of Babylon in Scripture, although that might be an important element of it. But, alas! it is but too true that the Church, during the absence of Christ, might be unfaithful in her conduct, though espoused to Christ, but placed under responsibility until the marriage of the Lamb. If any one cannot reconcile the thought of

responsibility here below with the accomplishment of the promises of God on high, he has much yet to learn as to the ways of God in reference to man; for the same thing is true of every Christian: evil is wrought before the Church or the Christian is on high come to perfection. Christ does not therefore cease to be the future Husband of the Church; and it is precisely when one ceases to recognize that relationship of bride of Christ, that the evil begins. Hence we have not to quit the Church, but the Church has to purify herself, because it ceases not to be the Church because it has ceased to be faithful. But there is no question about purifying Babylon, it will be destroyed. If saints find themselves there, they must come out of it. Again, if it is the kingdom they cannot come out of it. There is in this evidently often much confusion of mind. There can be no question about coming out of the Church. Nor again is Babylon in the Church, although one might, in a sense, speak of the Church in Babylon. If any one says that in its captivity the members of the Church are in Babylon, then it is plain that the members must come out. The idea that the Church may have been unfaithful, is quite intelligible, but that Christ should be king of Babylon is unintelligible. I admit that we may have to show that the Church has been unfaithful, if the heart feels it not, but in that there is nothing unintelligible, nothing contradictory; whilst the system which makes Christ king of Babylon is mere nonsense.

I must here, to make all this clear, briefly return to one point. If it be said, the practical sense in which the Scriptures speak to us of the Church upon earth, is rather the Church as it appears to man, than that which in the sight of God is the Church-I say, be it so: but then what door is opened here for uncertainty, after that which has occurred in the history of Christianity. But I ask, "Appears to whom?" To Mahomedans, to the Heathen, it is Christendom which appears to be the Church. If any one says that is not it, but the judgment must be of spiritual persons-I say, "Stop a moment! Do you deny that the Church was set up as a testimony to the world, that it ought to have been the epistle of Christ, and also ONE in order that the world might believe. That then which to the world appears to be the Church, has then a very great importance in the sight of God. He is jealous of the glory of His Son; and if that which bears His name upon earth, that which appears to be the Church in the sight of the heathen world, dishonors Him and belies all that He is, instead of preaching Him, and that this is no where remedied, it is a fact of the most solemn moment in respect of that which appears to be the Church, and which presents the name of the Son to the world in the sight of God. And such in the sight of God in the world is the fact; that which appears to be the Church is an abomination, is not the Church; it is, if you will, the work of the enemy; nevertheless it is the testimony rendered to the Son of God. Some will not have it that that which presents itself thus should be called the Church. It is quite right to undeceive men's minds upon that point, I admit it fully; yet in the sense which is perhaps the most important, and certainly the most important as to judgment, and the judgment of God, such it is which appears to be the Church. God may, for the sake of some righteous, still spare, at least until the tares be ripe: but the vintage of God will not be of the fruits of his grace; it is the winepress of his wrath.

But let us consider now the judgment of the spiritual, which has been appealed to as to what appears to be the Church. Whom shall I consult? Christians in national establishments? What appears to the most enlightened among them to be the Church? They will tell me that the Epistle to the Corinthians is a proof that dissenters and all of us together are entirely deceived on the subject of the Church. Of dissenters, one class would take it quite in another way from a second, and this second be greatly disconcerted to be identified with the first, as if having one view about

the Church. I believe, indeed, that the remark is perfectly just, that the word of God calls that the Church which appears as the Church; but this it is which causes that now there is nothing in exterior appearance which corresponds to that which is inward, to the true Church, to the assembly of the elect. We can use the word Church according to that which appears as being the Church, and there will be nothing which is accurately true, because, alas the Church is not at all manifest, unless we call that the Church, of which an unbeliever could say that its annals were the annals of Hell; which I, at least, would avoid doing: yet this appeal to the spiritual shows us where we are in this respect; and the children of God, have they no burden upon their hearts, on account of this? No, I will not, say upon their consciences; I will make no appeal on this subject to the conscience. " Where is the flock that was given thee, saith the Lord, thy beautiful flock"- (See Jer. 13.20, 21.) Are the Christian flock the flock of God now? Is it less precious to him? Will the Bride of Christ have no concern for the glory of her Bridegroom?

But can one-has one reason to speak thus when speaking of a body upon earth, or when we say this pretended body? for many deny one body on the earth jointly responsible. This is an important point as to responsibility. Can we speak of responsibility? First, let us bear in mind that there is such a thing as a unity reacting through all ages-the unity of a body involved down here in the results of its responsibility as a whole in all times. This is evidently of all importance. Farther, in the practical sense, the Word of God calls that the Church, which appears as such in the sight of man, to be so. I take the ground taken by others, and admit it as valid. We can speak then, with the Word as our warrant, of the church in this sense, admitting, at the same time, that there may be therein hypocrites who will never be in heaven; still the passages I have already cited speak distinctly of the Church upon earth. Timothy had need to know how to conduct himself in the Church of the living God. The Lord added to the Church-The Lord " hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12). He gave them as joints and bands, which might serve for the edification of the body " until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" and by their means the body receives from the Head its increase (Eph. 4). An effort is sometimes made to invalidate the force of these express declarations of the Word by means of a comparison. The Church is spoken of, it is said, as detachments of an army, of which one might say, there is the army; but this is not correct. It is an army which recruits itself, but which is not thereby the less constantly, the army as a body. Some think the idea ridiculous of a body to which one adds; but Eph. 4 expressly speaks of a body which increases according to the vigor of each part, so that that which is found fault with is really the idea and expression of the Word itself; and when John said, " The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"- certainly this is not when the church is in heaven with her Bridegroom-was that man of God right? Can one go further than to call the Church that which was upon the earth at the commencement, the Bride of Christ? If any one says-" I do not recognize one body, it is ridiculous; I know no such thing as the church, there is but a pretended church;" with much more reason might he have said-" How, the Bride? it was but a little portion of the Bride!" Nevertheless, the Word of God calls that which was then found upon the earth a body, Church, Bride; and the children of God would do better to speak according to the Word than to follow the reasoning of the human mind, however wise they may seem to be. The inconsistencies of the Word of God are more true than the most palpable deductions made by the intelligence of man, because the Word is truth, and has no need of deductions. When we read it

we need faith; but here I admit one thing, viz., that when the Word of God uses these expressions (and this remark has some importance), it speaks always of the privileges and blessings of the Church, because, while placing in that position the mass of living believers, it speaks in view of the final result; but this by no means prevents this glory, in so far as manifested by the Holy Spirit, being confided to these believers, and that Christians should be responsible for it. And here it may be well to strip this word "responsible" of much of the mist with which men like to envelop it. It has been said, we are not responsible for the acts of our fathers. Let us not forget the unity and one common responsibility of the Church, however. But further, the question is not only about the acts of such or such an individual. I confide my house to some one, forbidding him to admit to it any save my servants; he, a lover of society, in the very act of entering upon the responsibility of this charge, admits all sorts of persons, and the house is thereby altogether injured, and its appearance spoiled. He will say that he is not responsible for their acts, but he is responsible for the state of the house which I entrusted to him. It may be he has wished to prevent others, when they were doing what spoiled the house: this won't satisfy me, my house is spoiled, my confidence has been abused; and he, to whose care I left it, is responsible for that which I entrusted to him. It is very important to seize this thought. The glory of the name of Christ, the results of His victory over Satan and over the effects of his power, such were the blessings trusted as a precious deposit to the church: she was by her very position the witness of this. You are the letter of Christ, says the Apostle; not the letters, but the letter. There is no need of discussing the particular acts of which the Church may have been guilty; she ought to have guarded that which was committed to her. She was the pillar and ground of the truth; in a word, the glory of Christ was confided to her here below. Has she been faithful?

Here I must say a word on the subject of responsibility, and on the difference of that responsibility according as it is viewed in connection with eternal judgment, or with the government of God here below. I say, we inherit the acts of sin of those who went before us, and also, that we are responsible for the state in which we find ourselves. I know, indeed, that man would not that we should have responsibility as to an evil which existed before we were born. It is true as to the final judgment of the individual, each shall bear his own burden; but the government of God in the world does not proceed thus. I will explain myself on this, because it is important that all Christians should understand it. That each is individually responsible for his conduct, and that each shall give an account of himself to God, is a principle upon this subject generally recognized, and I need not enlarge upon it. "Each of us," says the apostle, "shall give account for himself to God" (Rom. 14:12) - "Each shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5) - "God will render to each according to his works," etc. (Rom. 2:6, 16,); but that is not the government of God in the world. In this God acts often towards masses, on the general result which the whole presents in His sight, and even in the sight of the world, if it is His people who should render a testimony for Him; for without this God would be identified with the evil, and His very character would be compromised. He can sustain while chastening; but, as He said of Israel, the nations shall know that Israel is gone into captivity, because of their sins. Sometimes the sin of a chief person, who draws others after him, but who himself is the most culpable, brings judgment upon his posterity and upon his people. "Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal" (2 Kings, 23, 26). On the other hand, one sees the world suffering the consequences of the sins of their fathers; the heathen are living witnesses of it. God gave them up to a reprobate mind

(Rom. 1:27). Thus we may easily see that we ought accurately to distinguish between the eternal judgment of God and His judicial government of the world; for in reference to His eternal judgment, it is said of the Gentiles-" those who have sinned without law shall perish without law.... in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:12, 16)-the gospel which Paul preached. As to the government of the world, it is said, as to the same Gentiles, "The times of this ignorance God winked at;" for, in truth, sin is not reckoned where there is no law. Nevertheless, death and sin reigned. Here man inherited the guilt of his fathers. While in present government they were not held responsible for their own acts; God passed all by. They were so, indeed, as to eternity, according to the light they had neglected. When God puts Himself in relationship with any people, and places a testimony in the midst of them, in such sort that the light of the testimony is cast upon the sin they commit, and in which they continue to walk in spite of the testimony, then God brings, according to His government here below, judgment of all that sin upon the generation which fills up the measure of the evil, so that there is no more room for patience. As witnesses of this, see the Jews who rejected Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit: all the blood which had been shed since the blood of righteous Abel had to be required of that generation. God had not required it before; He had enlightened them by His law, stirred them up by His prophets, warned them by judgments, had made an appeal to their whole moral being by the mission of His Son. The very sins of the fathers ought to have been a warning to their children to avoid the same offenses, because, after the sins of the fathers, their offenses were committed in the light. But they persisted therein, and thus heaped up wrath for the day of judgment; and they had to submit to the consequences of all this, according to the just judgment of God. This in no wise prevents each of their fathers being subject to the judgment of the dead, to the consequences of his own individual sin; but the nation, the system as a whole, the public object of the government of God in the world has been judged. If there were among the faithful those that bemoaned the evil, they were transferred into another system; in like manner, the just of preceding ages will enjoy the effects of their faithfulness in the world to come. And, as a matter of fact, the sin of a son who sins after his father is greater than that of his father, because, if there is light in my heart, as it shines in the system in the midst of which I live, the sight of the sin will act powerfully on my conscience will produce a horror of the sin thus committed in the sight of God, and I shall avoid it, astonished that any one can act thus, as a man does who sees another walk in the mire or fall over a precipice. If it does not act, I am hardening myself against the light, in the midst of which I live; but if I persevere in the sin of my father, I am more culpable than he, in that his sin was a warning to me; my sin is double, is morally augmented by the entire effect which his sin ought to have produced to deter me, that is to say, by the amount of what his sin was in the sight of God; for we suppose the case of those who have light and the testimony of God. And all have it in some measure, which measure is that of the sin's particular amount. My sin is augmented by the very amount of his, although he will be equally responsible for what he has done; also, it is evident that my heart in this case is hardened by reason of the sin of my father, whom I have seen, or whom I ought to have seen, in the light of God granted to me (Ezek. 23:11, 2 Chron. 34:19, etc., Jer. 11.15).

This is what we see of the judgment of God in Israel. Only we may add that God, in his goodness, has constantly renewed His testimony, and that, in His patience, He has sent his prophets, rising up early, as it is said, to send them until there was no remedy (see also Jer. 7); and lastly His own Son. The consequence has been, as we have already said, that all the righteous blood, from Abel

to Zacharias, came upon the generation which filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers in rejecting the last witness of God (Matt. 23:34). We see here sin inherited and the people held, as to the government of God, responsible for the sins of their fathers, for their sins were morally the accumulation of all those that went before, and which God had borne with, according to the patience which they had despised, and of which they availed themselves in order to plunge more deeply into evil (see also Dan. 5:18-23). It is clear that this consideration may augment the sin of an individual; but this prevents not the other great principle of the government of God as to those who bear his name or who enjoy the light He gives, or who are found (in consequence, perhaps, of their own pride and the blinding of Satan), in the position, or pretending to enjoy the position, in which God has placed His own (see, for instance, Jer. 23, Matt. 24:48, etc.)

We may add that the judgment of God is according to the iniquity of the people; He brings upon them their iniquity (comp. Jer. 5:21, and Isa. 6:9, and other passages as 2 Thess. 2:10,11). Now the spirit of God applies this general principle to Babylon in the Revelations. In her is found all the blood which has been shed upon the earth. The judgment of God renders her responsible for all that which has been done from the beginning, and the Apostles and Prophets are called to rejoice at the vengeance God takes upon her.

These Apostles and Prophets had no relationship with her; but the Babylon of the last day will inherit and will be responsible for the evil under which the Apostles suffered. Yet each one shall answer for his own sin committed at the beginning or at the end of the ages, although (as we have already said) the individual sin may be aggravated by the perseverance in the same sin, or may be, on the other hand, less grave from defect of light. That the culpability of Babylon is real, no one who knows and honors God, will call in question.

Such and so clear examples have we of this principle in the government of God, of holding a system responsible for all the evil which has been wrought during its whole existence, and even during the whole existence of that which preceded it, of which it inherited the privileges or greater ones. We inherit the guilt of those who went before us, and we are judged responsible for the whole. As to the individual, he will have to bear the judgment of that which he has done.

I now close: I thought a few words on the Eleventh of Romans, and upon the government of God, distinguishing it from the responsibility of the individual, might aid my brethren; my remarks embrace many points and details which are common difficulties. I hope for a blessing on the development of the subject, and on the thoughts as to the position of the church, the difference between the life of Christ (the eternal life which was with the Father), and the inheritance of promise which he has taken as seed of Abraham, and on the relation of the Church with the Father, on the one hand, and with the administration of his promises on the other. These thoughts are, it seems to me, more important aids to the progress of the children of God, even than the leading subjects which have called them out. Though I am perfectly assured, that if any one come to recognize the unity of the Church upon earth and its responsibility in that unity, that that will make a marked distinction between those, who receive that truth and those who, I will not say, are still ignorant of it, but who reject it. I believe that God is at this time acting upon the Church by these truths; that it is these truths which, in the sight of Christ, bring out the faithfulness of heart which He desires. I am sure that neither nationalism, nor dissent can bear with them; and the more they are discussed, the more do I feel that they are, as to faithfulness, the great truths for the days

in which we live. I do not doubt that those who reject them will still seek to represent them as secondary truths; but all that I see in that is a snare of Satan, from which I hope many souls will be delivered. These truths are connected with the presence of the Holy Spirit upon earth, who gives unity to the body here below. It is because they are truths that the Church can, as espoused to Christ, say to her bridegroom-Come! and he who denies them, denies at the same time the special privileges which link the Church to Christ, as well as the responsibility which flows thence, and to which the heart will adhere, in order not to renounce so precious a tie. Only let those who enjoy these things remember that the task laid upon us in our ministry of love, according to that which is entrusted to us, is to give meat in due season. That is charity-to think not of one's own ideas, but of the needs of the souls we meet with.

Ever guard, brethren beloved, according to this charity, the doctrine which is connected with the cross and resurrection of Jesus-the justification of the believer and of the Church-and seek to awaken the Church from her torpor, by the doctrine of her position, the beloved and only Bride of the Lamb. Take, as banner, this testimony of the Spirit- " The Spirit and the Bride say-Come!" such is our desire, which comes out of the fullness of the heart. Encourage in grace (for this is all in grace) those who hear, but who have not the persuasion of being the Bride of Christ, to come and join their cry to yours and to say with you-Come! And certainly if the heart has tasted the love of Christ in secret, the same Spirit which has made you to taste the joy of that love, will make you turn toward the world, and say, in the consciousness of that joy and of the possession of those living waters, " And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The same Spirit which makes us enjoy Christ and desire His coming, urges us to call others to the same enjoyment. In truth, this verse (Rev. 22:17) is the expression of the position of the Church and of the presence of the Holy Spirit; and it has been left to her as a last testimony, on the part of the Lord, in order to define that position. The thought of the coming of Christ and the persuasion of our obligations to Him, as Bridegroom, give to our souls and to our testimony an energy which naught else could give. He who recognizes the Holy Spirit down here, soul of the unity of the Church, which is the body and Bride of Christ, witness of His glory on high, and consequently ardently desiring His return will not cease on this account (yet ardently), to taste that third great truth which is the foundation of the others:-Christ delivered on account of our transgressions, and raised again from the dead for our justification. On the contrary, he will enjoy it the more, he will understand it the better. But to avail oneself of the last-named truth in order to deny the others, is at least to provoke God to take from us the strength even of that which we desire to retain.

May Christians, then, plainly understand what is in question, viz., the existence, unity, and responsibility of the Church of God, of the Bride of Christ upon earth; and may those who believe these things use them not as a means of judging others, but of encouraging them in grace, as being those who hear, to come and hasten by their sighs the return of the Bridegroom.

As to him who opposes these things, after having heard the cry of the Spirit and of the Bride, whosoever he be, he will bear his own burden.

Sermon on the Mount

John the Baptist having announced the kingdom of heaven as at hand, a kingdom which every Jew expected and knew was to be ushered in with judgment on the wicked and deliverance to the righteous-Jesus, upon the imprisonment of John, began to preach this "Gospel of the kingdom," and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The testimony of Jesus gathers disciples; and in chap. 5. He begins to instruct them in the principles of discipleship.

Mark their position: they were gathered to the person of Jesus, who was born under the Law, and magnified it. "Think not," said He, "that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets," etc.; neither was He taking them whom He was instructing from under the Law; but He tells them that their righteousness must go beyond that of the Pharisees, to enter into the kingdom. Though Himself fulfilling the Law, He came to display graces far beyond the Law; He came in grace to save men's lives; consequently, those who professed to be His disciples, must walk upon His holy, gracious principles.

He was speaking to a people who had departed from righteousness: He sets before them, and recalls them to, a walk of righteousness.

Redemption is not the subject. How they should be justified and accepted, is not brought before them. We learn the value of the atonement for acceptance first, and then how to walk as disciples; but the work was not yet accomplished, that the Holy Spirit could testify of; but Jesus was there in Person, announcing the nearness of the kingdom, and instructing, them in those circumstances and in that position they were then in.

From ver. 3-9, He pronounces seven blessings upon those who possess those inward graces in the soul He enumerates, accompanying each with a suitable and cheering promise.

From ver. 10--12, the disciples are contemplated as suffering reproach and persecution from the world, and a blessing declared upon that position.

In ver. 13 they are declared to be the only savor of the earth to God, and a warning lest they lose this savor.

Ver. 14-16 they are set as a light to the world-this light (i.e. good works) is to be seen by men, and not hid.

From ver. 21, the grace with which they are now to act is contrasted with what the Law commanded: it does not set aside their obedience to the Law, but they must go beyond it.

From ver. 21- 24, gifts and service are not acceptable to the Lord, unless accompanied with brotherly love.

Ver. 25, 26. If a man, through unrighteousness, had made another an adversary, he is exhorted to agree with him while he has the opportunity; for if not, righteous law shall be executed upon him, and he shall not be free till he hath paid the last farthing.

Ver. 27. Purity of heart as well as of act must now be considered.

Ver. 29, 30. Rather than offend or endanger the soul, that which is as dear as a right eye or hand must be sacrificed.

Ver. 31, 32. One sin only gives liberty of divorcement.

Ver. 33-37. The Law assumed there was some strength in the creature; swearing was permitted. The Lord and consequently His disciples were standing in weakness and grace; therefore, swearing became now unsuitable.

Ver. 38-41. Under Law, a man was permitted to demand an equivalent for an injury; now, he was not to resist evil, but bear spoiling and oppression with meekness.

Ver. 42. A merciful disposition and conduct inculcated.

Ver. 43. They were to love their enemies. The world love those that are kind to them; but the disciples were to love those who were unkind, because they were to have no less a standing before their eyes than their heavenly Father, who does good to the evil and the good, to the just and the unjust.

The fifth chapter sets before the disciples more their practical moral walk.

In chap. 6, from ver. 1-18, it is more with reference to worship-in giving alms-making prayer-fasting; all was to be done with reference to the eye of their Father which seeth in secret, and would reward openly; if done with reference to the eye of man, that was their reward.

The true elements of worship are then presented by the Lord in that beautiful prayer, based in His mind upon redemption, but not introduced in the prayer.

From ver. 19 they are exhorted not to lay up treasures upon earth, but in heaven; " for where the treasure is, there will be the heart." Ver. 22, 23, a single eye is commended; 24, the impossibility of serving two masters-the world and God.

Ver. 25-34. Encouragement given to put all trust and confidence in Him who is the Maker and Sustainer of all things; for He is their heavenly Father, and knoweth all their need, and would have them without care and thought, and foreboding-leaving the troubles of a future day till they arrive. He thus exhorts them to seek the kingdom of God, to enter there; if that is the absorbing desire of their soul, " all these things shall be added unto them."

Chapter 7 He then warns them against censorious judgment; exhorting them to be more careful to observe their own defects, than the failings of another.

Ver. 6. They are warned against conferring holy privileges upon the world, lest they trample them under feet, and turn again and rend believers.

Ver. 7-11. There was to be all activity of soul; they were to ask, to seek, and to knock. Again, the goodness of their Father which is in heaven is presented as inspiring confidence; and He closes, in ver. 12, the preceptive part by this statement-that to do as they would be done by, is " the Law and the Prophets."

Ver. 13. He then exhorts them to enter the strait gate. The multitudes go in the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. It is a narrow way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The Lord, as if foreseeing that the effort of the enemy would be to lead disciples into the broad way and to profession, says, " Beware of false prophets," with fair appearances, but devouring hearts; mark their fruits; for by their ways " shall ye know them."

Ver. 21. " Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom; but he that doeth the will of my -Father." Many were mere professors in the days when He was upon earth. Many will deceive themselves in the last days, and think to enter into the kingdom; but the Lord will say, " Your works have been bad; I never knew you."

Thus the great principle was established-that no amount of gift, zeal, or profession will avail without holiness.

Ver. 24. Therefore the Lord closes with declaring that hearing and doing these sayings shall so establish the soul, and make them so firm and unshaken, that they shall be like a house built upon a rock, unaffected by the rain and tempest; but he who heareth and doeth them not, shall be like a foolish man, whose house was built upon the sand, without stability or ability to stand against the floods and winds.

What a compendium of Divine instruction! Perfect in all its parts. Beginning with the inward graces of

the soul-position in the, world-towards God and towards the world-as to moral ways and conduct-and trust and confidence in God.

Chapter 6 As to worship, and heavenly affections and hope.

Chapter 7 As to righteous self-judgment, etc.

Hitherto the Jews had known the God of Israel as "Jehovah"; now, the Son came to make known the Father; and though the disciples knew not yet what would bring them into this relationship with God, Jesus tells them God is their Father; therefore they were to be perfect as their Father was perfect; they were to do all to their Father which seeth in secret; they were to say, when they prayed, Our Father"; they were to put confidence in God as their Father; they were to ask in the knowledge of the character of their Father. The Lord will not acknowledge any who have not done the will of the Father.

The Son of God

"I will put my trust in Him."-Heb. 2:13.

WHAT a moment it must have been, when the Lord stilled the wind on the Lake of Galilee. It must have been wondrous and beautiful to have witnessed it; as it would be now, had we but hearts sensible of the glories of Christ, to think of it. People may talk of the necessary force of principles, of the laws of nature, and of the course of things; but surely it is the first law of nature to obey its Creator. And here (see Mark 4), in the twinkling of an eye, the sea of Galilee felt the presence, and answered the word of Him, who at His pleasure transfigures the course of nature, or by a touch unhinges it all.

This was Jesus Jehovah. This was the God whom Jordan and the Red Sea had, of old, obeyed. "What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs?" "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord." The answer lies there, whether we listen to the voice of the Red Sea in the days of Exodus, or to the Sea of Galilee in the times of the Gospel. The presence of God tells the secret. " He spake and it was done."

When the sun and the moon stood still in the midst of heaven, we read the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. Joshua spake to the Lord then; and the Lord fought for Israel. And the occasion was full of wonder. The Holy Ghost, who records it, gives it that character. " Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down, about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man." But Jesus acts at once and from Himself; and no wonder is made of it. All the amazement that is felt comes from the unprepared, unbelieving hearts of the disciples, who knew not the glory of the God of Israel. But under His teaching, who takes of the things that are Christ's to show them to us, we, beloved, should the better understand it, discerning it alike, whether at the divided Red Sea, or at the Jordan that was "driven back," or on the stilled lake of Galilee.

But there is more of Jesus at the Red Sea, than the dividing of its waters.

The cloud which appeared to Israel as soon as they had been redeemed by the blood in Egypt, and which accompanied them through the wilderness, was the guide of the camp. But it was also the veil or the covering of the glory. In the midst of Israel such was that beautiful mystery. Commonly it was a hidden glory, at times manifested, but always there-the guide and companion of Israel, but their God also. He who dwelt between the Cherubims, went along the desert before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (Psa. 80). The glory abode in the cloud for Israel's use, but it was in the holy place also-and thus, while conducting the ramp in its-veiled or humbled form, it assumed the divine honors of the sanctuary.

And such was Jesus, God manifest in the flesh-commonly veiled under the form of a servant, always without robbery equal with God in the faith and worship of His saints, and at times shining forth in divine grace and authority.

Now just as they were approaching the Red Sea, Israel had to be sheltered. The cloud does this mercy for them. It comes between Egypt and the camp, and is darkness to the one and light to the other, so that the one came not near the other all the night-and then, in the morning, the Lord, the Glory, looked to the host of Egypt through the pillar of cloud, and troubled the host of Egypt. And so, on an occasion kindred with this at the Red Sea, Jesus acts as the cloud and the glory. He comes between His disciples and their pursuers. " If ye seek me, let these go their way." He shelters them with His presence, as of old. And then He looks through the cloud, and again, as of old, troubles the host of the enemy. " Jesus saith unto them, I am he- as soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." He did but look out the second time, and His arm was found not to be shortened. With like ease and authority, the God of Israel does His proper acts at the Red Sea, and Jesus the same in the garden of Gethsemane (Ex. 14, John 18). The gods of Egypt worshipped Him at the Red Sea, the gods of Rome worshipped Him in Gethsemane, and when brought again the second time into the world, it shall be said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

But further. In the progress of their history, Israel had to be rebuked as well as to be sheltered, to be disciplined as well as to be redeemed. This we see, as we leave the Red Sea, and enter the wilderness. But the same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work for them, as it did the other. In the day of the Manna-in the day of the Spies-in the matter of Korah-at the water of Meribah, Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and the Glory is seen in the cloud witnessing the divine resentment (see Ex. 16 Num. 14, 16, 20). And just so, Jesus again. When grieved (as the glory in the cloud was) at the hardness of heart, or unbelief of the disciples, He gives some token, some expression, of His divine power, with words of rebuke. As on that occasion I have referred to, on the lake of Tiberias; for there He said to the disciples, " Why are ye so fearful?" as well as to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." And so again and again, when the disciples betray ignorant and unbelieving thoughts of Him. As, for instance, to Philip, on one distinguished occasion, he says, in the grief and resentment of the glory in the cloud, "Have I been so long with you, and hast thou not known me Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sagest thou then, skew us the Father."

Surely here also was the same mystery. Was not the Lord here again shining through the veil for the confounding of the disobedience or unbelief of Israel. This was the glory seen in the cloud as in the day of the Manna, or kindred cases already referred to. Very exact is the corresponding of these forms of divine power. The cloud was the ordinary thing, the glory within was now and again manifested, but was always there. The guide and companion of the camp was the Lord of the camp. And is, not all this, Jesus, in a mystery? The Glory was the God of Israel (see Ezek. 43:4;44. 2),, and Jesus of Nazareth was the God of Israel or the Glory (see Isa. 6:1, John 12.41). The Nazarene veiled a light, or manifested in flesh a glory, which, in its proper fullness, "no man can approach unto."

Moses beautifully refused glory, but Jesus hid it. Moses, "when he came to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And a lovely victory over the world that was. We like to wear our honors, to make the most of what we are, and even to take more than we are entitled to, if men will make mistakes in our favor. But Moses humbled himself in the Egyptian palace: and that was a beautiful victory of faith over the course and spirit of the world. But Jesus did more. It is true, He had not servants and courtiers to teach, for He was a stranger to palaces. But the villagers of

Nazareth adopted Him as "the carpenter's son," and He would have it so. The Glory of glories, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the God of heaven, was hid under that common report, and there He lay without an answer to it.

It is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost, in Heb. to open the sources of this great mystery. The grace of God would fain exercise or indulge itself-precious as such a thought is-and the praise of Him " for whom are all things and by whom are all things," demanded the mystery, so to speak (see Heb. 2:9,10). These things are told us there. These are the rich fountains from whence the great purpose and transaction flow; that transaction, that unspeakable mystery of redemption through the humiliation of the Son of God, which is to give its character to eternity. Divine grace sought to gratify itself, and divine glory would be displayed to perfection. All issues from such springs. Flesh and blood was taken up by the Sanctifier-death was undergone-like temptations with the brethren, apart from sin, were endured - relationships to God, experiences in Himself, and sympathies with the saints, were borne and known-the life of faith on earth, with its prayers and tears, to Him that was able to save from death-life of intercession in heaven-all fitness to be both a sacrifice and a priest accomplished-ability to succor, and worthiness to cleanse, as well as resurrection, ascension, present expectancy, and coming kingdom and glories-all these find their springs and sources there.

The Son, of God took His place in connection with all this. He was dependent, obedient, believing, hopeful, sorrowful, suffering, despised, crucified, buried; everything which the great eternal plan made necessary to Him. He emptied Himself for all this, but all that He did was infinitely worthy of His person. The word at the beginning, " Let there be light, and there was light," was not more worthy of Him, than were the prayers and supplications " with strong crying and tears," in the days of His flesh. He could never have been allied with anything unworthy of Godhead-though found, abundantly and at all personal cost, in conditions and circumstances which our guilt and His grace in putting it away brought Him into.

The Person in the manger was the same as on the cross. It was God manifest in the flesh. And in the full sense of that glory we can but speak of His humbling of Himself from the earliest to the latest moment of that wondrous journey. He was worshipped in the manger. Led of God, the wise men of the East worshipped Him there. Simeon worshipped Him, I may say, at as early a moment, in the temple-and strangely (which nothing can account for but the light of the Holy Ghost who then filled him), he blesses the mother and not the child. He had the child in his arms, and naturally he would, on such an occasion, have given the infant his blessing. But he does not. For he had that child in his arms, not as a feeble infant whom he would commend to God's care, but as God's salvation. In that glorious character, in the hour of nature's perfect feebleness, he held Him up and gloried in Him. "The less is blessed of the better. It was not for Simeon to bless Jesus, though without wrong or robbery he would bless Mary.

Anna, the prophetess, receives Him in like spirit. And earlier still, while yet unborn, He was worshipped, I may say, by the leaping of the child in the womb of Elizabeth, at the salutation of Mary. As also, ere He was conceived, the angel Gabriel-owns Him as the God of Israel, before whose face the son of Zacharias was to go -and then, also, Zacharias in the Holy Ghost owns Him as the -Lord whose people Israel were, and as "the Day-spring from on high."

Self-emptying obedience, subjection of a kind quite its own, is, therefore, to be seen in every stage and action of such a One. And what was that course of service in the esteem of Him to whom it was rendered? As the born one, the circumcised one, the baptized and anointed one, the serving, sorrowing, and crucified one, and then as the risen one, He has passed here on earth under the eye of God. In the secrecy of the Virgin's womb, in the solitudes of Nazareth, in the activities and services of all the cities and villages of Israel, in the deep self-sacrifice of the cross, and then in the new bloom of resurrection, has "this wondrous Man" been seen and delighted in of God-perfect, untainted, recalling the divine delight in man more than when of old he was made in God's image, and more than annulling all the divine repentings of old, that man had been made on the earth.

His person lent a glory to all His course of service and obedience, which rendered it of unutterable value. Nor is it merely that His person made all that service and obedience voluntary. There- is something far. more than its being thus voluntary. There is that in it which the person (" my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts ") imparts-and who can weigh or measure that?

We know this full well among ourselves. I mean in kind. The higher in dignity-in personal dignity-the one who serves us is, the higher the value of the service rises in our thoughts. And justly so; because more has been engaged for us, more has been devoted to us, than when the servant was an inferior; more has the heart - instinctively learned, that our advantage was indeed sought, or our wishes and desires made an object. We do not forget the person in the service. We cannot. And so in this dear mystery we are meditating on. The service, and obedience of Jesus were perfect; infinitely, unmixedly worthy of all acceptance. But beyond that -beyond the quality of the fruit-there was the Person who yielded it; and this, as we said, imparted a value and a glory to it, that are unutterable.

The same value rested on the services of His life which afterward gave character to His death. It was His person which gave all its virtue to His death or sacrifice: and it was His person which gave its peculiar glory to all He did in His course of self-humbling obedience. And the complacency of God in the one was as perfect as His judicial acceptance of the other. Some symbol (like that of the rent veil) is seen by faith uttering that complacency and full delight of God over every passing act in the life of Jesus. Would that we had eyes to see, and ears to hear that, as we pass on through the ways of Jesus from the manger to the tree! But so it was, whether seen or not by us. Complacency of God, beyond all thought to conceive, rested on all He did, and all He was, throughout His life of obedience. As another has said, " divine wisdom in the way of our recovery by Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh,' designed to glorify a state of obedience; he would render it incomparably more amiable, desirable, and excellent, than ever it could have appeared to have been in the obedience of all the angels in heaven, and men on the earth, had they continued therein, in that His own eternal Son entered into a state of obedience, and took upon Him the form or condition of a servant unto God."

These are strengthening thoughts about the ways of Jesus. These ways of service and subjection to God are to get their own peculiar character in our sight; obedience has been glorified in His person, and shown in all its ineffable beauty and desirableness-so that we are not merely to say, that the complacency of God in Him was ever maintained in its fullness, but that it passes beyond all created thought.

"The, form of a servant" was a reality just as much as "the form of God" in Him; as truly an assumed reality, as the other was an essential intrinsic reality. And being so, His ways were those of a servant, just as being the Son, His glories and prerogatives were those of God. He prayed-He continued whole nights in prayer. He lived by faith, the perfect pattern of a believer, as we read of Him, "the Author and Finisher of faith." In sorrow He made God His refuge. In the presence of enemies He committed Himself to Him who judged righteously. He did not His own will, perfect as that will was, but the will of Him who sent Him. In these and in all kindred ways, was " the form of a servant," found, and proved, and read, and known to perfection. It is seen to have been a great and living reality. The life of faith was the life of this servant from beginning to end.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are taught to consider Jesus as "the Apostle and High-priest of our profession;" and also as "the Author and Finisher of faith" (3:1, 12:2, 3). As the one, He is set before us for the relief of our consciences and the succor of our times of temptation-in the other, as the encouragement of our hearts in like life of faith. As "the Apostle and High-priest of our profession," He is alone-as "the Author and Finisher of faith," He is connected with a great cloud of witnesses. As the one, He is for us, as the other, He is before us. But even when before us, as in the fight and life of faith, there is some distinctness; for the Holy Ghost calls on us to look at this Author and Finisher of faith in a way that He does not speak touching any other. He speaks of our being compassed about with them, but calls on us to be looking to Him.

And, further; it was "the contradiction of sinners against himself" that formed the life of trial and of faith in Jesus; and those are peculiar words. Others, like Him in the fight of faith had cruel mockings and scourgings, the edge of the sword, the caves of the earth, tortures, bonds, and imprisonments, and all from the enmity of man. But their conflict in the midst of such things is not thus spoken of. It is not called " the contradiction of sinners against themselves." There is a force and elevation in such words that suit only the life of faith which Jesus led and contended in.

How perfect are these minuter paths of the Spirit's wisdom in the word! The 16th Psalm gives us Jesus in this life of faith. There the Son of God is One in whom " faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"-as in Heb. 12:2, 3. He enjoys the present portion of a priestly man. He sets the Lord always before him, and knows that as He is at His right hand, He shall not be moved. He looks also for the pleasures at the right hand, and for the joy of the presence of God, in other regions.

The 116th Psalm is the end of His life of faith in resurrection, joy, and praise; and the Apostle, in "the same spirit of faith," can look to share like resurrection joy with His Divine Lord and forerunner (2 Cor. 4:13,14).

" I will put my trust in Him," may be said to be the language of the life of Jesus. But His faith was gold, pure gold, nothing but gold. When tried by the furnace, it comes out the same mass as it had gone in, for there was no dross. Saints have commonly to be set to rights by the furnace. Some impatience, or selfishness, or murmur has to be reduced or silenced, as in Psa. 73 and 77. Job was overcome; trouble touched him and he fainted, though often he had strengthened the weak hands, and upheld by his word them that were falling. "The stoutest," as an old writer says, " are struck off their legs." Peter sleeps in the garden, and in the judgment-hall tells lies and swears to them; but there has been One in whom the furnace, heated seven times, proved all to be precious beyond expression.

Read Luke 22; see this One in that great chapter; see Jesus there in the hour of the trial of faith. He is first in company with the sorrow that was awaiting Him, then with His disciples, then with the Father, and then with His enemies; and mark it all, beloved. How unutterably perfect all is! This faith in its unalloyed preciousness, when tried in the fire! But all the life of Jesus was the life and obedience of faith. In one light of it, it was, most surely, the life of the Son of God, "in the form of a servant," humbling Himself even unto death, though "in the form of God," and though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" but in another, it was the life of faith. "I will put my trust in Him." "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." These are His breathings; and we celebrate Him, after our own way, in His life of faith, and sing together of Him betimes,

"Faithful amid unfaithfulness,

Midst darkness only light,

Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,

And in His will delight."

And all this precious life of faith was answered by the care and keeping of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The faith of Him that was serving on earth was perfect, and the answer of Him that dwelt in the heavens was perfect (Psa. 91).

The care which watched over him was unceasing from the womb to the grave. So had it been of old declared by His Spirit in the Prophets. "I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly." "Thou didst make me hope (or thou keptest me in safety) when I was upon my mother's breasts." It was unwearied throughout. "Thou maintainest my lot." "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption." This help, and care, and watchfulness, in one aspect of His history, was everything to Him. It watched over Him that very night in which the Angel warned Joseph to flee into Egypt. It was the Father's unspeakable joy to exercise the diligence of that hour. He who kept that Israel could not slumber then.

But all this, instead of being inconsistent with the full divine rights of His Person, gets its special character from them. The glory of this relationship, and of the joy and complacency which attended it, is gone, if the Person be not vindicated and honored. Such was the Person, that His entrance into the relationship was an act of self-emptying. Instead of beginning a course of subjection either at the flight into Egypt, or at the manger at Bethlehem, He had taken "the form of a servant" in counsel before the world began; and as fruit thereof, He was "found in fashion as a man." And all His doings and services were the ways of this self-emptied one. All of them from the earliest to the last. For He was as truly "God manifest in the flesh" when on the journey to Egypt in His mother's arms, as when in Gethsemane, in the glory and power of His Person, the enemy coming to eat up His flesh stumbled and fell. He was as simply Immanuel as an infant in Bethlehem, as He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. All was humbling of Himself from the womb to the cross. I forget His Person or who He was, if I doubt that. But in another light of the glorious mystery, we are to see the relationship, and the tender perfect care and help which, according to it, the Father was ever rendering Him. But these things are only like the different lights or

characters in which the different Evangelists present the Lord, as we are generally acquainted with. He was the Object of the Father's care, and yet Jehovah's Fellow; and we may look at His path in the chastened light with which that divine care and watchfulness invests it, as we may gaze at it in that brightest light and most excellent glory in which His rights and honors as the Son of God present it to us. If He had this relationship to the care of God, assumed as it was according to eternal counsels, so had all creatures, earthly and heavenly, angelic and human, throughout the universe, the same relationship to Him.

By reason of such various truth as this, He could say, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up;" and yet the Holy Ghost could say of Him, that the God of peace brought Him again from the dead. His enemies who sought His life fell before Him at a word; and yet, so did His perfect faith acknowledge God's perfect care and guardianship, that He would say, "Cannot I now pray to my Father, and He will presently send me more than twelve legions of angels." He could, with a touch, heal the ear of the servant, nay restore it when cut off, when just at the same time He would have His own brows bleed under the crown of thorns. In the perfection of His place, as the emptied One, He would ask for sympathy, and say, "Could ye not watch with me one hour;" and shortly after, in a moment of still greater gloom in one sense, He could be above the pity of the daughters of Jerusalem, and honor by promises of Paradise and a kingdom, the faith of a dying malefactor. For in brightness He shines, even in the deepest moment of His humiliation, and lets sinners know, that it is not the compassion of men His cross seeks, but their faith-that it does not ask them, in human kindness, to feel that hour, but in faith of their hearts and to the full peace of their consciences to be blest by that hour-not to pity the cross, but to lean on it, and to know, that though accomplished in weakness, it is the very pillar which is to sustain the creation of God forever.

In such different, but consistent forms, we read the life of the Son of God in flesh. Is the one the less real because the other is true? The tears of Jesus over Jerusalem were as real, as though there was nothing in His heart but the sorrow of an ill-requited Lord and Savior over a rebellious unbelieving people. And yet, His joy in the full purpose of divine wisdom and grace, was just the same unmixed, undivided reality. The "Woe to thee, Chorazin!" and then, the "I thank thee, O Father," were equally living and true affections in the soul of Jesus. There was no want of full reality in either; and so, "the form of a servant" with all its perfect results, and "the form of God," in all its proper glories, were, in the like way, real and living mysteries in the One Person.

And may we not, at times, turn aside to gaze more intently at His Person, while we are tracing either the acts of His life, or the secrets of His love and truth? It is a part of the obedience of faith to do so. "The fear of the Lord is clean"-but there is a fear that is not altogether clean, having some spirit of bondage and unbelief in it. The refusal to turn and look at such great sights as these may be such. I grant the "mystery," and that the mystery is "great." So was it a great and mysterious sight which Moses turned to look at-but with unshod feet he might still look and listen. Had he not done so, he would have gone away unblest. But he listened, till he discovered that the "I am" was in the bush; and further, that the "God of Abraham" was there also. A strange spot for such glory to enshrine itself. But so it was. In a burning bramble-bush, the Lord God. Almighty was found.

And supposing I go to Calvary, and look there on "the smitten Shepherd," who shall I discover, if I have an opened eye, but the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts? (Zech. 13). And if I go into the midst of the rabble which surrounded Pilate's judgment-hall at Jerusalem, whom shall I find there, even in the One spit upon; and buffeted, and derided, but He who of old dried up the Red Sea, and covered the Egyptian heavens with sackcloth? (See Isa. 1)

And I ask, when I have so looked, and by the light of the Spirit in the prophets made these discoveries, am I quickly to retire? If I had bowels, I might ask, where can I go for richer refreshment of spirit? If my faith discover the God who did His wonders of old in the land of Ham, in the grieved and insulted Jesus, amid the men of Herod and the officers of the Romans, am I not to linger on that Mount of God, and Moses-like to turn aside and look and listen? I cannot treat the sight as too great for me. I do not believe such would be the mind of the Spirit. Liberty of thought, while I stay at the Mount, shall be rebuked if it transgress-but to linger there is not transgression, but worship. I speak, the Lord knows, of principles, not of experiences. The exercises of the heart there are dull and cold indeed-and the sorrow is (if one may speak for others), not that we spend too much thought over the mystery of the Person of the Son of God, but that we retire to other objects too quickly.

That Person will be "the eternal wonder and ornament of the creation of God."

Some may own, in general, the manhood and the Godhead in that Person. But we are also to own the full unsullied glory of each of these. Neither the soul or moral man, nor the temple of the body, are to be profaned. The whole man is to be vindicated and honored. And though the relationship in which Jesus stood to God, the care which that induced, and the obedience which that involved, may well be another great sight for us to turn aside and look at, still we shall fail to see it aright, and to eye it in its glory, if we forget in any wise the Person of Him who sustained it.

The divine reasoning in the Epistle to the Hebrews, among other things, evinces this; that the efficacy of the priesthood of Christ depends entirely on His person. Read the first seven chapters: what a writing it is!

In our priest we must find a man, one capable of succoring the brethren, from having "heel, tempted like them. So that we must see our High Priest passing into the heavens from amid the sufferings and sorrows of the scene here. Most surely so. But in our Priest we must find the Son also-because in none other partaker of mesh and blood was there "the power of an endless life." And accordingly, Melchisedec represents the person as well as the virtues, dignities, rights, and authorities of the true. Priest of God (see Heb. 7:1-3)-as we read of Him; " without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a Priest continually."

And what a sight does all this give us of " the High-Priest of our profession! " He came down from heaven, in the full personal glory of the Son, and in the due time He went up to heaven, bearing the virtue of His sacrifice for sin, and those compassions which succor saints.

Faith acquaints itself with this whole path of Jesus. It owns in Him the Son while He tabernacled in the flesh among us; and when His course of humiliation and suffering. had ended here, faith owns the once rejected and crucified man glorified in the heavens; the one person. God in the flesh here, man hid in the glory there. As we read of Him and of His blessed, wondrous path: " God was

manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

In the form of God, He was God indeed; in the form of a servant, He was a servant indeed. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" exercising all the divine rights, and using all the divine treasures and resources with full authority; and yet making Himself of no reputation, emptying Himself and being obedient. This tells the secret. All that appears in the history is interpreted by the mystery. It is as the glory in the cloud again. The companion of the camp, in all its afflictions afflicted, was the Lord of the camp. The glory which traversed the desert in company with the wanderings of Israel, was the glory which dwelt between the cherubims in the holy of holies.

But, the further words of this scripture, (Phil. 2:6-11) invite me onward for a little still.

"Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him."

We are only in new wonders, when we read these words. For what, we may ask, could exalt Him? Ere He entered upon His course of sufferings and of glories, He was in Himself infinitely great and blessed. Nothing could personally exalt Him, being as He was, "the Son." His glory was divine. It was unspeakable and infinite. No other honors could ever increase His personal glory. But still we see Him traversing a path which conducts Him to honor and glory still.

Strange and excellent mystery! And still stranger, and more excellent, as we may say, these new and acquired glories are, in some sense, the dearest with Him. Scripture entitles us thus to speak; as it does to speak of many things of His grace, which the heart would never have conceived. And yet, with all this (to compare divine things with human, as is the way of the Spirit's instruction) this which I now speak of is known among men. Let the highest by birth among us, let a prince, the son of a king, go forth and acquire dignities: his acquired dignities, though they cannot raise him personally, will be his dearest distinctions, and form the choicest materials of his history in the esteem of others. Such a thing as that is instinctively understood among us. And so is it (in the unspeakably precious mystery of Christ) with the Son of God. According to eternal counsels, He has gone forth to battle; and the honors He has acquired, the victories He has won or is still to win, will be His joy for eternity. They are to form the light in which He will be known, and the characters in which He will be celebrated forever; though, personally, He dwells in a light which no man can approach unto. And this He prizes. Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-rophi, Jehovah-shalom, Jehovah-tzidkenu, Jehovah-nissi, are all acquired honors. And how are these chief with Him in the unspeakable ways of boundless grace In Exod. He communicates His personal name to Moses, saying out of the bush, "I am that I am." But then, He communicates His acquired name also, calling Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and to this second, this acquired name, He adds, "this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations:" words which deeply tell us, how He prized that glory which He had acquired in His doings for poor sinners. As also in the tabernacle, or temple, where His name was recorded, it was His acquired and not His personal name, that was written and read there. The mysteries of that house did not speak of His essential omnipotence, omniscience, or eternity, or like glories, but of one in whom mercy rejoiced against judgment, and who had found out a way whereby to bring His banished ones home to Him.

Surely these are witnesses of what price is His name gained in service for us, in His sight, But "God is love," may account for it all. There the secret is told. If the manifestations be excellent and marvelous, the hidden springs which are opened in Himself give us to know it all.

We are to know Him as "made under the law," as surely as we know Him in His personal glory, far above all law. All His life was the life of the obedient one. And so, though God over all, the Jehovah of Israel, and the Creator of the ends of the earth, He was the man Christ Jesus. He was Jesus of Nazareth, anointed of the Holy Ghost, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. In these lights we see Him, and in these lights we read His varied, wondrous history. He imparted the Holy Ghost, and yet was anointed with the Holy Ghost.

The Son came forth to take part of flesh and blood. So had the way and the grace of the eternal counsel run -so had our necessities required it. He was found "in fashion as a man." He was exercised in a life of entire dependance on God, and accomplished a death which (among other virtues) was in full subjection to Him. This was His covenant place, and in such place He acted and suffered to perfection; and from thence came the services and the afflictions, the cries and the tears, the labors and the sorrows of the Son of Man on earth. But still more-even now that He is in heaven, it is, in a great sense, the same life still. A promise awaited Him there, and that promise He received and lives on to this hour. "Sit on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool," was "said to Him as He ascended, and in the faith and hope of that word, He took His seat in heaven-" sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." Here was hope answering promise, and this found in the heart of Jesus as He ascended and sat down in heaven, just as He was the believing one, and the hoping one, and the obedient one, and the serving one,

When on this earth of ours. And still further, in His onward -Ways of glory, will He not still be subject? Every tongue is to confess Him Lord; but is not this to be "to the glory of God the Father?" And when the kingdom is given up, is it not still written, "the Son also Himself shall be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all?" And as subject thus to Him who puts all things under Him, so in the same regions of coming glory will it be His gracious delight to serve His saints-as we read, "He will gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them;" and again, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And here, in closing this meditation, I know not that we can better take leave of the mystery which has engaged us, than in these words of a writer in other days from ours:-

"Man, by sin, had cast the most inconceivable dishonor on the righteousness, holiness, goodness, and rule of God, and himself into the gulf of eternal ruin. In this state, it became the wisdom and goodness of God, neither to suffer the whole race of mankind to come short eternally of that enjoyment of Himself for which it was created, nor yet to deliver any one of them without a retrieval of the eternal honor of His righteousness, holiness, and rule, from the diminution and waste that

was made of it by sin. As this could no way be done, but by a full satisfaction unto justice, and an obedience unto the law, which should yield more honor unto the holiness and righteousness of God, than they could lose by the sin and disobedience, of man, so this satisfaction must be made, and this obedience be yielded, in and by, the same nature that sinned or disobeyed. Yet was it necessary hereunto, that the nature wherein all this was to be performed, though derived from the same common stock with that whereof in all our persons we are partakers, should be absolutely free from the contagion and guilt which, with it and by it, are communicated unto our persons from that common stock: unless it were so, there could be no undertaking in it for others, for it would not be able to answer for itself. But yet, in all these suppositions, no undertakings, no performance of duty in human nature could possibly yield that obedience unto God, or make that satisfaction for sin, whereon the deliverance of others might ensue unto the glory of the holiness, righteousness, and rule of God. In this state infinite wisdom interposed itself in the glorious ineffable contrivance of the Person of Christ, or of the divine nature in the eternal Son of God, and of ours in the same individual person. Otherwise this work could not be accomplished: at least, all other ways are hidden from the eyes of all living. This, therefore, is such an effect of divine wisdom, as will be the object of holy adoration and admiration unto eternity: but in this life, how little a portion it is we know of its excellency!"

The Son of God

"Received up into glory."-1 Tim. 3:16

In earlier days, the angels had desired to look into the things of Christ (1 Peter 1:12). When these things themselves were manifested and accomplished, this desire was answered; for in the history, as we find it in the Evangelists, the angels are set to be eye-witnesses of that which they had thus long desired to look into., They are privileged to find their place and their enjoyment in the history of Christ, in " the mystery of godliness;"Aid to find it, just as, of old, they had found it in the sanctuary of God. In that sanctuary, all, it is true, was for the use and blessing of sinners. The altars, and the laver, and the mercy-seat, and all else, were provided for us. The action and the grace of the house of God were for sinners; but the cherubim gazed. They were set in that house to look at its deepest mysteries. And so, in the same condition, shall we find them, in the day of the great originals, or of the heavenly things themselves, when " God was manifest in the flesh." For then, it is equally true, all was for the service and salvation of us sinners, or that God, so manifested, might be " preached unto the gentiles," and " believed on in the world;" but still all was, as surely, for this end, that He might be seen of angels."

Thus they took the same place in the sanctuary of old, and in the great mystery itself. They gazed-they looked-they were eye-witnesses-And further; the sight they took of the mystery was of the same intense and interested character, as the cherubim had before expressed in the holy of holies. " And the cherubim spread their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy-seat, with their faces one to another, even to the mercy seat-ward were the faces of the cherubim." And so, in the history of Christ, the true ark, they will be thus again seen.

The angel of the Lord comes, in his commission and ministry from heaven, to announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem the birth of Jesus. But as soon as he had fulfilled his service, suddenly there was with him " a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men." And when the time came for another great event,

and " God manifest in the flesh" was raised from the dead, soon to be "received up into glory," the angels are again present with the like intense and interested delight. At the sepulcher, as Mary Magdalene looked in, two of them were sitting, " one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain;" and at the crisis of the ascension itself, they are again present, instructing the men of Galilee in the further ways of Him, who had just then gone up on high.

What hanging over the mercy-seat was all this? What cherubim-gaze again and again was this? This utterance of the heavenly host in the fields of Bethlehem was not part of their ministry to roan, but an act of worship to God. They were not then instructing the shepherds or even formally addressing themselves to them; but breathing out the rapture in which their own spirits were held in thoughts of the One that had been then born. And so, their attitude in the sepulcher. When Mary appears, they have, it is true, a word of sympathy for her; but there they were, in the sepulcher, before she had come, and there they would have been, though she had never come. As the cherubim in the tabernacle had hung over the ark and mercy-seat, on either side one, so now in the sepulcher, the angels hang over the place where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet.

What ways of seeing Jesus were these! As we read, God was manifest in the flesh-seen of angels." Well may we, beloved, covet grace to have like utterances and like attitudes over Jesus. And well may we grieve over what in our hearts is short of this, great, indeed, as some of us know that to be. I believe that many of us need to be attracted more than we are wont to be, by these things. Many of us have dwelt (if I may distinguish such things by such terms) more in the light of the knowledge of the divine dispensations, than in the warmth of such mysteries as Bethlehem, the garden, and the Mount of Olives, revealed to the enraptured angels. But in this we have been losers-losers in much of that communion which marked the path and the spirit of others in other days. My desire has been to turn to this great sight, led that way by the condition of things around and among us. Glorious, I need not say, is the object-the same Person, "God manifest in the flesh," followed by faith from the manger to the Cross, from the Cross through the grave up in resurrection, and thence to the present heavens, and eternal ages beyond them.

The Holy Ghost (in a way which we will now consider for a while) makes it His gracious business to aid this vision of faith, by carefully forming before us, so to express myself, the links between the parts or stages of this wondrous journey, " God manifest in the flesh-received up into glory." By St. John, as our previous meditations may have led us to see, the Spirit, very specially, reveals or declares the link between "God" and "flesh " in the Person of Jesus. We listen to this at the opening of his Gospel and his Epistle. I need not repeat it. But of course all the divine writings either assume or utter this truth, in their different ways, as well as John. But it is the other link, or that between "God manifest in the flesh" and "glory" or the heavens, which is rather our present matter in the progress of these meditations, so that we will now pass on with evangelists and angels, from Bethlehem to the garden of the sepulcher, and to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel by Matthew, in a general way, witnesses the resurrection. To be sure it does. The angels at the tomb declare it, the women on the road back to the city hold the feet of the risen Savior, and the disciples meet Him on the mountain in Galilee.

Mark tells of several appearances of the Lord, after His resurrection, to His own whom He had chosen-as to Mary Magdalene, to two of them as they walked into the country, and to the eleven

as they sat at meat.

Luke, however, goes more carefully into the proofs which Jesus gave His disciples, that it was indeed He Himself, and none other, who was in the midst of them again. He eats before them. He shows them His hands and His side. He tells them that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as they saw He had. He shows them out of the Psalms, and out of the Prophets, that thus it was to be.

John has his own peculiar style still, while dealing with this common testimony. In his Gospel, we may say, all with the Lord is strength and victory; and so is it at the sepulcher, as well as everywhere else. When the disciples visit it, they see the linen clothes lying, and the napkin that was about the Lord's head, wrapped together in a place by itself. There was no disturbance, no symptom of effort or of struggle, no sign as though something arduous had been accomplished there. All is as the trophy and witness of victory, rather than the heat and strife of battle. "Bless, bless the Conqueror slain," is the voice from the tomb, as it is opened before us by St. John. And if the place thus speak, so does the Lord Himself afterward. It is not that He verifies His resurrection after the same manner as we find Him doing in St. Luke. He does not, so properly, give them sensible signs that He Himself was in the midst of them again. He does not eat and drink with them here, as He had done there. The broiled fish and the honeycomb are not called in to stand in evidence. But in other courts, so to speak, the truth of His resurrection is recorded. He makes it good to the hearts and to the consciences of His disciples. His voice on the ear of Mary tells her who He was, because her heart had been familiar with that name on those lips-and His pierced hands and side were shown, that they might speak peace to the conscience of the others, in the assurance of the accepted sacrifice; yea, even to the drawing out from the depths and secrets of the soul of one of them, the cry of thorough conviction, " My Lord; and my God."

Thus do the evangelists lead us into the garden of the sepulcher. The Mount of Olives has its witnesses like wise; the ascension as well as the resurrection of Jesus. And again I would say, To be sure it has.

Neither Matthew nor John, however, declare it. The Lord is still on the mountain in Galilee when Matthew's gospel closes. Neither does John take us to the Mount of Olives or to Bethany,. the same thing. In a parabolic action, as I judge, after the disciples had dined in His presence on the Sea of Galilee, He intimates His going up to the Father's house, and their following Him there; but it is not the ascension itself-it is not the scene at Bethany-it is not the actual translation of the Lord from earth to heaven.

Mark, however, asserts the fact: "When the Lord had done speaking with His disciples He was received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God." Here the fact-the very moment of the ascension-is declared. But, I may say, that is all. It is simply the ascension of One who had all rights and honors belonging to Him, and awaiting Him on high in the ascended place; but there is no communion, in spirit, with that event, among the disciples. The story in Mark does not so much as tell us, whether or not the disciples were eyewitnesses of it.

But Luke gives us something quite beyond this. In his gospel, the ascension of the Lord is witnessed by eyes and hearts which had, and felt they had, their own immediate and personal interest in it. "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into

heaven; and they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God."

Thus, then, as the risen man, from amid a throng of witnesses that He was indeed their Jesus, Jesus reaches the heavens. And though a cloud received Him out of their sight, He was thus known to be beyond it, in the highest, the same Jesus still.. Jesus, who had eaten with them in the days of His sojourn with them, had now eaten with them in His risen days. Jesus, who had given them drafts of fishes in the days of His sojourn with them, had now given them drafts of fishes in His risen days. Jesus, who had blessed the meat and given it to them then, had done so in like manner now: and this was He who had now ascended in their sight. How are all the stages of this wondrous journey thus tracked distinctly, though variously, for us, by the same Spirit, in the evangelists. We hold the same blessed One in view, at Bethlehem, in the garden of the resurrection, and at the Mount of the ascension. Manifest in flesh, the Son journeyed from Bethlehem to Calvary. Risen from the dead, with His wounded hands and side, He ate and drank with His disciples during forty days; and then, with the same wounded hands and side, He ascended the heavens. He gave them counsel after He rose, as He had done before. He entrusted a commission and ministry to them then as before. He knew them and called them by name just as before. And, at the last, when they looked after Him as though they had lost Him forever, the angel appears to them to tell them that this same Jesus had other ways still to accomplish for them. " Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And this is the secret or the principle of all divine religion. It is " the mystery of godliness." Nothing recovers man to the knowledge and worship of God, but the understanding and faith of this, through the Spirit. This is the truth which forms and fills the house of God. "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Do we, indeed, beloved, vividly and constantly hold this One Person in view from first to last? He lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, then in flesh He lay in that distant dishonored manger at Bethlehem. He journeyed through the fatigues and sorrows of life, died on the cross, rose from the bowels of the earth, and ascended to the very highest place in heaven. The links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together the highest and the lowest. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He has formed them, and holds them in view at times with divine desire and delight. In such breathings as Psa. 23, and 24, how rapidly does He carry His prophet from the lowly life of faith, of dependence, and of hope, which Jesus passed here in the days of His flesh, onward to the days of His entrance as "the Lord mighty in battle," "the Lord of hosts," "the King of glory," into the "everlasting doors" of His millennial Jerusalem!

Are we, in spirit, on that road with Him also? And as a further question for our souls, which may well humble some of us afresh, are we, in real living power, with our Lord in the present stage of this mysterious journey? For He is still in this world, the rejected Christ. How far are we, in spirit, with Him as such? Are we considering this poor man, or continuing with Jesus in His temptations? (Psa. 41:1; Luke 22:28). " Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God." Jesus was no more any one in the world after His resurrection than He had been before it. The resurrection made no difference as to this. The world was no more to

Him then, than it had been in other days, when, as we know, He had not where to lay His head. He left it for heaven then, as He had left it for Calvary before. When He was born, the manger of Bethlehem received Him: now, when risen from the dead, heaven receives Him. As born, He had proposed Himself to the faith and acceptance of Israel; but it was to be refused by Israel. As risen, He published Himself through the apostles to Israel again; but it was to be refused by Israel again-and Jesus is still the stranger here. The present time is still the age of His rejection. He was a lonely one on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, though then the Risen Man, as He had been before on the way from Bethlehem to Calvary. But, beloved, is it in such a character, that you and I have joined Him on the road?

Many a thought would be too much for us, were we not trained for it after the method of the divine wisdom, " I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," says our divine Teacher to us-and in this way His "gentleness" makes us "great." We are prepared for enlarging communications from Him. Jesus can annihilate distances as He can control oppositions. On the lake of Galilee He trod the troubled waters outside, and then, when he entered the ship, " immediately it was at the land whither they went" (John 6:18-21.)

As the irradiations from the hidden glory that was there break through, after these manners, and enter the soul, how welcome they are! And what have we to do but to open all the avenues of the soul, and let Jesus enter. Faith listens. The Lord would have had the poor Samaritan at the well simply a listener from beginning to end. She may speak and does speak; but what are her words but the witness of this, that understanding, conscience, and heart were all opening to His words? And when the whole vessel was open, Jesus poured Himself in.

It is this listening attitude of faith we long more simply to occupy; and surely specially so, when tracing these profound and holy subjects.

The links between the parts of this great mystery, the transition-moments in the progress of the way of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we have been now shortly considering with the evangelists. In other words, we have been with angels and with disciples, at Bethlehem, in the garden of the sepulcher, and on the Mount of Olives.

As we enter, immediately afterward, the Book of " the Acts of the Apostles," we shall be struck with this-that what fills the mind of the Apostles, and forms the great burthen or thought of all their preaching, is this-that Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, the Man denied and crucified here, was now in heaven. Peter makes it his first and constant business, to link all the grace and power which were then (in that day of his testimony) ministered from heaven in the midst of the Jewish people, with the fact of the ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

On the descent of the Holy Ghost, the prophecy of Joel becomes (properly and naturally, nay, necessarily) the text of Peter's sermon. But the manner in which He preaches from it is this: he finds Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, in it. He declares the Man, who had been lately approved of God in the midst of them by miracles and signs, to be now in heaven, and, as the God spoken of in that prophecy, to have now shed forth the promised Spirit; and, moreover, that this same One was the Lord spoken of in that prophecy, whose name was for salvation now but whose day would be for judgment by and bye. This is Peter's sermon and exhortation upon the text from Joel. It is the Man now in heaven, whom he finds, or declares, in all the parts of that magnificent

oracle.

If John, I may here say, find in Jesus on earth, the Son from the bosom of the Father, in full unsullied glory, so Peter now finds in heaven, in the place there of all grace and salvation and power, the Son of Man, the Nazarene, who had been despised and rejected here.

So, in the next chapter-It is Jesus of Nazareth (the name of all slight and scorn among men) now glorified on high, whom Peter speaks of and acts by. The lame beggar at the beautiful gate of the temple is healed by the faith of that name; and then the Apostle. further declares, that this same Jesus the heavens had received, and would retain, till the time when His restored presence should bring refreshing and restitution with it. And being challenged by the rulers; in the chapter that follows, on the ground of this miracle of healing, Peter publishes this same despised Jesus of Nazareth, as the Stone set at naught by the builders here, but made the Head of the corner in heaven.

This is the name and the testimony-whether we see the Apostles in the face of the power of the world, or in the midst of the sorrows of the children of men, this is their only thought-here all their art is found, their virtue, and their strength. And immediately after this, this same name of Jesus is all their plea and ground of confidence in the presence of God. The weak One, as men might say, "the Holy Child, Jesus," whom Israel and the Gentiles, Herod and Pilate, the kings of the earth and the rulers, had stood against and refused, this One they hope in before God. They know Him in the sanctuary now, as they had known Him among men before. And mark their different style in using that name. Mark the assurance with which they pledge it to the needy, the boldness with which they contend for it before the world, and the tenderness-" Thy Holy Child, Jesus" - with which they plead it with God. And the place where they had thus named that name before God is shaken, and they are filled with the Holy Ghost. All power is now owned in heaven as belonging to that name, as before all power had flowed out of it here. The beggar at the gate of the temple had been healed by it, and the rushing, mighty wind from above now shakes the place where it had been pleaded. Yea, more; the world, or hell itself, is moved at it, for the high-priests and Sadducees are filled with indignation, and cast the witnesses of that name into the common prison.

With all this, Peter, in the fullest manner, sets forth the weakness and humiliation of the Jesus whom he was thus again and again testifying to be now exalted to the highest in the heavens. This is very striking in these early preachings of his. He had been slain, Peter says, set at naught, delivered up, denied, taken, crucified, killed, hanged on a tree. He puts no restraint on language like that. And, in the same spirit, he seems to glory in the despised name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He has it on his lips again and again. All the forms of sorrow and of scorn, which " the Prince of life," " the Holy One and the Just," wore or carried in His heart, his body, or his circumstances here among men, are rehearsed and remembered by him in this fine vivid style, under the fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost. This is the One he glories in, all through these chapters of his earliest ministry to the Jews (chap. 2 and 6). And yet, this One who had been thus dealt with here, he declares to be God's great ordinance, "Lord and Christ." That a man in heaven was David's Lord, that the seed of Abraham was raised up for blessing, that the promised

Prophet, like unto. Moses, was ascended on high; this` was the word he spake with boldness.

And as this anointing of the Holy Ghost thus leads Peter to testify of the Man in heaven, of Jesus of Nazareth, once denied here, but now exalted there, so rapture in the Holy Ghost, immediately afterward does the same for Stephen (see chap. 7). If Peter speak of Him in heaven, Stephen sees Him in heaven. The preacher declares Him without fear,- the martyr sees Him without a cloud. "But he being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God."

Thus, after this manner, the Spirit gives Jesus in heaven to the lips and to the eyes of his different witnesses. But it is blessed to add, that Jesus in heaven was as great a reality to Peter as He was to Stephen, though Peter knew that mystery under an anointing only, while Stephen knew it under a rapture, in the Holy Ghost. May we, beloved, know it in our souls in more of the like power! May we enjoy it in the light of the Spirit now, as we shall enjoy it in more than the vision of it forever!

Such is the first preaching in the Acts, after the great link had been formed between " God" and " flesh, and between " God manifest in the flesh" and " heaven." But what a vast and wondrous scene is in this way kept within the view of faith, and all for our blessing, and light, and joy. We see the links between heaven and earth, God and sinners, the bosom of the Father and the Manger of Bethlehem, the cross of Calvary and the throne of the Majesty in the highest. Could human thought have ever reached or planned such a scene as that? But there it is before us a great reality at this hour, and for eternity? "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He descended first into the lower parts of the 'earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." The Spirit had revealed the God of glory in the Babe of Bethlehem; and now, when all power and grace is ministered from heaven, the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost -the healing of the sorrows of the children of men-the salvation of sinners-the promise of days of refreshing and restitution, all this is found and declared to be in and from the Man glorified in heaven! What divine mysteries are these, passing all conception of the heart! "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" was the inquiry of the Lord in the day of His humiliation; and the only right answer was this, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And now, in its season, when it is asked of the Apostles in the day of their preaching, " By what power or by what name have ye done this?" the divine answer is this, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

This is the One, the same One, the only One. He has left His memorial in " the lower parts of the earth," and borne it with Him upward, " far above all heavens." He fills all things. God has been here, Man is there. That God was here on earth in full glory was told to faith in other days, the Son of the bosom among the children of men; that Man was now in heaven, having passed in there from amid the slight and scorn, 'the weakness and humiliation of the scene here, was now told to faith, in like manner, in these days. And faith apprehends the mystery, that it is the One, the same One, the only One-that He who ascended is He also who had descended, that He who descended is the same also that ascended.

"His glorious meetness (to use very much the language of another) for all the acts and duties of His mediatory office is resolved into the union of His two natures in the same Person. He who was conceived and born of the Virgin was Immanuel, that is, God was manifest in the flesh. 'To us a

child is born, to us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' The One who spake to the Jews, and as a man was then only a little more than thirty years old, was 'before Abraham' (John 8). The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of His whole Person."

This is the mystery. Faith apprehends it in the full certainty of the soul. And faith apprehends more of the same mystery, and listens with intelligence and delight to this-" justified in the Spirit, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world." God, though manifest in the flesh, was justified in the spirit. All in Him was perfect moral glory; all was, to the divine mind, and for the divine acceptance, infinitely, ineffably right. We have need of a justification from without or through another. Nothing in us stands justified in itself; all in Him did so. Not a syllable, not a breath, not a motion, which was not an offering acceptable, well-pleasing to God, an odor of sweetest smell. "He was as holy in the Virgin's womb as in the Father's bosom; as spotless as Man as He was as God; as unsullied in the midst of the world's pollutions as when daily the Father's delight before the world began." Faith knows this, and knows it well, without a thought to cloud it. And, therefore, faith also knows that His history, the toils and sorrows, the death and resurrection of this Blessed One, " God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," was not for Himself, as though He needed it, but for sinners, that He and His precious history might be " preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world." In the sacrifice He accomplished, in the righteousness He wrought out and brought in, He is presented to sinners, even the most distant, be they who they may, far off or near, Gentile or Jew, that they may trust in Him, though still in this world, and be assured of their justification through Him (1 Tim. 3:16).

Time would fail to watch and follow the Word of God throughout, upon this mystery; but I would add, that among all the epistles, as they follow the book of "the Acts," that to the Hebrews is eminent in doing service for our souls, connected with it. "Received up into glory," is a voice heard throughout that divine oracle, from beginning to end. Would that the soul had in power, what the mind has in enjoyment, when listening to such a voice. One can not write but with the sense of this, and one would not write but with the confession of it.

Each chapter of this wondrous writing, or each stage or period in the argument of it, gives us a sight of the ascended Jesus. It opens directly and at once with this. It seems as though it were forcing this object upon us somewhat abruptly. Most welcome indeed all this is to the soul; but this is the style of it. The Son, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person, is seen, after having by Himself purged our sins here, in His ascended place in heaven, inheriting there a name more excellent than that of angels, getting title to a throne which is to endure forever, and filling a seat in highest dignity and power, till His enemies be made His footstool.

The second chapter gives us another sight of the same object. The Sanctifier, having descended to be the kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and to do for them a kinsman's part, is then in his assumed Manhood declared to have re-ascended the heavens, there to fulfill for us the services of a merciful and faithful high priest. And this Scripture, I may say, so abounds with this thought, that this same chapter gives us this same object a second time. It shows us, as from Psa. 8, that "wondrous man," made for a season lower than the Angels, now crowned on high with glory and honor.

The next chapters (3, 4) are but parenthetic, incidental to previous teaching; but still this sight of Christ is kept before us. He is declared to have been here on earth, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, but now to have passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, to give us grace and help from the sanctuary there.

In the next subject, that of the Priesthood (chap. 5, 6, 7), we have the same ascended Lord still in view. The Son is declared to be made a priest, "higher than the heavens." He had descended to come of the tribe of Judah, and to perfect Himself in the days of his flesh here; but was now ascended again, the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him.

And so, in the next great matter dealt with-the Covenants (chaps. 8 and 9). Immediately on their opening before us, we see Jesus in the tabernacle in the heavens-that tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, and therefrom ministering "the better covenant."

'And so again, in the next chapter, when the victim is the thought, as the covenant and the priesthood had been before, we have the same ascended Jesus in view (chap. 10) It is the one who could say, "Lo I come!" that is revealed as having sanctified sinners in the body prepared for Him on earth; but then to have gained the heavens; opening for us a way to tread those highest, purest, brightest courts of God's presence, with all boldness.

Here the doctrine of the Epistle formally closes; and, after this manner, we see, in various lights and characters, the same glorious and wondrous Person, the ascended Son of God.

And I may add, so rich is this Epistle in this thought, so faithful is it to this its object, that after we formally leave the doctrine of it, we soon find that we have not left this great mystery-Christ in heaven. In the practical warnings that follow, we find it still. Jesus, as "the Author and Finisher of faith," is seen at the end of His life of faith in heaven. "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher 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." Thus is He seen in heaven in this new character-the life of faith leads Him there, as all that He did and suffered for us in divine grace leads Him there. And there He shines before the eye of faith; and had we but senses to discern it, and a heart to enjoy it, we should know it, that heaven itself is bright with beauty and glory unknown to it before, since Jesus in all these characters, won and acquired on earth and for us sinners, has reached it.

And this is the mystery-the assumption of flesh and blood by the Son, so that He became the kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and then the assumption of that wondrous Person into heaven. "God was manifest in the flesh.-received up into glory." And blessed is the task of inspecting, as we have been seeking to do, these mysterious links. And these links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together what lay at distances beyond all created thought to reach. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He formed them for the divine delight and glory, according to divine eternal counsels. The "Word made flesh " of St. John is " the good thing out of Nazareth" (chap. 1). The Emmanuel of Matthew was the babe who lay for worship in the manger at Bethlehem (chaps. 1 and 2) In the midst of the throne, there has been seen a Lamb, as it had been slain (Rev. 5). In the person of the One, whose lips were telling of wisdom suited to the commonest traffic of human life, He was found who had been set up, in the secrecy of the Godhead-persons, as the foundation of all the divine way (Prov. 8) In the bush of Horeb, there was

the God of Abraham; in the cloud of the Wilderness, the glory; in the armed man of Jericho, the Captain of the Lord's host; in the stranger that visited Gideon in his threshing-floor, and Manoah in his field, the God to whom alone worship is due throughout the whole creation. These are among the witnesses, that (in unspeakable grace, and for the divine delight and glory) the highest and the lowest are linked together. "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven."

How finely that thought of the apostle which we get in the Epistle to the Ephesians, rises upon the renewed mind-" Now He that ascended what is it but that He descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" The dignities, the offices, the services which the ascended One fills and renders, are of so eminent a character, that they tell us He must be He who had already descended, already been One in heaven "above all"-as it is written " He that cometh down from heaven is above all." The dignity of His Person is involved in this mystery of His ascending and descending. That challenge in Eph. 4:8,9, seems to intimate this; and this Epistle to the Hebrews opens he reasons of it more fully. For it tells us, that ere He ascended, He had accomplished the purging of our sins that ere He ascended, He had destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered his captives-that ere an ascended, He had perfected Himself as the author of Grnal salvation to such as we are (chaps. 1, 2, 5.) In these characters and in such others, He went up; and when He had actually ascended, He filled the true sanctuary in the heavens, the tabernacle which.. God pitched and not man, there to secure to us an eternal inheritance, and to purify the heavenly things (chaps. 8 and 9).

Who could have ascended in such glory and strength this, and far more than this, but One who had been ready in heaven "above all?" "Now that He ascended that is it but that He descended first?" The offices He fills tell who He is. His sufferings, even in weakness and humiliation, bespeak His Person in full divine glory.

But then again, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things." This follows, and. this tells us the boundlessness of His sovereignty, as the other had revealed to us the dignity of His Person. In His works, His journeys, His triumphs, the highest and the lowest regions are visited by Him. He has been on earth, in the lower parts of the earth. He has been in the grave, the territory of the power of death. He is now in the highest heavens, having passed by all principalities and powers. His realms and dominions are thus shown to the eye of faith. No pinnacle of the temple, no exceeding high mountain, could have afforded such a sight. But it is shown to faith. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

This is the mystery. It is the same Jesus, Immanuel, the Son, and yet the kinsman of the seed of Abraham. And here I would say, for there is a call for it, I know we are not to confound the natures in this glorious and blessed One. I fully bow in faith to the truth that the Sanctifier took part of flesh and blood. I avow with my whole soul the true humanity in His Person; but it was not an imperfect humanity, in the condition, or under the results of sin, in any wise. But I ask, with that, is there not some unsuspected and yet real unbelief touching the mystery of the Person in the mind of many? Is the undividedness of the Person throughout all the periods and transitions of this glorious mysterious history kept in the view of the soul?

I would have grace to delight myself in the language of the Holy Ghost, and speak of " the Man, Christ Jesus." Have I ever had a thought that did not own it? The Man that was obedient is given

to us as the ground and object of righteousness (Rom. 5:15). The Man that is risen is declared to be the pledge of resurrection to us (1 Cor. 15:21). The Man that is ascended is the great assurance to us that our interests are, every moment, before God in heaven (1 Tim. 2:5). The Man to return from heaven by and bye will be the security and joy of the coining kingdom (Psa. 8). The mystery of Man obedient, dead, raised, ascended, and returned, thus sustains, we may say, the whole counsel of God. But still, again I say, the Person in its undividedness is to be kept in the view of the soul. "The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of His whole Person." Yea, indeed, and His whole Person was on the Cross, as everywhere else. The Person was the sacrifice, and in that Person was the Son, "God over all, blessed forever." He gave up the Ghost (παρεκώκε το πνευμα), though He died under God's judgment against sin, and though He was by the hands of wicked men crucified and slain. And this is an infinite mystery.

It was Himself, beloved, from first to last. He trod the mysterious way Himself, though He trod it unaided and alone. None other than He, " God manifest in the flesh," could have been there. The Son of the bosom became the Lamb for the altar here, and then the Lamb that was slain reached the place of glory, far above all heavens. It is the Person which gives efficacy to all. Services would be nothing-sorrows would be nothing-death, resurrection, and ascension, would all be nothing (could we conceive them), if Jesus were not the One He is. His Person is the Rock; therefore His work is perfect. It is the mystery of mysteries. But He is not presented for our discussion, but for our apprehension, faith, confidence, love, and worship.

God and man, heaven and earth, are together before the thoughts of faith in this great mystery. God has been here on earth, and that too in flesh, and man glorified is there on high in heaven. It is the links between these great things I have sought to look at particularly, fitted as this exercise is to make the things of heaven and eternity real and near to our souls. The moral distances are infinite, but the distances themselves are now nothing. Nature, beset with lusts and worldliness, makes it hard indeed for the soul to pass in; but the distance itself is nothing. Jesus, after He was in heaven, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, showed Himself to Stephen just outside the city of the Jews; and, in a like moment of time, shone across the path of Saul of Tarsus, as he traveled from Jerusalem to Damascus; and though we have not like visits from the glory, the nearness and the reality of it are pledged afresh, and made good to our souls, by the sight of these great mysteries.

And is not the kingdom to be the exhibition of the results of these mysterious links? For heaven and earth, in their different ways, shall witness and celebrate them. "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad." The church, one with this exalted glorified Man, will be on high, far above all principalities and powers. The ladder which Jacob saw, shall (in the mystery) be set up, the Son of man shall be the center as well as the stay of all this predestinated system of glory and of government. The manifestation of the sons of God shall deliver the whole creation from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty. The heavenly city shall descend, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor unto it, while she shall minister to the scene beneath her, the streams, of her river, the leaves of her tree, and the light of her glory. Angels round the throne shall say, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;" and every creature in heaven, earth, and sea, shall give "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever." The nations shall learn war no more. The stick of Judah and the stick of

Ephraim shall be one, and one king shall be to them both. " And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." And what is all this, but the happy fruit, to be gathered in the days of the coming kingdom, of these links which have been, as we have been seeing, already formed? The germs and principles of all these manifestations in heaven and on earth, among angels, and Men, and all creatures, and the creation itself, are found, so to speak, at Bethlehem, in the Garden of the Sepulcher, and at the Mount of Olives.

May heart and conscience learn the lesson! May we gaze on these mysterious links which we have been speaking of, more in company with the angels in the fields of Bethlehem, and in the tomb of Jesus I Or, I might here add, more in the dear mind of the disciples on the Mount of Olives, as they gazed there on the glorious link which was then forming between Jesus and the heavens (see them in Luke 24:44-52). They were, then, like Israel in Lev. 23:9-14, celebrating the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits. Jesus, the true first-fruits, had just then been gathered, and He had, as their divine teacher, expounded to them the mystery of the gathered sheaf, that is, the meaning of His resurrection. They then watched that mysterious moment. They looked as their risen Lord ascended, and they keep the feast as with a sacrifice of burnt-offering. " They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Surely we may say, " great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

He was received up gloriously or in glory, as well as into glory. He entered the light of the highest heavens; but He entered it, glorious Himself-and there He now is, a glorious body, the pattern of what ours is to be. The real manhood is there, in the highest heavens, but it is glorified. And though thus glorified, yet it is the real human nature still. "Jesus is in the same body in heaven, wherein He conversed here on earth. This is that 'Holy Thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when He was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body which was offered for us, and wherein He bare our sins on the tree. That individual nature wherein He suffered all sorts of reproaches, contempts, and miseries, is now unchangeably seated in incomprehensible glory. The body which was pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other. That tabernacle shall never be folded up. The Person of Christ, and therein His human nature, shall be the eternal Object of divine glory, praise, and worship."

Thus speaks one for our edification and comfort. And one of our own poets has thus sung of Him, looking after Him up to heaven:-

"There the dear Man, my Savior sits,

The God, how bright He shines,

And scatters infinite delights

On all the happy minds.

Seraphs, with elevated strains,

Circle the throne around,

And charm and fix the starry plains

With an immortal sound.

Jesus the Lord their harps employs;

Jesus, my love, they sing;

Jesus, the name of both our joys,

Sounds sweet on every string."

" His present state is a state of the highest glory, of exaltation above the whole creation of God, and above every name that is or can be named."

He was received up with the unspeakable love, and with the boundless unmeasured acceptance of God the Father, as He had wrought out and accomplished the purpose of His grace in the redemption of sinners.

He was received up in triumph, having led captivity captive, and spoiled principalities and powers-and there He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on-high, with all power given to Him in heaven and on earth.

He was received up as the head of His body, the -Church, so that out of the fullness of the Godhead which dwelleth in Him bodily, it "increaseth with the increase of God," through the Holy Ghost given to us.

He was received up as into a temple, there to appear in the presence of God for us, there to sit as the Minister of the true Tabernacle, there to make continual intercession for us, and in this and in like ways of grace to serve in His body before the throne.

He was received up as our forerunner, as into the Father's house, there to prepare mansions for the children, that where He is, there they may be also.

And further, as He sat down in heaven, He sat down as an expectant. He waits to come forth to meet His saints in the air that they may be with Him forever. He waits till He is sent to bring times of refreshing to the earth again by His own presence. And He waits till His enemies be made His footstool.

.Cold is the affection, and small the energy; but. in principle I know nothing at all worthy of such visions of faith, but that spirit of devotedness that can say with Paul, " I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," and that spirit of desire which looks after Him still, and says, " Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Beloved, our God has joined Himself thus by links which never can be broken, which His own delight and glory in them, as well as His counsel and strength, will secure forever. These links we have gazed at, mysterious and precious as they are. Himself has formed them, yea Himself constitutes them, faith understands them, and on the Rock of Ages the poor believing sinner rests, and rests in peace and safety.

I remember the day when David brought up the ark from Baalah of Judah, how he did so unadvisedly, and sorrow and evil rebuked him for it. That unadvisedness, that carelessness of his, came from want of communion with the Lord. Had he been in spirit more in communion, he would not so have erred: On that great occasion he listened to nature. Joy attended it; for his conscience did not upbraid him. It was not profaneness but carelessness. And much of this may be betrayed by others of -us, who are little indeed in other excellencies of David.

If any unadvised words in these meditations have offended the simplest soul, which, apart from the reasoning and liberty of the flesh, seeks Jesus in His person, and offices, and work, I am sorry. But the liberty of the mere mind of man is to be rebuked, though found in the saint. Faith owns the same Blessed One from the manger to the Cross, from the Cross through the grave and gate of death, in resurrection, and up to the highest heavens. The only begotten Son who lay in the bosom of the Father, God and yet with God, is known, by faith, in Jesus of Nazareth, having taken part of flesh and blood with the children, as kinsman of the seed of Abraham. Faith tracks this Blessed One on earth, but discerns the full unsullied glory that was His all the while. Faith further watches and follows the life He led here, in sorrow, rejection, temptation, but sees it all passed in a spirit of faith and dependence, answered by the supports and consolations of God. Faith understands the end of that life, in the death and woe unutterable of the cursed tree. And faith ascends with the same Blessed One into heaven, and traces His present life there until He come again.

With my whole soul, I say, May these meditations help to make these objects of faith a little nearer and more real to us! They will be worthless, if they tend

not to glorify Him in our thoughts, to give Him, with a fresh pressure, beloved, to our hearts.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee! "

May that be the breathing of our souls till we see Him! Amen.

"Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore."

The Son of God

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet."-Heb. 11:8.

In the opening of the Gospel by St. Luke, one is struck by the deep and vivid expression of intimacy between heaven and earth, which is found and felt to be there. It is man's necessity and weakness which open the heavenly door; but once opened, it is thrown wide open.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. They were of the priestly family, the seed of Aaron. But it was not their righteousnesses that opened heaven to them, but their need and infirmities. Elizabeth was barren, and they were both now well-stricken in age; and their point of real blessing lay there, lay in their sorrow and weakness. For to the barren wife and the childless husband, Gabriel comes with a word of promise from heaven. But, as we said, heaven being once opened, is flung wide open. Angels are all action and joy; and no matter, whether it be the Temple in the royal holy city, or a distant village in despised Galilee, Gabriel with equal readiness visits either and both. The glory of God also fills the fields of Bethlehem, as well as hosts of angels. The Holy

Ghost, in His divine light and power, fills His elect vessels; and the Son Himself assumes flesh. Heaven and earth are very near each other. The action and the joy, which had begun on high, are felt and answered from the scene here below: the shepherds, the favored women, the aged priest and the unborn child, share the holy enthusiasm of the moment, and waiting saints go forth from the place of expectation.

I know no scripture finer than these chapters (Luke 1, 2.) in this character. It was, as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; but a blessed transition was accomplished- "Heaven comes down our souls to greet."

Earth learns, and learns in the mouth of these wondrous witnesses, that the door of heaven was indeed thrown wide open to her. And the intimacy was deep, as the services and grace were precious. The angel calls Zacharias and Mary by their names, and speaks to them also of Elizabeth by name, a language or style which lets the heart know its meaning at once.

We might bless the Lord for this, and we should do so, did we a, little more simply, a little more believingly, walk on in the sense of the nearness and reality of heaven.

Jacob and Stephen, in their day, and in like manner, had heaven opened to them, and were given also to know their own personal interest in it. A ladder was set up in the sight of Jacob, and as the top of it entered heaven, the foot of it rested just on the spot where he was lying. It was a mean, dishonored place, the witness, too, of his wrong as well as of his misery. But the ladder adopted it, and the voice of the Lord, who was in His glory above it, spoke to Jacob of blessing, of security, of guidance and inheritance.

Stephen, likewise, saw the heaven opened and the glory there; but the Son of Man was standing at the right hand of God. And this told the martyr, as the ladder had told the patriarch, that he and his circumstances at that very moment were the thought and object of heaven.

Thus was it, after these same ways, in these distant days of Jacob and of Stephen, distant from each other as well as distant from us. But time makes no difference. Faith sees these same opened heavens now, and learns, too, like those of old, that they are ours. It learns that there are links between them and our circumstances. In the eye of faith there is a ladder, heaven stands open before it, and "the Man Christ Jesus" is seen there-the Mediator of the New Covenant, the High Priest, the Advocate with the Father, the One who reconciles and sympathizes, the Forerunner, too, into those places of glory.

Jesus has ascended, and the present action in the heavens, where He is gone, is known by faith to be all "for us." Our need, as well as our sorrow, is in remembrance there. Jacob's sufferings were those of a penitent, Stephen's were a martyr's; but heaven was the heaven of Jacob as well as of Stephen.

But though this is so, this is not all. Faith knows another secret or mystery in heaven. It knows that if the Lord, as He surely did, took His seat there in these characters of grace for us, He took it likewise as the One whom man had despised and the world rejected. This is equally among the apprehensions which faith takes of the heavens where the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is now seated.

The Lord Jesus died under the hand of God, His soul was made an offering for sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." And He rose as the One who had thus died, His resurrection witnessing the acceptance of the sacrifice; and He ascended the heavens in the same character also, there to carry on the purpose of the grace of God in such a death and such a resurrection.

But the Lord Jesus died also under the hand of man; that is, man's wicked hand was in that death, as well and as surely as God's infinite grace. He was refused by the husbandman, hated by the world, cast out, crucified, and slain. This is another character of his death. And His resurrection and ascension were in that character also, parts or stages in the history of One whom the world had rejected; His resurrection, consequently, pledging the judgment of the world (Acts 17:31), and His ascension leading Him to the expectation of a day when His enemies are to be made His footstool (Heb. 10:13).

These distinctions give us to understand the different sights which faith, in the light of the word, gets of the ascended Jesus, seeing Him, as it does, in priestly grace there, making intercession for us; and, at the same time, waiting, as in expectation, the judgment of His enemies.

The Gospel publishes the first of these mysteries, i.e., the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of God for us, and His resurrection and ascension as in character with such a death. And this Gospel is rightly gloried in as all our salvation. But the second of these mysteries, the death of the Lord under the hand of man, may be somewhat forgotten, while the first of them is thus rightly gloried in. But this is a serious mistake in the soul of a saint, or in the calculations and testimony of the Church. For let this great fact, this second mystery, as we have called it, the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of man, be forgotten, as it may be on earth, it is surely not forgotten in heaven. It is not, it is true, the occasion of present action there; it is the death of the victim, and the intercessions of the Priest upon such death, which form the action that is there now. But as surely it will be the death of the divine Martyr, the death of the Son of God at the hand of man, that will give character to the action there by and bye.

These distinctions are very clearly preserved in Scripture. Heaven, as it is opened to us in Rev. 4, is a very different heaven, differently minded I mean, differently moved and occupied, from the heaven presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews; just as different, I may say, as the death of the Lord Jesus looked at as under man's hand, i.e., perpetrated by us, and as under God's hand, i.e., accomplished for us. We may have the same objects or materials in each, but they will be seen in very different connections. We have, for instance, a throne and a temple in each of these heavens, the heaven of the Hebrews and the heaven of the Apocalypse; but the contrasts between them are very solemnly preserved. In the Hebrews, the throne is a throne of grace, and whatever our present time of need and sorrow may require, is found there and got there. In the Apocalypse, the throne is one of judgment, and the instruments and agencies of wrath and of vengeance are seen to be lying before and around it. In the Hebrews, the sanctuary or temple is occupied by the High Priest of our profession, the Mediator of the better covenant, serving there in the virtue of His own most precious blood. In the Apocalypse, the temple gives fearful notes of preparation for judgment. Lightning, and earthquake, and voices attend the opening of it. It is as the temple seen by the prophet, filled with smoke, and the pillars of it shaking in token that the God to whom vengeance belonged was there in His glory (see Isa. 6).

The sight we get of heaven in the Apocalypse, is thus very solemn. It is the place of power furnishing itself with the instruments of judgment. Seals are opened, trumpets are blown, vials are emptied, but all this introducing some awful visitation of the earth. The altar that is there is not the altar of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the heavenly priesthood eat of the bread of life; but an altar that supplies penal fire for the earth. And there is war there; and at the last it opens for Him whose name is called " the Word of God," whose vesture is dipped in blood, and who carries a sharp sword in His mouth, that by it He may smite the nations.

Surely this is heaven in a new character. And the contrast is very solemn. This is not the heaven which faith now apprehends, a sanctuary of peace filled with the provisions and witnesses of grace, but a heaven which tells us that though judgment is the Lord's strange work, yet that it is His work in due season. For heaven, in its revolutions, is, as we may say, the place or the witness of grace, of judgment, and of glory. It is the heaven of grace now, it will become the heaven of judgment in the day of Rev. 4, and so continue throughout the action of the Book of the Apocalypse, and then, at the close of that Book, as we see in chap. 21, 22, it becomes the heaven of glory.

The soul should be accustomed to this serious truth, that judgment precedes glory. I speak of these things in the progress of the history of the earth or the world. The believer has passed from death into life. There is no condemnation for him. He rises not to judgment but to life. But he ought to know, that in the progress of the divine history of the earth or the world, judgment precedes glory. The kingdom will be seen in the sword or "rod of iron," ere it be seen in the scepter. When the Son takes the heathen for His possession, the first thing He does is to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Ancient of days sits in white garments on a throne of fiery flame with the books opened before Him, ere the Son of Man comes to Him with the clouds of heaven to receive dominion (Psa. 2; Dan. 7).

These lessons are very clearly taught and marked in Scripture. In the day of Rev. 4, as I may express it, heaven has conceived a new idea, taken notice of a new object. It is Christ rejected by man, and not Christ accepted of God for sinners, that has become its thought and object. And accordingly, preparations are making to avenge the wrongs of the Lord Jesus on the world, and to vindicate His rights in the earth: in other words, it is heaven beginning that action which is to seat Him in His kingdom upon the judgment of His enemies.

But all this shows us again, according to my leading thought in these meditations on " the Son of God," how it is the same Person that is kept before us, and to be known by us, in each and all of the stages or periods of the same great mystery. We are still, at whatever point we may have arrived, in company with the same Jesus. For these distinctions, which I have been now noticing, tell us, that He has been received up into heaven, and is now seated there, in the very characters in which He had been before known and manifested here on earth. For He had been here, as the One who accomplished the grace of God towards us sinners to perfection, and as the One who endured the enmity of the world in its full measure; and it is in these two characters, as we have now seen, that He is seated in heaven.

He does not quickly take this second character, or appear actively in heaven as the One who had been despised and rejected on earth. He lingers ere He reaches the heaven of the Apocalypse. And in this feature of character, in this delaying His approaches to judgment, and tarrying in the

place of grace, we have a very sweet expression of the Jesus whom faith has already known. For when He was here, as the God of judgment He approached Jerusalem with a very measured step. He said to her, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing," ere He said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." He lingered in the plains below, visiting every city and village of the land, in patient service of grace, ere He took his seat on the Mount, to speak of judgment and of the desolations of Zion (Matt. 24:1). And now, of Him who, after this manner, trod softly the road which led Him to the Mount of Olives, the place of judgment, is it written, "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3).

How do we thus hold in view the same Person, with like character attaching to Him, whether when He was here on earth, or as He is now in heaven, the Person One, the moral one, though scenes and conditions change. "The grace that was in Christ in this world is the same with that which is in Him now in heaven." Comforting words! How truly should we know we speak truly when we say, We know Him! We have been considering Him from the beginning. He lay in the Father's bosom, and then in the Virgin's womb, and the manger of Bethlehem; He traversed the earth in full unsullied glory, though veiled; He died and was buried; rose, and returned to heaven, and, as we have now been meditating, faith sees Him there, the One whom faith had known to be here, the very One, the minister and witness of the grace of God to man, the bearer of man's full enmity against God, and yet the reluctant God of judgment..

But I must notice still more of this same Jesus, and something still more immediately in connection with my present meditation.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He looked for His kingdom. He offered Himself, as her King, the Son of David, to the daughter of Zion. He took, the form of the One who had been of old promised by the prophets, and entered the city " meek and riding upon an ass." In a still earlier day, His star, the star of the kingly Bethlehemite, had appeared in the eastern world, summoning the Gentiles to the Son of David, born in the city of David. But what He then looked for He found not. " His own received Him not." But He carried with Him to heaven this very same 'mind, this desire for His kingdom. " A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for Himself a kingdom." He thinks of His kingdom though now on the throne of the Father, as He had thought of it and looked for it when here. And I may again say, how strictly, in this fine characteristic, are we kept in communion with the same Jesus still. Once on earth He was, and now in heaven He is, but we know Him, after these manners, as the same Lord, in Person one, in purpose and desire one, though places and conditions change. He was King of Israel when here, and with desire claimed His kingdom; and being refused it at the hands of the citizens, He has found it and received it in heaven, and in due time will return, in a day of the gladness of His heart, to administer it here where at the first He sought it. " I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed."

We are, after this manner, given the one Person, the same Jesus; and the heart prizes this when we think upon it. And there is one other feature of this identity, surpassing, yea, far surpassing, all

that I have already noticed.

When He was here He desired to be known by His disciples, to be discovered by them, poor sinners as they were, in some of His hidden glories. He rejoiced likewise in all the communications of His grace to faith. The faith which drew upon Him without reserve, the faith which used Him without ceremony, the faith which could outlive apparent neglect or repulse, was precious to Him. The sinner who would cling to Him in the face of the world's scorn, or would trust in Him all alone, without countenance or encouragement from others, was deeply welcome to Him. The soul that with freedom would ask for His presence, or seek communion with Him, seated at His feet or by His side, might get from Him what it would, or, like interceding Abraham, have Him as long as it pleased.

He desired oneness with His elect, full personal, abiding oneness, ready as He was to share with them His name with the Father, the love in which He stood, and the glory of which He was heir.

He sought sympathy, He longed for companionship in both His joys and His sorrows. And we can by no means appreciate the disappointings of His heart, when this He sought but found it not; deeper, at the least we may say, far deeper than when He claimed a kingdom, as we have already seen, and received it not. " Could ye not watch with me one hour," spoke a lonely disappointed heart.

And further still. He purposed, when lie was here, that He would share His throne with His people. He would not abide alone. He would share His honors and His dominions with His elect, as He would that they, in sympathy, should understand and share His joys and sorrows with Him.

And now (excellent and wonderful as is the mystery which speaks it to us), all this is, or is to be made, good to Him in and by the Church. The Church is called to answer the desires of the Lord Jesus in all these things, to be all this to Him, either in the Holy Ghost now, or in the kingdom by and bye; to enter now, in spirit, into His thoughts and affections, His joys and His sorrows, and hereafter to shine in His glory, and to sit on His throne.

What a mystery! The Church, now endowed with the indwelling Spirit, and destined to sit, glorious herself, in the inheritance of His dominion, is the answer to these deepest desires of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh. And again I say, what a mystery! We may well admire those harmonies which tell us of the same Jesus, the one Person in these different parts of His wondrous ways. He sought and claimed a kingdom when He was here, and He desired the sympathies of His saints when He was here. But His people were not prepared to own His royalty, His saints were not able to give Him this fellowship. A kingdom, however, He is receiving now in heaven, and He will return and minister it here. This fellowship He is beginning to find now through the Spirit indwelling in His elect, and it will be in its fuller measure made good to Him in the day of their perfection. The kingdom will be His glory and His joy. It is called, " the joy of the Lord," for it will be said to them who share it with Him, " Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But this fellowship, in which the Church will stand with Him, will be still more to Him. It was His deepest desire here, and it will be His richest enjoyment by and bye. Eve was more to Adam than all his possessions beside.

Have we, beloved, any power in our souls to rejoice in the thought of the heart of the Lord Jesus being thus satisfied? We may trace the forms of these joys which thus await Him as in the day of

His espousal, the day of the gladness of His heart; but have we capacity, in spirit, to do more? It is humbling to put such inquiries to one's own soul, surely, we may say with all unfeignedness.

But these will be His, the Kingdom and the Church.

The Kingdom will be His by many titles. He will take it under covenant-or, according to counsels which were taken in God before the foundation of the world. He will take it by personal right-for He, the Son of Man, never lost the Image of God. Of course He could not, because, though Son of Man, He was Son of the Father. But He did not; and having that Image, dominion is His by personal title, according to the first great ordinance of power and rule, " And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." He will take it likewise by title of obedience-as we read of Him " being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross-wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." He will take it by title of death-for we read again, " and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven." And the cross, on which he accomplished that death, had written upon it, as we may say, in all the languages of the world, and kept there unblotted, uncanceled in a single letter of it, by the strong prevailing hand of God Himself, " This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Thus, dominion is the Son of Man's by covenant, by personal title, by title of service or obedience, and by title of death or purchase--and I may add, by conquest also-for the judgments which are to clear His way to the throne, and take out of the kingdom all that offends, are, as we know, executed by his hand. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

What foundations are thus laid for the dominion of the Son of Man! How does every title join in subscribing itself to His honored and glorious name! As we see in Rev. 5 none in heaven or earth could take the Book but the Lamb that was slain, who was the Lion of Judah; but into His hand He that sits on the throne lets it pass at once, and then the Church in glory, angels and all creatures in all parts of the great dominions, triumph in the Lamb's rights and title. And if the title be thus sure, sealed by a thousand witnesses, and wondrous too, so will be the power and kingdom which it sustains. In the Lord Jesus Christi, the Son of God, " the Lord from heaven," as well as " the Son of Man," all the great purpose of God in the rule of all things stands revived and established. We may say, " as all the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen," so all the destinies of man under God are alike in Him Yea, and in Him Amen.

There was dominion in Adam. There was government in Noah. There was fatherhood in Abraham. There was judgment in David, and royalty in Solomon. In Christ all these glories will meet and shine together. In Him and under Him will be "the restitution of all things." Many crowns He will wear, and many names He will bear. His name of " Lord" in Psa. 8, is not His name of " King" in Psa. 72 The form of glory in each is peculiar. The crowns are different, but both are His. And He is likewise "the Father of the everlasting age"-a King and yet a Father-the Solomon and the Abraham of God. In Him all shall be blest, and yet to Him all shall bow. The sword too is His, " the rod of

iron," as well as " the scepter of righteousness." He will judge with David and rule with Solomon.

As son of David He takes power to exercise it in a given sphere of glory. As Son of Man, He takes power, and exercises it in a wider sphere of glory. He comes likewise in His own glory, in the glory of the Father, and in the glory of the holy angels. And as the risen man He takes power.

This is shown us in 1 Cor. 15:23-27. And in that character He has His peculiar sphere also. He puts death, the last enemy, under His feet. And this is so fitting, like everything else, perfect in its place and season, that as the risen man He should put down death.

Scenes of various glory will surround Him, and characters of various glory will attach to Him. The very bearing of the kingdom will be this, it will be full of the glories of Christ-varied, yet consistent and blending. The Cross has already presented a sample of this perfect workmanship. "Mercy and truth" met together there. There God was "just and yet a "justifier". And it is to be after this same manner in coming days of strength, as it has been, thus, in past days of weakness. As mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, once met and embraced each other, so authority and service, blessing and yet rule, a name of all majesty and power, and yet such a name as shall come down like showers on the mown grass, shall be known and enjoyed together. There shall be the universal dominion of man in the whole range of the works of God, the honors of the kingdom in holding all nations under rule, together with the presence of the Father of the everlasting age holding them all in blessing. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

All is tending to this blessed and glorious lordship and headship of the Son of God, though it be through "seas of tribulation" to some, and through the, full judgment of "this present evil world." God is leading this way, and man cannot hinder it, though he seek to fix the earth on its present foundations, refusing to learn that they are all out of course, that the earth and its inhabitants are dissolved, and that Christ alone bears up its pillars. " The bundle of life " (as she spoke who confessed to David's glory in the day of David's humiliation) is a firm bundle; well compacted and sure, because the Lord Himself is in it, as of old He was in the burning bush. But beyond the measure of that bundle (weak and despised in the thoughts of man, like a bramble-bush), all is tottering,-and times are surely at hand, that will teach this in history, to those who will not learn it or seek to learn it, and watch and pray to learn it in spirit.

The sword and the scepter of this coming day of power are alone in their glories. There is no other sword, no other scepter, that is or can be like them. The sword is to be "bathed in heaven." What an expression! The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, the powers of heaven shall be shaken, darkness shall be under His feet, and thick clouds of the sky shall accompany Him, in the day when it is drawn for the slaughter. And the power of it is the treading of the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Everything that is high and lifted up, the principalities and powers that rule the darkness of this world, the beast and his prophet, kings, captains, and mighty men, as well as the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, are among the enemies which are made to feel it-" The host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." The sources, as well as the agencies of evil, are searched out and visited by the light and strength of it.

Is not such a sword alone in its glory? Could Joshua's or David's have wrought such conquests as these? Would principalities of darkness have yielded to them? Would death and hell have submitted themselves? "Canst thou draw leviathan with a hook"?

But-" he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him."

In whose hand then, I ask, must that sword be, which can quell hosts like these? The very service in that day of power, like every other service of His, whether in weakness or in strength, tells us who he is. There is this beautiful and divine self-evidencing light and power in Him, and about Him, and around Him, let Him act as He may, yea, let Him suffer as He may, which we have been feebly tracing and admiring, but which we will still acknowledge and worship. The victories of this same God of battles, in other days, were of this same high character. For Of old His warfare bespoke His person and glory, as it is still to do. Therefore is it written of Him, " The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name." His warfare, in this utterance of the Spirit, is said to reveal His Lordship, His glory, His name, His person. In Egypt the gods felt His hand, as they did afterward among the Philistines, and then again in Babylon. Dagon fell before the Ark, Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped. These were days of the same hand.,

And as is the sword, so is the scepter. Solomon's was but a distant shadow of it, and Noah's government and Adam's dominion shall be thought of no more, in comparison with it.

All shall be the subject-world then, the subject creation as well as the subject nations. " O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day, declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people." Under the shadow of this scepter, and in the light of this throne of glory, shall dwell from one end of the earth to the other the "willing" and the "righteous" nations. There shall be a covenant between men and the beasts of the field. The wilderness too shall rejoice. The lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. The sun of that kingdom shall not go down, nor the moon withdraw herself, for the Lord shall be its everlasting light. Nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

Israel shall revive. The dry bones shall live. The two sticks of Judah and of Ephraim shall be one again. The city shall be called, "The Lord is there." Of the land it shall be said, "This land that was desolate is become as the garden of Eden." And again, she shall be saluted in words that speak her holy dignities. " The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness."

The Gentiles shall be brought to a right mind. Their reason will return to them. The senseless world, though "made by Him," yet " knew Him not." The kings of the earth and their rulers stood up against the anointed. They kicked against the pricks, betraying their madness and folly. But their reason will return to them. The story of Nebuchadnezzar will be found to be a mystery as well as a history. The reason of that head of gold, that great head of Gentile power, returned to him after his term of judicial folly; and he knew and owned that the heavens did rule. And so, the world by and bye will no longer senselessly not know its Maker, but as deeply own Him as once they madly refused Him. For " kings shall shut their mouths at Him," in token of this deep and worshipping acknowledgment. The beast's heart shall be taken away from them, and the man's heart be given them. No longer shall they be rebuked as by the ox that knoweth his owner, and by the crane, the

turtle, and the swallow, that observe the time of their coming, but they shall fly "as doves to their windows." " Behold these shall come from far: and, lo, those from the north, and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim."

The works of God's hand as well as Israel and the Gentiles, shall rejoice in this same scepter. " The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." The very soil shall own again the early and the latter rain, and the tillage as of a divine husbandman. "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it, thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it."

What a scepter! Is not such a scepter, as well as such a sword, alone in its glory? Was ever scepter like it? Could power in any hand but one be such as this? What Adam lost in the earth, what Israel lost in the land of election and of promise, what Abraham lost in a degraded, disowned, and outcast seed, what the house of David lost in the throne what the creation itself lost by reason of him who subjected it to bondage and corruption; all shall be gathered up and held and presented in the presence and power of the days of the Son of Man.

"The Son" alone could take such a kingdom. The virtue of the sacrifice already accomplished, as we have seen in earlier meditations on this blessed Object, rests on the Person of the Victim; the acceptableness of the sanctuary now filled and served, rests, in like manner, on the person of the high priest and mediator who is there; and the glories and the virtues of the kingdom that is to be, could be displayed and exercised and ministered only in and by the same person. The Son of God serves in the lowest and in the highest, in poverty and in wealth, in honor and dishonor, as the Nazarene and as the Bethlehemite, in earth and in heaven, and in a world of millennial glories both earthly and heavenly; but all service from beginning to end, in all stages and changes in the great mystery, tell who He is. He could no more have been what He was on the cross, were He not there the one He was, than He could now be sitting on the Father's throne, were He not the same. Faith cares not where it sees Him or where it follows Him, it has the one bright, ineffably blessed Object before it, and resents the word that would presume to soil Him, even though ignorantly.

We must still, however, look at other glories of this coming kingdom of His.

" The second man is the Lord from heaven," and a glory must attend on the rising of such a one, which the throne of Solomon could never have measured. Yea, in the presence of this " Lord from heaven," far brighter glories than that of Solomon will be outdone. " Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." There will be heavenly things in His kingdom, as well as restored earthly things. Adam had the garden and all its teeming beauty and fruitfulness. But beyond that, the Lord God walked there with him. Noah, Abraham, and others, in patriarchal days, had possessions of flocks and herds, and in Noah we see power and lordship in the earth. But, beyond all this, they had angel visits, yea, and visits and visions and audiences of the Lord of angels. The land of Canaan was a goodly land, the land of milk, of oil, and of honey; but more than that, the glory was there, and the witness of the divine presence dwelt between the cherubim.

So will it be in the coming days of the power of the Son of God. Heaven will grace the scene with a new and peculiar glory, as surely as of old the Lord God walked in the garden of Eden, or as surely as angels passed up and down in the sight of the patriarch, or as surely as the divine presence

was known in the sanctuary in Jerusalem in the land of promise. And not merely will there be this visitation of the earth again, and the glory from heaven again, but this will all be of a new and wondrous character. The earth will have the witness of this strange, surpassing mystery, that she herself, from her very dust and bonds, has supplied a family for the heavens, who, in their glories, shall revisit her, more welcome than angels, and, in their appointed authorities and powers, shall be over her in government and in blessing. " For unto the angels path He not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak, but one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

What links between the highest and the lowest are these! "The second man is the Lord from heaven." The holy city will descend out of heaven, having the glory of God, and in the presence of it will the rule of the kingdom or power over the earth be ministered. This shall be something outreaching Adam's sovereignty and Solomon's brightness.

In the scene on the holy hill in Matt. 17, and in that of the royal visitation of the holy city in Matt. 21, this day of the power of the Son of God, this " world to come," is entered (in a mystery) in both its heavenly and earthly places. The heavenly glory shines on the holy hill. Jesus is transfigured. His face shines as the sun, and His raiment is white as the light, and Moses and Elias appear in glory with Him. So, on the occasion of the royal entrance into the holy city, the same lowly Jesus assumes a character of glory. He becomes the Lord of the earth and its fullness, and the accepted triumphant Son of David. Here, on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem; He is seen, for a mystic moment, in His rights and dignities in the earth; as, for another like moment, He had appeared on "the high mountain apart," in His personal heavenly glory. These solemn occasions were, each of them in its way, as I may say, a transfiguration, though the glory of the celestial was one, and the glory of the terrestrial was another. But equally on each occasion Jesus was glorified, borne away, for a moment, from His then lowly path, as the humbled, toiling, rejected Son of God. The two great regions of the millennial world spread themselves out before us, in vision or in mystery, then. Such sights were but passing, and quickly lost to us; but what they pledged and presented are to abide in their brightness and strength in the coming day of glory. For that bright day, that happy world, will be full of the glories of the Son of God. It is that fullness which will give it its bearing and its import, as we said before. Head of the risen family, or Sun of the celestial glory, He will then be, Lord of the earth and its fullness; and King of Israel and the nations, He will then be also. Strangely, mysteriously, in that system of glories will all be linked together, " the lower parts of the earth," and " far above all heavens." " God was manifest in the flesh-received up into glory." "The second man is" nothing less than " the Lord from heaven."

What mysteries! what counsels of God touching the ends of creation, in the hidden ages before the beginnings of creation! Would that the affection and worship of the heart followed the meditations of the soul! The Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, lay in the "Virgin's womb, assuming flesh and blood with the children; as Son of Man, God in flesh, He journeyed the rugged paths of human life, ending them in the death of the cross; He left the grave for the glory, the lowest parts of the earth for the highest places in heaven; and He will rise again on the earth in dignities and praise, in rights, honors, and authorities, of ineffable, surpassing greatness and brightness, to make glad the world to come.

But there is another mystery ere this scene of glories, "the world to come," can, in the way of God, be reached. The church must be linked with the heavens, as her Lord has already been.

The path of the church across the earth is that of an unnoticed stranger. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." And as her path across the earth is thus untracked, so is her path from it to be. All about her is "the stranger here." And as the world around knows not the church, nor will be a witness of the act of her translation, she herself knows not the time of such translation. But we know this link between us and the heavens will be formed -ere the kingdom, or "the world to come," be manifested. Because the saints are to be the companions of the King of that kingdom in the first acts of it, that is, when He bears the sword of judgment which is to clear the scene for the scepter of peace and righteousness-as He has promised, " he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."

" I will give him the morning star."

Is there not something of a link, something of an. intermediate, connecting action, intimated by this?

The sun is that light in the heavens which connects itself with the earth, with the interests and the doings of the children of man. The sun rules the day, the moon and the stars the night. But the morning star receives no appointment in such a system. " He appointed the moon for seasons, the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions do roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening." The morning star has no place in such arrangements. It is beautiful, but it shines in a solitary hour. The children of men have laid them down, and their sleep, in divine mercy, is still sweet to them, while the morning star is decking the face of the sky.

The season in which the sun shines is ours. I mean, the sun is the companion of man. But the morning star does not, in this way, recall man to his labor. It appears rather at an hour which is quite its own, neither day nor night. The child of the earlier morning, the one who is up before the sun, the watchman who has gone through the night sees it, but none but he.

The sun, in the language or thought of Scripture, is for the kingdom. As we read, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth" (2 Sam. 23:3,4, see also Matt. 13:43; 17:4, 5).

I ask, then, is there not to be expected by us a light before the light of the kingdom? Are not these signs in the heavens set there for times and seasons? Are there not voices in such spheres? Is there not a mystery in the morning star, in the hour of its solitary shining, as well as in the sun when he riseth in his strength upon the earth? Is it not the sign in the heavens of One whose appearing is not for the world, but for a people who wait for an early, unearthly Lord? The hope of Irael, the earthly people, greets the day-spring (Luke 1:78)-but the church welcomes the morning star. " I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, and the Spirit and the Bride say, come " (Rev. 22:17,18).

All is ours; and among this glorious all, the morning star, for our transfiguration to be like Jesus, and the rising sun for our day of power with Jesus.

How are the mysterious links thus formed, and the wondrous journeys thus tracked and followed from first to last, from everlasting to everlasting! We never lose them, nor our interest in them, not even in the most sacred, intimate moment. We have now, in the progress of our meditations along this glorious pathway of the Son of God, watched a light in the heavens earlier than that of the day-spring, a light which Jesus, the Son of God, amid His other glories, claims to be, and to share with His saints. " I will give him the morning star."

And after the morning star has shone for its brief hour, the sun in its appointed season will rise. " Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And it shall be " a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain;" " Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof, let the field be joyful and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth"-

" Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true."

One has said, " Faith has a world of its own." Surely we may say, after tracking these ascendings and descendings of the Son of God, linking all together, the highest and the lowest, and introducing all into the brightness of such a kingdom, this is so-faith has indeed a world of its own. O for power in the soul to walk there; and that power lies in the earnestness and fervor of faith, which is but the simplicity and reality of faith! David and Abigail walked in the world which was faith's world, when they met in the wilderness of Paran. To all appearance, or in the reckoning of men, David at that time was but the sport of the wicked; and, wandering in caves and dens of the earth; he would have been debtor, if it might be so, to a rich neighbor for a loaf of bread. But faith discovered another in David; and in the eye of Abigail, all was new. In that favored, though unnoticed hour, when the saints of God thus met in the desert, the kingdom, in spirit, was entered. The wilderness of Paran was the kingdom in the communion of the saints. " The solitary place was glad for them." The needy, hunted, persecuted fugitive was, in his own eyes and in the eyes of Abigail, the Lord of the coming kingdom, and the Anointed of the God of Israel. Abigail bowed before him as her king, and he, in the grace of a king, " accepted her person." The provisions she brought in her hand, her bread and her wine, her clusters of raisins, and cakes of figs, were not her bountifulness to the needy David, but the tribute of a willing subject to the royal David. She deemed herself too happy and too honored, if she could but minister to his servants. It was after this manner, that by faith she entered another world on this fine and beautiful occasion, as I may call it, witnessing to us that faith has indeed a world of its own. And that world was far more important to Abigail's heart than all the advantages of her wealthy husband's house. The wilderness was more to her than the fields and flocks of Mount Carmel. For there her spirit drank of those pleasures which faith had discovered in the pure, though distant, regions of glory.

Blessed, beloved, when we have like power to enter and dwell in our own world! Had not Noah such a world when he built a ship apparently for the land and not for the water? Had not Abraham such a world, when he left country and kindred, and father's house? Had not Paul such a world, when he could say, " Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious

body"? Have we not all our own world at this living moment, when by faith our souls have access "into this grace wherein we stand"? That grace is the present peaceful, happy dwelling-place of the conscience sprinkled and purified, and the bright dwelling-place of hope, from whence it looks out " for the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). It is but poorly known, if one may speak for others; but it is ours. And amid all this conscious infirmity, our faith has but to glorify the Son of God, for deeper enjoyment of Him is the diviner progress.

In closing this meditation, in which we have looked (according to our measure) at " the world to come," I would say, that few lessons lie more on the heart at the present day, than the rejection of Christ. I might naturally say so in this place-for if He be thus glorious, as we have seen,- in " the world to come," so surely is He rejected in " this present evil world."

But this is easily forgotten; and the god of this world would have it so. There is large and increasing accommodation and refinement abroad, social, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement; and all this is helping to keep an unworldly Christ out of sight. But faith eyes a rejected Jesus and a judged world. Faith knows that though the house, be swept, and emptied, and garnished, it has not changed its master or owner, but is only made the more fit for the ends and purposes of its master.

Solemn mistake, beloved, to think of refining and cultivating " this present world" for the Son of God!

If David, on one occasion, were careless about the mind of God as to the carriage of the ark, so was he, on another occasion, ignorant of the mind of God, as to the building for the ark a house of cedars. He sought to give the Lord an abiding habitation in an uncleansed, uncircumcised land. He therefore did greatly err, not knowing the purity of the glory of the Lord; and so with those who would link the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the earth as it now is, or with the kingdoms of this present world. With whatever right desire of the heart this may be, as with David, again we say (and how surely in our own convictions), " They do greatly err, not knowing the purity of the glory of the Lord." This is a lesson we need to learn with increasing power. The Son of God is still a stranger on the earth; and He is not seeking it, but seeking a people out of it, to be strangers for a while longer with Him, on the face of it, and amid all the vanities and ambitions which constitute the history of its every hour.

" Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me."

"Through the dark path of sorrow which Jesus has trod,

Thy feeble ones wander, our Father, our God!

And the thick clouds that gather, but turn us away

From the waste howling desert where He could not stay.

"O hasten thy coming! we long for the day!

Bright Star of the Morning, no longer delay!

Let the groaning creation from sorrow be free,

And the purchased possession be gathered to Thee!"

The Son of God

" Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him."- 1 Cor. 15:28.

It is happy and establishing to the soul, to bear in lively faith and recollection, that it is the very same Jesus who was here on earth that is now in heaven, and whom we are to know, " through His own eternity." When we keep this in memory, every passage of His life here will be introduced afresh to us, and we shall feel it and own it, that we have in the Evangelists a more wonderful page to meditate, yea, and in some sense a much happier one too, than we once counted upon in the days of His sojourn among us, everything was a reality to Him; all was living and personal. He did more than touch the surface. When He healed a wound or a sorrow, in a way He felt it. " Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." His spirit drank of the springs, as of the streams-for not only were His joys real, His sorrows real, His fears and disappointments and the like real, but He entered into every occasion in all its character. He knew the unuttered language of that needy soul that touched Him in the crowd, and felt that touch in all its meaning. He was filled with delight at the faith of that Gentile who pierced the thick cloud of His humiliation, and reached the divine glory which shone in His person beneath it; and He alike feasted on the bold (but not too bold) faith of that sinner of the city who pierced the dark cloud of her own sin and shame, and reached the divine grace which could heal it all (see Luke 7). He understood the hasty step of Zacchaeus as he climbed the sycamore-tree, and the thoughtfulness of Nathanael as he sat under the fig-tree. He heard the strife of the disciples by the way, as they went up to Jerusalem, heard it in the tumult of the lusts within, ere it broke out in wars and fighting. And He knew the love as well as the self-confidence which drew Peter from the ship to the water.

Surely, then, it is for us, as we read " the wondrous story," in the recollection of this, to feel after Himself, as we mark the hand that did the deed, or track the foot that was treading the path. Every act and word would be felt with something of a new impression; and if so, what more blessed advance could we be making? Would it not be edifying in a high sense indeed, if we could be thus acquainting ourselves more really with a living, personal Jesus? At this time of ours, beloved, there may be a tendency to forget His Person or Himself, in the common testimony that is now borne so extendedly to His work. The region of doctrine may be surveyed, as by a measuring line and a level, instead of being eyed as the place of the glories of the Son of God with an admiring, worshipping heart. And, yet, it is this He prizes in us. He has made us personally His objects, and He looks for it, that we make Him ours.

And I ask myself, is not this, in a sense, the very topmost stone! Is not this personal desire of Christ towards us, chief in the ways of His grace? Election, predestination, pardon, adoption, glory and the kingdom, are they not only crowned by this, this desire of Christ towards us, this making of us an object to Himself? Surely it crowns all; surely it is the topmost stone, lying above and beyond all, fuller, and richer, and higher than any. Adoption and glory, welcome into the family, and a share in the kingdom, would be defective, were there not also this mystery, that the Son of God has found in us an object of desire. It assumes all the other works and counsels in the history of grace, and is thus beyond them all.

The Spirit delights to tell of the work of Christ, and to bear it in its preciousness and sufficiency to the heart and conscience. Nothing could stand us for a moment, had not the work been just what it was, and so counseled and ordered of God. But still the work of the Lord Jesus Christ may be the great subject, where He Himself is but a faint object, and the soul will thus be a great loser.

But these meditations on the Son of God, which I have been following now, I may say, to their close, suggest to me another thought just at this time.

When considering the deeper and more distant parts of God's ways, we sometimes feel as though they were too much for us; and we seek relief from the weight of them by going back to earlier and simpler truths. This, however, need not be. If we rightly entertained these further mysteries, we should know that we need not retire from them for relief; because they are really only other and deeper expressions of the same grace and love which we were learning at the very beginning. They are but a more abundant flow, or a wider channel, of the same river, just because they lie somewhat more distant from the source.

Till this assurance be laid up in the soul, we are ill prepared to think of them. If we have a fear, that when we are looking at glories, we have left the place of affections we wrong the truth and our own souls. It is not so by any means. The more fully the glories unfold themselves, the more are the riches of grace revealed. The rising of a river at its birthplace, where we took in the whole object at once, without effort or amazement, has, as we know, its own peculiar charm; but when it becomes, under our eye, a mighty stream, with its diversified banks and currents, we only the rather learn why it ever began to flow. It is the same water still; and we may pass up and down from its source and along its channels, with various but still constant pleasure. And " the river of God " is the same. We need seek no relief by turning to its source, as we survey it in its course, along and through the ages and dispensations. When in spirit (as now in the way of these meditations), we reach " the new heavens and the new earth," we are only in company with the same glorious person, and in fellowship with the same boundless grace, whom we knew, and which we learned, at the very beginning.

The same one made real to the soul, and brought near, is what I would desire, in God's grace, to be the fruit of these meditations. " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever "-so He is both in His own glory and to us.

In earlier days there were manifestations of Him, the Son of God, sometimes in veiled, sometimes in unveiled glory. To Abraham at the tent-door, to Jacob at Peniel, to Joshua under the walls of Jericho, to Gideon, and to Manoah, the manifestations were veiled, and faith, in more or less vigor, through the Spirit, removed the covering, and reached the glory that was underneath. To Isaiah, to -Ezekiel, and to Daniel, the Son of God appeared in unveiled glory, and He had, by a certain gracious -process, to make the brightness of the glory tolerable to them (see Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Dan. 10)

The Person, however, was one and the same, whether veiled or unveiled. So, in the days when he had really (and not as in those earlier days) assumed flesh and blood, the glory was veiled, and faith was set to discover it, as in. the time of Abraham or of Joshua; and after He had ascended, He appeared to John in such brightness of unveiled glory, that something had to be done by Him in grace, as in the case of Isaiah or of Daniel, ere His presence could be sustained (Rev. 1).

Times and seasons in this respect made no difference. Of course, till the fullness of time came, the Son was not "made of a woman." Then it was that "the Sanctifier," as we read, "took part of the same," flesh and blood with the children (Heb. 17). For very flesh and blood indeed He took then, and not till then, very kinsman of the seed of Abraham He then indeed became. "It behooved him to be made like unto His brethren." And all this waited for its due season, "the fullness of the time," the days of the Virgin of Nazareth. But these manifestations of the Son of God in earlier days were pledges of this great mystery, that in due time God would send forth His Son made of a woman. They were,

I may so express it, the shadows of the forthcoming substance. And what I have been observing has this in it-and which is of interest- to our souls-that those foreshadowings were beautifully exact. They forecast, in forms both of glory and of grace, the ways of Him who afterward traveled and sojourned here on earth in humble, serving, sympathizing love, and is now set as glorified in Heaven, the Son of Man, the Virgin's Seed, forever.

It is delightful to the soul to trace these exact resemblances and forecastings. If we have a veiled glory at the threshing-floor at Ophrah, so have we at the well of Sychar-if we have the brightness of the unveiled glory on the banks of the Hiddekel, so have we the same in the isle of Patmos. The Son of God was as a traveling man in the sight of Abraham in the heat of the day, and so was He to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, as the day was fast spending itself. He ate of Abraham's calf, "tender and good," as He did of "the broiled fish and of the honeycomb," in the midst of the disciples at Jerusalem. In His risen days, He assumed different forms to suit (in divine grace) the need or demand of the moment, as He had done of old, whether as a stranger, or a visitor, whether as "a man of God" simply to Manoah and his wife in the field, or as an armed soldier at Jericho to Joshua.

And it is this, I think I can say again, which I value specially in following these meditations upon Him, to see Jesus one throughout, and that, too, near and real to us. We need, if one may speak for others, the purged eye that is practiced to see, and delight in, such a heaven as the heaven of Jesus must be. Will it be nothing, we may ask our hearts, will it be nothing to spend eternity with Him who looked up, and caught the eye of Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree, and then, to the thrilling joy of his soul, let his name fall on his ear from His own lips? With Him, who without one upbraiding word, filled the convicted quickened heart of a poor sinner of Samaria with joy, and a spirit of liberty that far more than abounded? Surely we want nothing but the child-like, simple, believing mind. For we are not straightened in Him-and there is nothing to Him, like this believing mind. It glorifies Him beyond even the services of eternity.

Nature, it is indeed true, is not equal to this. It must come from the in-working and witness of the Holy Ghost. Nature finds itself overwhelmed. It always betrays itself as that which, as the Apostle speaks, comes short of the glory of God." When Isaiah, on the occasion already referred to, was called into the presence of that glory, he could not stand it. He remembered his uncleanness, and cried out that he was undone. All that he apprehended was the glory, and all that he felt and knew in himself was his unfitness to stand before it. This was nature. This was the action of the conscience which, as in Adam in the garden, seeks relief from the presence of God. Nature in the prophet did not discover the altar which, equally with the glory, lay in the scene before him. He did not perceive that which was perfectly equal to give him perfect ease and assurance, to link him

(though still a sinner in himself) with the presence of the glory in all its brightness. Nature could not make this discovery. But the, messenger of the Lord of hosts not only discovers but applies it; and the prophet is at ease, in the possession of a cleanness Or a holiness that can measure the very " holy of holies" itself, and the brightness of the throne of the Lord of hosts.

The Spirit acts above nature, yea, in contradiction of nature. Nature in Isaiah, in us all, stands apart, and is abashed, unable to look up-the Spirit draws us right inward and upward in liberty. When Simeon is led by the Spirit into the presence of the Glory, he goes up at once in all confidence and joy. He takes the child Jesus in his arms. He makes no request of the mother to suffer it to be so-he feels no debt to any one for the blessed privilege of embracing "the salvation of God," which his eyes then saw. He through the Spirit had discovered the altar; and the glory, therefore, was not beyond him (see Isa. 6, Luke 2).

And true still, as true as ever, as true as in the days of Isaiah and of Simeon, are these things now. The Spirit leads in a path which nature never treads. Nature stands apart and is afraid; yea, will rebuke where faith is full of liberty. And these divers ways of nature and of faith we may well remember for our comfort and strengthening, as we still look at the Son of God, and Meditate on mysteries and counsels of God connected with Him.

Our meditations have waited on the Lord from the eternity of the Father's bosom, to the coining days of the millennial kingdom. We have watched His ascendings and descendings in the intermediate dispensations, and marked the links between the successive parts of this great mystery, or the transition-moments in the stages of these wondrous journeys. We have but little liberty from Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow Him further. The Psalms and the Prophets open the door into the coming kingdom, and open it widely. But they scarcely carry us beyond it. At least if they lead us to know that there are reunions still in the further distance, that is almost all they do. They never give us to survey them.

This coming kingdom they again and again speak of as everlasting. Rightly so, as I need not say-but rightly so in this sense-that it is not to give place to any other kingdom. As Daniel says of it, " The kingdom shall not be left to other people." It is to be as untransferrable as the priesthood of the same Christ, the Son of God. It is to be as enduring as royalty-as long continued as power " ordained of God" is to be; for it shall not cease while He, " to whom power belongs," has anything to do by means of power. But still, it will, in season, have discharged its office and service, and then cease.

Of this mystery, this ceasing, or delivering up of the Kingdom, we have a verbal or literal intimation in Psa. 8 That Psalm celebrates the lordship of the Son of Man, in the day of His power, over the works of God's hands. But it contains an intimation (as we find from an inspired commentary upon it in 1 Cor. 15:27,28), that that day of power shall yield to another order of things.

We have also moral intimations of the same mystery. For instance: the age or dispensation we are now contemplating is, as we see, to be a kingdom, the time of a scepter; and, as such, may I not say, it must have an end. Could a scepter be the symbol of the divine eternity, the eternity of God's presence? A scepter may exercise its prerogative power for its season; but Scripture would lead us to say, it could not be the symbol of our eternity in the blessed presence of God. Even Adam can scarcely be said to have had a scepter. He had dominion, but was it exactly that of a king? His

was lordship and inheritance more properly, not a kingdom. It was not royal rule, though there was the fullest subjection to him, and the most perfect order. A kingdom was not developed, in the progress of the divine way and wisdom, for a long time. And all this suggests, that when the time of a kingdom, or the rule of a scepter, or the exercise of royal power, come, such a form of things will not be final or eternal. It cannot, I judge, give rest to the thoughts which are spiritually or scripturally exercised towards God and His ways. A scepter of righteousness is not so high or so eternal a thought as a dwelling-place of righteousness, and that is what Scripture confirms (see 2 Peter 3:13).

And, further, as another moral intimation of this same truth, the coming kingdom will be but an imperfect condition of things. We need not determine how far there may be the need of it, or the demand for its exercise, still, however, power will be present to put itself forth. The Prophets survey this kingdom, as we said, widely in its strength, its extent, its duration, its glory, its peace and blessedness, and the like; but withal, the presence of evil and of sorrow is contemplated, though with authority to control, and resources to relieve.

Is not this then, I ask, a further intimation, of a moral character, that such an order of things is to yield to a better? Surely it is. But there is more than even this -the kingdom is a delegated thing, a stewardship-and being such, we may say, in divine or scriptural reasoning, it must give an account of itself, and be delivered up.

But here, beloved, meditations on Jesus Himself, the Son of God, afresh invite the soul.

In this character of it, to which I have now referred, His kingdom is like His past time of humiliation on earth, and His present time of priesthood in heaven. All, in a great sense, was, or is, or will be, stewardship. He came here to this earth of ours to do God's will, and when He had accomplished it, He rendered it up as in sacrifice: His present seat in heaven is a stewardship. As a High Priest there, He is faithful, " faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house."-And after these patterns will be His coming kingdom and power. It will be, like the rest, a stewardship. Though of something new, something which had not been committed to Him or put into His hands before, something, too, very glorious and excellent, still it will be a stewardship. And, being such, it will have, in due season, to be accounted for and delivered up. And such a mystery is full of blessedness, had we but faith and bowels to enjoy it. For, after this wondrous manner, subjection and obedience to God (which man, the creature of the dust, cast off and refused), from the • unutterable glory of the Person of Him who owns it and renders it, receives such value as all creatures, from the highest to the lowest, though they had all continued in unintermitting and full service, could never have imparted to it.

And this is a precious truth, which the soul loses, just so far as the enemy robs it of the sense and apprehension of the Person of the Son.

The Son Himself delights to be all this, the steward or servant of the will of God, whether in grace or in glory, in humiliation or in power. And when we, in the spirit of worship, consider or recollect who He is throughout all changes and conditions, we can and will say, that changes and conditions, whether the highest or the lowest, are as nothing. What, in one sense, can raise such a One? Can glory and a kingdom elevate Him? Faith finds it easy indeed to see such a One a steward of power and dominion and royal honors, when He comes to sit on a throne, just as He

was a steward, when He traversed in weakness and humiliation the path of life. Such distances, in one sense, are nothing to such a One as "the Son." In another sense, the distance, we surely know, is immense; for He entered into sorrow in its season, and will enter into joy in its season. All was, and is, and will be real to Him, as we said before; and, therefore, in another sense, the distance is immense. The "Man of Sorrows" will take the "cup of salvation." Will that be nothing? To Him that was despised and rejected, insulted and scorned, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. But the Person is the same throughout, God and man in one Christ; and faith, therefore, receives it, that having been the steward of the Father's will and grace in days of humiliation, He may still be steward of the Father's kingdom in days of exaltation and strength.

And so it will be, as scripture after scripture tells us. "When I shall receive the congregation (says Christ, anticipating the kingdom), I will judge uprightly"-thus owning that He is under commission or in stewardship, when in the kingdom. So, to the like intent, He owns that the time of His receiving the kingdom and the distribution of the rewards and honors of the kingdom, are not in His hands, but the Father's (Mark 13:32; Matt. 20:23). Every tongue, in that day, it is most sure, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but then, this is to be "to the glory of God the Father." The Lord Himself again and again calls it the Father's kingdom. And further; He will be anointed for the ministry of it, just as He was anointed for the ministry of the days of His flesh (see Isa. 11:1-3, and 61:1, 2). And further still, may I say, He will be a dependent on God during His day of strength, as He has already been, or as He once was, in His day of sorrow and weakness. Therefore we read, "prayer shall be made for Him continually"-as Solomon, the typical king, put the kingdom, which he had received, under the care of the God of Israel, by a public act of intercession (see Psa. 72, and 2 Chron. 7).

All this is moral intimation that there must be a delivering up of the kingdom; for all this spews us that the kingdom is a delegated thing, a stewardship-and this moral intimation, as we know, is affirmed by the divine reasoning, as we said, in 1 Cor. 15, and Psa. 8. All is subjection-the kingly days of power, the self-emptying days of sorrow, the heavenly days of priestly ministry-all is alike subjection and Service-. As Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a High-Priest, but He which said unto Him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," so we may say, neither did He glorify Himself to be made a king, but He which said unto Him, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "I saw in the night-visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom."

This is the institution of the coming kingdom of Christ. And thus it is a delegated thing, taken from the hands of another, in its time to be delivered back. The Son most surely will be faithful, where all others have been found wanting. Of them it is written, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, He judgeth among the gods"-but of the Son it is written, "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" (Psa. 45, and 82.). But all this still tells us that He holds the kingdom as a stewardship. Whether it be the sword or the scepter of the kingdom, whether He act as the David or the Solomon, He will be alike faithful. When He goes forth to the judgment, onto fight the battles of the Lord, this will be so-as it is said of Him, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath"-and again, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made

in the earth." When He sits on the throne, or ministers the kingdom in peace, this will be so. "I will walk within my house," says Christ the King, "with a perfect heart." And it is said of Him to Jehovah, "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment:" But again I say, all this intimates delegated power, though in a peculiar hand. His kingdom shall perfect that which concerneth it, as did His death once and forever, and as His heavenly priesthood is now doing day by day. And then His scepter shall be laid aside, the kingdom shall cease. As it is written, "He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father"-and again, "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

" That God may be all in all." Yes, God, by the Son, made the worlds or the ages. And when the worlds or the ages have run their course and discharged their trust, when dispensations have manifested the counsels and the works, and the glories appointed them, the Son, as the One in whom they were laid and by whom they were ordered, may well be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

It is the subjection of office, the subjection of Him who had all things put under Him to Him who did put all things under Him. That is the character of this subjection. As to the Person, unlike the office, it is eternal. The Son is of the glory of the Godhead, as is the Father, and as is the Holy Ghost. And the Son manifest in flesh, the Person of the Christ, is a tabernacle never to be folded up. " I do believe," as another speaks, " the Person of Christ, and therein His human nature shall be the eternal object of Divine glory, praise, and worship. The life of glory shall be exercised in the continual ascription of glory, praise, and honor, unto God, whereof the Lamb, the Person of Christ, is the eternal object, with that of the Father and the Spirit, the human nature in the Son being admitted into the communion of the same eternal glory."

It is the mystery of mysteries, the Person, we are here looking at. When we think rightly of Him, even all the brightness of the coming kingdom will be seen but as a veil. Can the splendor of the throne display Him? Would not the honors of Solomon, yea of the kingdoms of the world, be a veil over the glory of the Son, as really as the scorn of Pilate's judgment-hall, or the thorns of Calvary? Is the Bethlehemite the measure of His personal worth-a single tittle more than the Nazarene? Therefore, to faith it is easy to see the servant still, in days of exaltation as in days of sorrow. He serves as a Servant, he serves as a Priest, he serves as a King. Service is still His way. And service in Him and by Him becomes acceptable to God, beyond all power of thought or of utterance. In every character, the Son will have taken it up, accomplished it, and dignified it. He will have fulfilled it to perfection in strength and in weakness, in shame and in honor, in sorrow and in joy, in the village of Nazareth, in the temple in heaven, and on the millennial throne of power.

It is the link of links, this mystery we are here contemplating-and in the faith of it, all distances and intervals vanish. Heaven and earth, God and man, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, the highest and the lowest, are introduced to each other in ways of unutterable glory to God and blessing to us.

What links, indeed, what mysteries, what harmonies, what counsels about the ends of creation in the hidden ages of divine eternal wisdom before creation! "Vast as is the course which Scripture has traced, it has been a circle still; and in that most perfect form comes back to the point from which it started. The heaven, which had disappeared since the third chapter of Genesis, reappears in the latest chapters of the Revelation. The tree of life again stands by the river of the water of life,

and again there is no more curse."

" Even the very differences of the forms under which the heavenly kingdom re-appears are deeply characteristic, marking, as they do, not merely that all is won back, but won back in a more glorious shape than that in which it was lost, because won back in the Son. It is no longer Paradise, but the New Jerusalem, no longer the Garden, but the City of God-no longer the Garden, free, spontaneous, and unlabored, as man's blessedness in the estate of a first innocence would have been, but the City, costlier indeed, more stately and more glorious, but at the same time the result of toil and pains, reared into a nobler and more abiding habitation, yet with stones which (after the pattern of the elect corner-stone) were, each in its time, laboriously hewn and painfully squared for the places which they fill."

We may join in these thoughts, but having reached the delivering up of the kingdom, we are on the borders of " the new heaven and the new earth.".. The heaven and the earth which is now will have been the scene of the Son's exercised energies, and the witness of His perfections in grace and in glory, in humiliation and in power, in the services of the Servant, the Priest, and the King, in the life of faith and in the lordship of all things. And when the Son has been thus displayed,' as in weakness and in strength, as on earth and in heaven, from the Manger to the Throne, as the Nazarene and the Bethlehemite, the Lamb of God and the Anointed Lord of all, according to predestination of eternal counsels, these heavens and earth which now are will have done all they had to do; when they have continued unto this display of the Son, they have continued long enough. They may give place; and the soul that has surveyed them as having accomplished such a service may be prepared to hear this from the Prophet of God, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

But, as I said before, " we have but little liberty from Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow the Lord further than the kingdom." There are, however, characteristics of "the new heaven and the new earth," given to us in the passing or occasional notices of the Spirit. Isaiah speaks of the former heaven and earth not being remembered when the new creation comes; intimating thereby the abounding excellence of the latter. And, again, he says, "the new heaven and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me," thereby suggesting that it is the eternal state. St. Paul says, that after the delivery of the kingdom, God shall be ' all in all"; by that intimating, I judge, that all delegated power, all stewardship, of which I have spoken, even in the hand of the Son, is over, as having completed its purpose. St. Peter speaks of the new heaven and the new earth as being the dwelling-place of righteousness, by such a thought carrying our minds beyond the time of the scepter of righteousness.

But John, in the Apocalypse, is more full, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." And, again, John says of this same new heaven and earth, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." This is blessed. "The former things are passed away." Tears are gone; death is gone; sorrow, and pain, and crying are gone. No trace remains of the former things of sin and death. The Millennial earth will not be a witness of so high an order as that. "The former things are passed away." Not that we

lose anything which has been given or communicated in His counsels of grace and glory, in the services of the Son, and in the operations of the Spirit. Nothing will be lost to us, which we have gathered in the progress of the divine dispensations. That could not be. Even the passing refreshments of the Spirit, which the in-working of corruption spoils us of for many and many a season, are not lost to us. They are the witness of that which is eternal in its very essence. And in like manner, all the unfolded wisdom of God must be enjoyed forever, in its bright result. It is itself essentially eternal, and cannot be lost to us. These manifestations of God in His wisdom, and power, and grace, and glory, have come forth and shown themselves in the progress of the ages, and they have found a struggle in an injured, ruined, degraded scene of action, like this world of ours; but in the new heavens and the new earth, all this struggle in every form of it is over, and these manifestations will be known in their full, triumphant and glorious result.

Before Him that sits on the white horse, the apostate powers of "this present evil world" in the hour of their fullest pride and daring are smitten; and the Lord and His saints take righteous rule in the earth for the appointed Millennial age. Before Him that sits on the white throne, the present heaven and earth pass away, and there is found no place for them, and He that sits on the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." Surely these are distinctions; distinctions, too, full of meaning, and as significant of advance and development in divine counsels and ways, as any earlier moment.

It will not be the scepter of righteousness, but its dwelling-place, and accordingly it will not be the throne of the Son, but the tabernacle of God. It is not divine authority over the scene, but the home of God in the scene.

It will no longer be the earth that was once stained with the blood of Christ, and has been the grave of a thousand generations, but a new earth-no longer the heavens that have been clothed in sackcloth, and where thunders and wind and deluge have done the work of judgment, and borne witness of righteous wrath, but " new heavens."

He that is athirst shall drink of the fountain of the water of life; he that overcometh, shall inherit all things (Rev. 21:6, 7). Blessed characters of the saint, how little realized in the souls of some of us; but still blessed, when we can but read of them or think of them; to be longing after the living God, and conquering the course of this evil world.

I would, however, say but little more. We must not speculate where we cannot teach; we must not listen where we cannot learn from Him. His written word is the standard of the thoughts of all His saints, while some have that word more largely made the possession of their souls, through the Spirit, than others. We are to know the common standard, and also our personal measure in the Spirit. I would, therefore, pause here just adding one thought which has been happy to myself - that though we see not those distant regions, we may trust them-trust Him, rather, who is the Lord of them. We may assure our hearts in His presence, that they will be just what we would have them to be, just what our new conditions would ask for. Heaven has always been what the earth needed. At the beginning, the sun was there to rule the day, and the moon and the stars to govern the night. Those ordinances were set in heaven then, for they measured the earth's need then. But there was no rainbow in the sky, for the earth needed not a token that God would debate with judgment.

Judgment was not known. But when conscience had. been quickened, and judgment was understood and feared, when God was known (in the doings He had accomplished) to be righteous, and earth needed a pledge that in wrath He would remember mercy, heaven wore the token of that mercy, and hung it out as on its very forehead.

After this manner, heaven has already changed itself, or arrayed itself anew, with the changing need of the earth-and the past pledges the future, though "a new heaven and a new earth" be to be revealed. Yea, I may add, the millennial earth, in its day, will know the same fidelity of heaven to it. For the habitation of the glory shall be seen to be there then (as the sanctuary of peace is known by faith to be there now), and the heavenly city of that age will descend in that very character which the nations of the earth, their kings, their glory, and their honor, will both need and delight in. The God of heaven and earth, in boundless and unwearied goodness, will, after this old, and constant, and undeviated way, be ever and alike true to the blessing of His creatures. " Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And the new heavens and the new earth will but take up the same tale of various but exhaustless goodness.

I desire grace to know that the heavenly country is very near-near both as to time and place. There are no divine measures of distances for heaven, though there are for earth. The wisdom of man tells us of stars whose light would take thousands of years to travel to us. We need not deny it, beloved. Space is without limit, if they please, as well as duration. We may leave such thoughts unquestioned. But this is not the character of divine wisdom-this is not the way or the light of scripture. The schools teach these things, but not the Spirit. From the teaching of the Spirit in the Word we know that the place of the glory is so near that, in other days, a ladder measured the distance in the eye of Jacob, and so does it still measure the same distance in the eye of faith-and we know also that the time of it is so near, that the twinkling of an eye will be enough to accomplish the journey in its appointed season.

We only need the happy faith which realizes it all to the soul.

Our Father's house! our Father's house!

In spirit we are there-

The gather'd of the Father's hand,

The objects of His care.

Our Father's house! no more our souls

At fearful distance bow,

We enter in by Jesus' blood,

With happy boldness now.

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,

What there the Spirit knows,

The drafts of bliss it drinketh there,

Amid that blest repose.

Our Father! thought had never dream'd

That love like thine could be-

Mysterious love which brings us thus

So very near to Thee!

May these meditations help our souls to know this nearness and this reality of the blessed things of faith. Amen.

"We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true-even in His Son Jesus Christ - this is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Note.-I have learned that some things in No. II. of these meditations on " The Son of God" have been an offense to many. I am well aware, that in the heat, and under the influence, of certain feelings at the time, I was led to expressions which I should not now use, and have thus conveyed my mind too boldly and unguardedly. I am grieved if any child of God have been offended through this. I would not lead him from the place of the knowledge and worship of Christ, into that of speculation or discussion about Him. This unguardedness and boldness has led also, I believe, to a misapprehension of my mind to some extent. This is also my fault and my regret.

I receive the manhood in the Person of the blessed Christ of God, as simply and surely as I do His Godhead. But I receive it in its purity and perfection, with no taint of sin, or consequence of sin in it. All the sorrows and the fears, the weariness and the pains, the conflicts, the cries, the agonies and the death of the Lord Jesus were deep realities. Never had I any other thought. And if my words in that paper, or any where else, have led any not to find in the Jesus that I have presented to them, their kinsman, in the sense of His having par- taken of flesh and blood, because of the children, I would restore their soul with all care and diligence. No language that I could use would be too strong to convey the assurance I have of the reality of the manhood and of the death of that sacred Person, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, and the Christ of God. He was the slain Lamb of God, the Son of Man by wicked hands killed and crucified, though He gave up His life; a mystery, which the mystery of His Person, " God manifest in the flesh," suggests, and which Scripture reveals. To Him be praise forever and ever!

The Song of Solomon

This book takes up the Jew, or at least the remnant in quite another aspect. It tells of the affections that the King can create in their heart, and by which He draws them to Himself. However strong these affections may be, they are not developed according to the position in which Christian affections, properly so called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated; the bonds of which are formed and recognized, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves, and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former, the relationship is the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter, the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship. Now, although the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nevertheless, on account of the revelation which has been made to us, and of the accomplishment of our salvation, this latter character of affection is that which is proper to the Church. Praise and glory be to God for it! We know in whom we have believed. The strength and energy of desire is, however, still maintained, because glory and the marriage of the Lamb are yet future. What a position is that of the Church! The entire confidence of the Bride, the ardent expectation of the Betrothed of the Lord, whose love, however, is well known; an expectation that is linked with the glory in which He will come to receive her to himself; to be forever with Him. This is not the position of the Jew. The point for him is to know that his Beloved is his. That is the question. That there is a principle in common, is true. Christ loves His Church, He loves His earthly people. He loves the soul that He draws to Himself. So that there is a moral application to ourselves which is very precious. Nevertheless, it is important that we distinguish and do not apply to the Church that which relates to Israel. Otherwise we shall not have the right character of affection, and shall fail in that which is due to Christ.

The Song of Songs gives, then, the re-establishment of the relations between Christ and the remnant, in order that by exercise of heart-necessary on account of their position-they may be confirmed in the assurance of His love, and in the knowledge that all is of grace, and a grace that can never fail. Then is He fully known as Solomon. His heart becomes like the chariot of His willing people (Ammi-nadib), which carries Him away. Having thus given the general idea, we shall point out some features that are developed in the course of this book, and that possess a moral import of great interest to ourselves.

" Oh that thou wert as my brother, when I should find thee without I would kiss thee!" Nevertheless, the Spirit of God, desiring to assure the heart of the remnant of the Savior's love, we see that the expression of the heart's desire to possess its beloved does not cease until it has gained its object. The heart assures itself according to the operation of the Spirit of prophecy; for, in fact, Christ is for the remnant, and the remnant is for Him. The whole is, based on this. But the heart needs to be re-assured, as in a similar case we observe in other passages.

Chapter 1 presents in the most clear and simple manner the assurance of the full enjoyment of blessing. After this we find exercises of heart, that lead to a full understanding of the beloved One's affection. There is progress in this intelligence, and that in spite of the faults and slothfulness of heart, which give a fresh value to the affection that is in exercise. This mode of instruction is found in the Psalms, in which the first verses frequently give the thesis and the result, which is reached through

circumstances that are afterward detailed. There is another sign of an affection in exercise, when the relationship is not formally established. The heart is occupied with the qualities, with the features of the beloved One. When, on the contrary, the object is possessed, it is with that object itself the heart is occupied. No doubt the qualities are a source of happiness; but while the position gives the enjoyment of these, it is the person who manifests them that is thought of. The grace, the kindness, or similar qualities may attract the heart, and it is occupied with them. But the relationship once formed, it is the person we think of whose qualities are now, so to say, our own. The loved one speaks much here of the qualities of her Beloved-she loves to speak of them, and to others. It may be said that the Beloved does so yet more, although He knows the relation in which He stands to her. This is true; but as she is not yet in it, He is fain to re-assure her with respect to her value in His eyes. He therefore speaks constantly of it to herself. Moreover, this is suitable to the position of man and of woman, and so much the more, as it is really Christ Himself in question. Christ, in a certain sense, suffices to Himself. He needs not to go and talk to others of that which is in His heart. His love is a love of grace. But it is infinitely precious to us-when, in our utter unworthiness, we might doubt the possibility of His affection, even because it is so inestimable-and very affecting, as well as precious, to see Him manifesting His sense of her value, that her beauty is perfect in His eyes, that He has observed all her features, that one look has ravished His heart, that His dove, His undefiled, is the only one, that there is no spot in her. There is perfect grace in this re-assuring testimony on the Bridegroom's part. It is the chief subject of His discourse. It is that which her heart needed. There is much more variety in the exercises of her heart; there are even failures and sorrows arising from her faults. There is also an evident progress in her assurance. The Song commences with the Bride's declaration that her heart needs this testimony. She acknowledges that she is black, because of the scorching rays of the sun of affliction. She seeks shelter in the presence of her Beloved, who makes His flock to rest at noon. She would belong to Him only. She fears now to wander among the shepherds of Israel. But if the Spirit of the Lord reminds her of those former testimonies of the Law and the Prophets, her heart is not silent, and the heart of the Beloved overflows in the testimony of her value in His eyes. The suitability of all this to the remnant in the last days is evident. The rest of the chapter contains testimonies of affection, which present the idea that is the thesis of the book.

The first six verses (omitting the second) of chapter 2 appear to me to be the voice of the Bride. They have been differently understood, but I think wrongly. Observe here that Christ is the Apple-tree. This will help us afterward. Moreover, the Bride speaks of herself. In theory she apprehends her relationship, and speaks chiefly of herself; but there is real affection. The Bridegroom will not allow her to be disturbed, when she rests with full confidence in His love. His own voice, the only one to which she now hearkens, shall waken her. He Himself tells her to arise, that the winter is past-the time of mourning and sorrow. He desires also to hear her voice. Thus her heart is re-assured, her Beloved is hers.

In chap. 3 we have another attitude, another state of heart. She is alone and in darkness. She seeks her Beloved, but finds Him not. There is affection, but no joy. She questions the watchmen in Jerusalem who go about the city. As soon as she passes from them she finds Him. Again He will have her rest in His love. But all this is only prophetically and in testimony, for the comfort of those who have not yet found Him, by showing them what He is for them. The Spirit of prophecy then exhibits the Bridegroom coming up out of the wilderness with His Bride, where (like Moses) He had been with her in spirit.

In chap. 4 He declares all that she is in His sight, although she has been in the lion's den. From thence He calls her, all fair and without spot in His eyes.

Chapter 5 gives us another experience. Intimacy was formed through the testimony of the Bridegroom's affection. The re-assured heart, certain of His love, exhibits its slothfulness. Alas! what hearts are ours!

We turn again to ourselves as soon as we are comforted by the testimony of the Lord's love. The Bridegroom's sensitive and righteous heart acts upon her word, and He retires from one who does not listen to His voice. She arises to learn her own folly and the just delicacy with respect to herself of His ways whom she had slighted. How often, alas! do we act in the same manner with regard to the voice of His spirit and the manifestations of His love. What a dreadful loss! but through grace, what a lesson! She is chastised by those who watch for the peace of Jerusalem. What had she to do in the streets at night, she whom the bridegroom had sought at home! And now, her very affection exposes her to reproof, the expression of its energy placing her in a position that proved she had slighted her Beloved. If we are not in the peaceful enjoyment of the love of Christ, where He meets with us in grace, the very strength of our affection and our self-condemnation cause us to exhibit this affection out of its place, in a certain sense, and bring us into connection with those who judge our position. It was right discipline for a watchman to use towards a woman who was wandering without, whatever might be the cause. Testimonies of her affection to her beloved at home, the love of her own heart, do not concern the watchman. Affection may exist; but he has to do with order and a becoming walk. Nevertheless, her affection was real and led to an ardent expression of all that her beloved was to her. An expression addressed to others, who ought to understand her. Not to the watchman, but to her own companions. But if sloth had prevented her receiving Him in the visitations of His love, her heart, now disciplined by the watchman and turned again to her beloved, overflowing with His praises, being taught of God, knows where to find Him. And this experience makes her understand, through grace, another aspect of her relationship, proving a real progress in the intelligence of grace and condition of heart. It is no longer the desire that seeks possession, it is the consciousness that she belongs to Him. "I am my Beloved's." This is a very important progress. The soul that seeks salvation, that seeks to satisfy newly awakened affections, exclaims, 'as soon as it is assured of it, "My Beloved is mine." When there has been a deeper experience of self, it recognizes itself as being His. Thus with respect to ourselves, it is not "We have found Him of whom the prophets did write;" but "We are bought with a price, we are no longer our own." To belong in this manner to Christ, no longer thinking of self, is the happiness of the soul. It is not that we lose the sense of the blessedness of possessing the Savior, but the other thought, the thought of being His, occupies the first place.

Again, the Beloved testifies to the preciousness of the Bride in his eyes. But here also there is a difference. Before, when speaking of her, he added to the gentleness and beauty of her aspect, all the graces which were seen in her, the honey that flowed from her lips, the pleasant fruits that were found in her, the sweet odors which he called on the breath of the Spirit to bring forth. He does not now repeat, these things. He speaks of that which she is for Him. Having described her personal beauty, His heart dwells on what she is for Himself. " My dove, my undefiled is but one." His affection can see no other, none can be compared with her; there are many others, but they are not the one whom He loves. The person of the Lord fills the heart that has been brought back to Him. The look and the graces of the Bride are the subject of the Bridegroom's testimony. Moreover, for Him there is no one but her, the only one of her mother. Thus will it be with the remnant of Israel in the last days; even as in spirit it is now with us. The reception of Christ, and His union with this remnant at Jerusalem, are represented in a very striking manner in that which follows. It is no longer the Beloved coming up out of the wilderness,-where He had associated His people with Himself,-in glory and in love. It is the Bride, fair as the moon and radiant with glory, who appears on the scene, like an army with banners displayed. The beloved had come down to look upon the ripening fruits of the valley and to see if His vine flourished. Before He is aware, His love makes Him like the chariots of His willing people (compare Psalm 110:3). He leads them in glory and triumph. He had sought the fruits of grace among them; but having come down for this, He exalts them in glory. It is only when His people are fully established in grace that everything in them will be beauty and perfection, and that they will recognize that they belong entirely to Christ, and at the same time that they will entirely possess His affection. This last thought is the rest of their heart. They can now go forth with Him to enjoy all the blessings of the earth, in the certainty and the communion of His love. What fruits of gratitude, what peculiar feelings will. be those which the people of Israel have kept for the Lord alone, which they could never have for any other, and which, after all, none but themselves could have towards the Lord.

Chapter 8 stands by itself, and appears to me to recapitulate the principles of the whole Book. It returns to the foundation of that which gave rise to all these exercises. The full satisfaction of all the desires of the remnant is prophetically announced, and the path of their affections is marked out. But this picture is drawn for the encouragement of those who are not yet enjoying it, and expresses the desire for its accomplishment; giving thus the sanction of God to the ardent desire of the remnant to possess Christ, and to have full liberty of communion with Him. The reply teaches with a clearness that is very precious, the manner of its accomplishment. The ardent affection of the loved one is manifested, and the Beloved desires that she may rest in His love, and enjoy it as long as she will, without being disturbed. Afterward, she comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Him. And where did the Lord awaken her from her sleep? Under an apple tree. From Christ alone she derives her life. Thus only can Israel give birth to this living remnant, which, at Jerusalem, shall become the earthly Bride of the great King, which desires to be, and shall be, as a seal upon His heart, according to the power of a love that is strong as death -that spares nothing, and yields nothing.

The "little sister" appears to me to be Ephraim, which has never had the same development that Judah received through the manifestation of Christ, and through all that took place after the captivity of the ten tribes. For all the moral affections of Judah were formed on their relations to Christ, on His rejection, and on the sentiments which this produced when the Spirit caused it to be

felt (Isa. 50-53). Ephraim has gone through none of this, but will enter into the enjoyment of its results. Judah, when perfected, will enjoy the full favor of the Messiah; their affections having been formed for Him by all the exercises of heart which they have had with respect to Him.

Christ, in His Solomon character, the glorious King, the Son of David, and after the order of Melchisedec, has a vineyard as Lord of the nations or multitudes. He has entrusted it to others, who are to make Him a suitable return. The vineyard of the Bride was at Her own disposal, but all its proceeds shall be for Solomon; and there shall be a portion for those that kept its fruits. A touching expression of her relation to the King. She will have all to be His; and then there are others who shall profit by it also.

It is to be observed, that there is no question in this book of the purification of the conscience. That question is not touched upon. But it speaks of those affections of the heart, which cannot be too ardent when the Lord is their object. Consequently, the faults that manifest forgetfulness of Him and of His grace, serve only to produce such exercises of heart with respect to Him, as recall all the attractions of His person, and the consciousness of belonging entirely to Him. Exercises that form the heart to a much deeper appreciation of Himself, because guilt before a judge is not the question, but a fault of the heart towards a friend—a fault which meeting with a love too strong to be turned away from its object, only deepens her own affection, and infinitely exalts in her eyes the affection of her Beloved; thus forming her heart, by inward exercise, to the appreciation of His love, and to the capability of loving and estimating all that He is. It is all-important to perform our part in this portion of the Christian life. It is thus that Christ is truly known; for with respect to divine persons, he who loves not knows not. The heart indeed is imperfect, it cannot love as it ought. And therefore all these exercises are necessary. I do not say that faults are necessary. But, as has been said, it is love that causes the fault to be felt, and the strength of that love that exposes to the watchman's blows (whose business it is, not to measure love, but to maintain moral order). He takes away the veil—sad and painful discipline, which proves, that even while loving much, there was not love enough; or at least that this love was deposited in a weak vessel which, if listened to, is a traitor to itself.

I have said that in its interpretation this book does not apply to the Church. Nevertheless, I have spoken of ourselves and of hearts, and with reason; because, although the interpretation of the book presents Israel as its object, it is the heart and the feelings that are in question, so that morally it can be applied to us. But then, this modification must be introduced, we have the full knowledge of accomplished redemption, we know that we are sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. Our conscience is forever purged. God will remember our sins and our iniquities no more. But the effect of this work is, that we are entirely His, according to the love that is shown in the sacrifice that accomplished it. Morally, therefore, Christ is the all in all of our souls. It is evident that if He loved us, if He gave Himself for us, when in us there was no good thing, it is in having absolutely done with ourselves that we have life, happiness, and the knowledge of God. It is in Him alone that we find the source, the strength, and the perfection of this. Now, as to justification, this truth makes our position perfect. In us there is no good thing. We are accepted in the Beloved - perfectly accepted in His acceptance, our sins being entirely put away by His death. But, then, as to life, Jesus becomes the one object, the all in all of our souls. In Him alone the heart finds that which can be its object—in Him who has so loved us and given Himself for us—in Him who is entire perfection for the heart. As to conscience, the question is settled. The heart needs to love such an

object, and in principle will have none but Him, in whom all grace, devotedness to us, and every grace according to God's own heart is found. It is here that the Christian is in unison with the Song of Songs. The Church, loved, redeemed, and belonging to Him, having by the Spirit understood His perfections, having known Him in the work of His love, does not yet possess Him as she knows Him. She sighs for the day when she will see Him as He is. Meanwhile He manifests Himself to her, awakens her affections, and seeks to possess her love, by testifying all His delight in her. She learns also that which is in herself-that slothfulness of heart which loses opportunities of communion with Him. But this teaches her to judge all that in herself, which weakens the effect on her heart of the perfections of her Beloved. Thus she is morally prepared, and has capacity for the full enjoyment of communion with Him; when she shall see Him as He is, she will be like Him. It is not the effort to obtain Him; but we seek to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended by Christ. We have an object that we do not yet fully possess, which alone can satisfy all our desires - an object whose affection we need to realize in our hearts -an end which He in grace pursues, by the testimony of His perfect love towards us, and thereby to cultivate our love to Him, comforting us even by the sense of our weakness, and by the revelation of His own perfection, and thus showing us all that in our own hearts prevents our enjoying it. He delivers us from it, in that we discover it in the presence of His love.

It is not my object to trace here in detail the working of these affections in the heart, because I am interpreting and not exhorting. But it was necessary to speak a little- on the subject, that the book may be understood. Moreover, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of cultivating these holy affections which attach us to Christ, and cause us to know His love, and to know Himself. For we repeat, he who loves not, knows not when God is in question, and His dealings with respect to us. Only remark with what earnestness, with what tenderness He tells His loved one of all her preciousness in His sight, and of the perfection which He beholds in her. If Jesus sees perfection in us, we need nothing more. He re-assures her heart by speaking to her of this, when she had been justly rebuked and disciplined by the watchmen, and her heart compelled to seek relief by declaring to others, to her friends, all that He was to her. He reproaches her with nothing, but makes her feel that she is perfect in His eyes.

Practically, what deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when He had denied Him! What a moment was that when without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him who had thus denied Him, the sheep and the lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just given His life!

Now this love of Christ's, in its superiority to evil, a superiority that proves it divine, reproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of every one who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love, we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him, Himself.

A Word Of Exhortation.

2 Peter 1:12-15. " Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I

must put off' this my tabernacle. even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

The Lord has taught us much and many blessed truths, and when they were fresh and new what power they had upon our souls! They filled our thoughts; we spake often one to another about them: now, I am thinking that one great reason why we have become so weak, why so much failure, is just this, that what we have known we have not kept "always in remembrance." Had the church not forgotten what it did know, surely she would not have failed as she has. Did we individually walk as always in remembrance of what we learn from the Lord by His Word, I am sure we should find ourselves gaining strength, and increasing too, in knowledge of Him.

The Potter's Broken Vessel

I feel and judge very distinctly that there is a special character in this present time through which we are passing. The great powers which are destined to fill out the action of Christendom's closing day, are practicing themselves, each in its several sphere, with great earnestness and skill. I mean, the civil and the ecclesiastical.

I do not doubt but that, for a season, the ecclesiastical will prevail. The woman is to ride again for a while - a prophetic symbol, as I believe, signifying ecclesiastical supremacy. And this present moment is marked by many efforts on the behalf of that which takes the place of the Church, or of the ecclesiastical thing, thus to exalt itself; and she is so adroitly directing those efforts, that success may speedily await them, and then the blood of the saints may flow afresh.

The civil power, however, is anything but idle. The wondrous advance that is making every day in the cultivation of the world, proves great skill and activity on its part. It is largely boasting itself, showing what it has done, and pledging what further it means to do.

At this moment, each of these powers is abroad in the scene of action; and the minds of men are divided between them. In some sense, they are rivals. There is the commercial energy, and there is the religious energy: the one is erecting its railroads and making its exhibitions; the other is extending its bishoprics, building its temples, multiplying its ordinances, and the like. The attention of the children of men is divided between these things; but the saint who knows the cross of Christ as the relief of his conscience, and the reason of his separation from the world, is apart from them both.

I doubt not that the civil power will have to yield the supremacy for a time, and the woman will ride again - though her state and greatness will be but for a little; for the civil power will take offense, and remove her.

If we, in God's grace, keep a good conscience towards Christ and His truth, we may count upon it, that no inheritance in the earth is worth, as people speak, many years' purchase. If we consent to become whatever the times would make us, of course we may go on - and that, too, advancing with an advancing world.

I have been sensible, lately, how much the spirit of Jeremiah suits these times. He lived in the daily observation of evil. Iniquity was abounding in the scene around him, though it was called by God's name, and was indeed His place on the earth. The house of prayer had become "a den of thieves," though it still cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these!" He knew that the judgment of God was awaiting it all; and he looked for happy days which lay in the distance, beyond the present corruption and the approaching judgment.

Over all this corruption, Jeremiah mourned; against it all he testified; and, like his Master, he was hated for his testimony (John 7:7).

He was, however, full of faith and hope; and in the strength of that (anticipating the future) he laid out his money in the purchase of Hanameel's field (Jer. 32).

All this was beautiful: the present sorrow over the corruption of the daughter of his people - faith's certainty of the coming judgment - and hope's prospect of closing crowing glory.

This is a pattern for our spirit. And I observe another feature of power in the prophet. He was not to be seduced from the conclusions of faith by occasional fair and promising appearances (see chap. 37).

The Chaldean army had broken up their camp under the walls of Jerusalem, because of the arrival of the Egyptian allies. This circumstance flattered the Jewish people into hopes; but Jeremiah left the city, because he would still hold to the conclusions of faith--that Jerusalem was doomed of God in righteous judgment.

All this is a fine exhibition of a soul walking by the light of God, not merely through darkness, but through darkness which seemed to be light.

All seems to be quiet around us at present; and even more than that, things are greatly and rapidly advancing, as far as all the accommodations of social life extend. But the moral of the scene, in the eye of faith, is more serious than ever. The apostate principles of man's heart are but ripening themselves into their most fruitful and abundant exhibition.

There is something of rivalry in the different powers that are in action just at present. The secular and the religious are apart, to a great extent. Each has its respective worshippers. But, ere long, confederacy will take the place of rivalry, I believe. The world must, even for its own ends, adopt religion for a time, that man's system may grow solid, as well as extended and brilliant, and propose itself as that which has earned a title to conform all and everything to itself.

Separation is the Christian's place and calling-Church separation-separation because of heavenly citizenship, and oneness with an already risen Christ. Abraham's separation was very peculiar; it was twofold. - He was separated from the natural associations of Mesopotamia, "country, kindred, and father's house," and from the moral associations of Canaan, or its iniquities and its idols.

In the thought of these solemn truths, beloved, may the Lord Himself be more real and near to us! May the hope of His appearing be found lying more surely and calmly in the midst of the affections and stirrings of our hearts! All was reality with Jeremiah, to whom I lately referred. The present corruption was a reality to him; for he rebuked it and bewailed it-the approaching judgment was a reality to him; for he wept at the thought of it, and deprecated it-the final glory was a reality to him; for he laid out his money upon it. He had occasional refreshments of spirit. His sleep, and the dream that accompanied it, in chap. 31, was, as he says, "sweet unto him." It was a moment on "the holy hill" to him; for a light from the kingdom, or the glory, visited him. He had, likewise, revelations, and he could speak and write of them. But not only as thus refreshed and gifted in spirit-he was real and true in moral power. He testified against this "present world" unto suffering, and laid out his money, his expectations, and labors on "the world to come."

It was this which completed his character-and all would have been poor without it. We may speak of Christ, and teach about the kingdom-one's own soul knows it well; but to witness for Him against the world, and to be rich towards God-this is to fill out and realize our character as saints.

We may covet these elements of the Christian character. Some of us, if one may speak, are but half Jeremiahs. We can talk of Christ; but can we suffer for Him? We can teach about the kingdom; but can we lay out our money upon it?

All this may admonish us, beloved-But I have another word on my heart just at present also.

The parable of the potter, in Jer. 18, 19, was designed to let Israel know that, though brought into covenant, they were still within the range and reach of the Divine judgments, and that such judgments would overtake them because of their sins.

In John Baptist's time, Israel is found in the like character of self-confidence. If in Jeremiah's day they would say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these"-in the Baptist's day they said, "We have Abraham to our father." But John, like Jeremiah, would again teach them that, though in covenant, judgment could reach them.

In the Lord's ministry we find the same. Israel still boasted. They talked of Abraham being their father, and of God being their Father (John 8); but we know how the Lord, again and again, warned them of the coming judgment.

All this has a lesson for our learning.

Christendom, or Babylon, has taken this ancient place of Israel. She trusts in security in spite of unfaithfulness. She boasts in the Lord, though her moral condition be vile. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow"; though blood and pride and all abominations stain her (Rev. 18:7). But Rev. 18 is another action, like that of the prophet in the potter's house. It teaches the unfaithful one, that the doom of the broken vessel, or of the millstone cast into the sea, awaits her.

This is for our learning.

God never sanctions disobedience. He did not go into the Garden of Eden to accredit Adam's sin, but to bring relief, in the way of grace, for it. So, in the Gospel; He utterly condemns sin, while delivering the sinner.

Nor does He ever commit Himself to His stewards. He commits Himself to His own gifts and calling (Rom. 11:29), but never to His stewards. They are always held responsible to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture. Christ is the only Steward that ever stood and answered for Himself, in the conditional place: and in this respect, as in every other, He is the moral contradiction of man. In the temptation (Matt. 4), the devil sought to inspire the Lord with confidence in spite of disobedience. He partially cited Psa. 91, quoting the promised security, omitting the required obedience. But he was utterly defeated. The Lord, in answer, cited

Deut. 6, and acted accordingly; for in that chapter, obedience is declared to be Israel's ground of security.

In this way did Jesus keep His own blessings under Psa. 91, and His Israel's blessings under Deut. vi. But all other stewards, in their several turn and season, have failed; and Babylon's boast, which we have already listened to, is a lie.

All this may, now-a-days, be had in our remembrance seasonably: for we live at a time when Babylon is filling herself afresh with this boast, just before her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the millstone (Rev. 18:21).

For the boast of " the eternal city," as she calls herself, only the more awfully signalizes her for the judgment of God. It is a favorite thought with her, that while other Churches tremble for their safety, she is above such fears-she is God's city, and has His walls around her.

This is imposing. But when considered by the teaching of the Word, it only the more distinctly declares what she is, and witnesses her more advanced ripeness for the judgment of God. Because this boast is defiance. It is not faith in God, but disavowal of His rights and authority. It is the denial of her subjection to Him-of her stewardship, or place of being answerable to Him and His judgment. This boast of being " the eternal city," so far identifies her with the Babylon that says, " I sit as a queen, and am no widow"; and it leaves her for the doom of the potter's vessel in the valley of the son of Hinnom, or of the millstone in the hand of the angel.

" Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

Things As They Are

Men are dealt with in Scripture as God sees them to be—circumstances detailed as they are. God and realities are identified on the one hand, vanity and the creature on the other. Sin has hidden from man the reality of his condition, and, ignorant of his disease, he cannot find out the remedy. With uncertain data, it is vain to expect positive conclusions. Things as they are and the wherefore is unfolded in the Word, God's judgment and remedy revealed. How early in Genesis (6:5) do we read "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." An evil heart, an evil life (ver. 12). How early in our Lord's mission is the announcement, "Ye must be born again" (John 3) The "flesh profiteth nothing!" How the testimony of patriarchs and prophets corroborates the truth. "Few and evil have been the days of my life," the language of Jacob (Gen. 47:9). "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you," the testimony of Moses (Deut. 24:19). "Born in sin and shapen in iniquity," the confession of David (Psa. 51). This desperate condition behold in reality, there is but one remedy. Sin as it is, and sinners as we are, God only can remove the former and save the latter. Things as they are, can only be met by God as he is revealed to us in Christ. Realities find their answer in God. The very basis of communion with God is reality. Our need of God's grace is real, and the grace of God for that need is real also. Christ died the just for the unjust to bring us to God. Grace had its existence in the object for which it exists. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Individually, then, our comfort arises from honest-hearted dealing with God in Christ, in the confidence of the grace which is revealed there. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Having been led into acquaintance with ourselves, and taught our utter emptiness, and this knowledge accompanied by the revelation as to where our help lies; responsibility is imposed upon us to seek it. Our very need is our recommendation, the more we want the more is revealed of the bounty of Him who bestows. We exist for grace to be displayed; and grace is manifested in our existence. Communion with God at the outset of our career is based upon our helplessness, and the fact of His grace to meet all our need out of his riches in Christ. To forget the former is to lose the enjoyment of the latter.

As was before affirmed, realities find their answer in God. Now this truth, in individual operation, cannot be gainsaid. The word of God asserts it, and the word of God confirms the assertion. The children of God bear testimony to it, and the lives of the children of God confirm their testimony. The latter end of Job was better than the beginning (Job 42:12); but he had traveled farther in the way of self-loathing, and lost by the way no little of self-importance. In his own words, "Behold I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. And it was so (verses 7-10). And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." The lower he got the more he had, "for before honor is humility."

Things as they are, seen and acknowledged, is a primary element in our individual dealings with God. This is doubly true in our collective assemblies. Saints gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, have to do with realities. In His presence everything is exposed, naked and bare is everything before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is one thing to have got into our place, to have learned the true whereabouts of believers, viz., as gathered together in the name of Jesus, " He is there in the midst of them," and it is another to learn what is befitting the place; in other words, how to behave in it. Realities, not pretensions, have their answer. in God. Now in our day, we have had too little reality, and too much pretension. We have thought the recovery of place to be the recovery of power, and looked for what once was as now to be realized, and reading how others were exercised, decided on imitating them. But realities find their answer in God. The knowledge of where Saints ought to be is understood, something of what the Church ought to be is apprehended; but alas, in our folly, we have overlooked what Saints are. The fact of the existence of gifts in the Church is recorded, the source of them revealed, but our ability to exercise them may be overrated.

The purpose of God, to bless His people for Christ's sake, is undoubted. God has a people, and the Head of that people He cannot, He will not forget. He ever lives before God, to receive and give down to us the blessings He receives for us. This is undoubted reality. He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself! But on our part too there is a condition, the precursor of blessing. In the history of God's ancient people, as in Judges, how often they turned aside from following Him, how often they hewed to themselves cisterns which could hold no water. In His mercy He visited them, exposed to them their condition, brought them to acknowledge it and to feel it, and then He brought their deliverance. As then, so it must be now. Believers need to see and acknowledge their nakedness, abandon their folly, and in humility own things as they are, not pretending to what they have not, but mourning over the little they have; waiting on God in His grace, to supply them with more. The presence of the Holy Ghost is a reality, and surely leads to acknowledgment of our real condition, But, alas, how slow we are to learn; how far from apprehending, how backward to take the low place, though the grace in the remedy imperatively requires it. The need felt is very power! How sweet is humility, how happy confession! Poverty is no crime in the kingdom of grace, unfitness no sin-but the presumption of place where the power to occupy does not exist-and how wretched the feeling! In the world men have their places and their occupations. To be consistent in them is their distinction, to pretend to any other their discredit. In station, rightly to occupy the one God has placed us in, is an honor; to pretend to another, shows folly.

The very world has such in derision, who through weakness of character and the feeling of pride, would pass themselves for other than they are. Truly before God, then, His people should be candid. When disguise is impossible, confession is true wisdom, and far more when everything is to be gained by acknowledgment of weakness as it exists, and "things as they are;" to pretend to anything else, is to put the blessing far from us. The work of God by His Spirit to-day, is not to place men on an elevated position favorable for discovering the errors of others; but where they can have a better survey of their own. The existence of ministry by human arrangement is to be deplored; sectarianism is palpably wrong; and the assumption of power where it does not exist, is equally bad. But let none imagine that these difficulties justify the intrusion of self-will in the worship of God; but rather let saints seek from the Lord a ministry of the Word, in full accordance with the Truth and the Spirit.

But God is all-sufficient for the need of His people. Humility will characterize those who realize His presence. True ministry will seek to bring about communion; and in the reality of the intercourse with God, is the antidote to the evil. Every truth has its counterfeit. Liberty of ministry does not convey power, but allows the exercise where it exists. Deprivation of true ministry is to be deplored; but the lack of it cannot be supplied by pretension.

Many have left efficient ministry in system, in obedience to the Word as to the gathering of saints, and the sovereignty of the Spirit; it is hardly to be expected they, should be satisfied with worse, however patient under the deprivation of any. There is then ministry, and that of the Word, and all are not gifted for it. If it is confined to few, when we may be safely entrusted with more we shall have it. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest."

But, meanwhile, let it be understood distinctly, we are not bound to do without what we have, because some will say we are only, like others, leaning upon ministry; neither are we, by pretension to what we have not, to render our position false, and endanger the testimony, in obedience to which we have experienced edification and blessing. God works by instrumentality; and where He is using such, ours is to support them by prayer. The chiefest of Apostles needed this in the zenith of his power; how much more our feeble helps in these days of the " Church's weakness"! The position is of God, and must be abided by. Our weakness in it is most palpable to others; let us not hide the condition from ourselves. Things as they are, our God in Christ is all-sufficient; to confess them, is to find Him. Things as they are, and acknowledged as such, command the regard of those who are without. There is respect due to the faith which enters a path where difficulties must be encountered; but pretension to power where there is little but weakness, would only provoke derision and censure. But, still, things as they are, and God's help sought in them, and we are far better off than if we had things as we should like them, and His presence denied.

The True Grace of God

There is not a single doctrine of Scripture that is met by so much repugnance in the human mind as the doctrine of divine grace. This repugnance is not confined to unconverted persons only; for the very same disposition, if watched, will be found to operate in the minds of those who are renewed by the grace which, in measure, is opposed and denied. It is not that the necessity of grace is altogether disallowed-a certain degree of it is admitted, as essential to acceptance with God; as even the Pharisee himself could allow, who thanked GOD for the difference between himself and others-but its absoluteness and completeness, i.e., its real and divine character finds an unwilling reception in our hearts.

It will be found, I imagine, on strict inquiry, that the substitution of our own feelings and natural apprehensions, in the place of an absolute and simple faith in God's testimony, has much to do with wrong and inadequate views of God's grace. The natural bias of the mind, acquired, it may be, and strengthened by systematic exhibitions of truth, goes very far in restricting the breadth and freedom of thought in the divine word; and makes it a very hard thing for a man to " become a fool that he may be wise."

Two things are exceedingly needful to be understood and kept in prominence, in order to the right apprehension of grace, viz., what the nature of man is, and has been proved to be, under the various trials to which it has been subjected in the dispensations of God, and the real nature and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's full, and blessed, and only remedy for all this proved and manifested evil in man.

It is comparatively an easy thing to dwell on the sense of personal evil, and to confess in humiliation the workings of a corrupt nature; but it is exceedingly difficult to connect the conscious evil of the flesh, with all that has been discovered by GOD to exist in that flesh, from the day of its first murderous outbreak in Cain, until its enmity found a horrid vent in the rejection and murder of God's only Son. If it were kept in mind that it is the very same nature that failed in Eden, and filled the earth with violence before the flood-that turned to the baseness of idolatry in the newly-peopled world, and exhibited itself in the filthiness of Sodom-which wrought in rebellion against the law of God when he thus dealt with the Jew-and, finally, in Jew and Gentile joined in crucifying God's Son when he was sent into the world-it would go far towards clearing the ground for the admission of grace in all its fullness and perfectness, as presented in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

If my apprehensions of sin are limited by the discoveries I may have made of my own evil, and are not corrected by the results of God's dealing with man, brought to an issue in the guilt of the cross, I shall stop far short of the proved abomination and wickedness of the flesh; and shall in the same measure practically fall short of a just estimate of the riches of God's grace-that " true grace of God wherein we stand."

It is this which constitutes the special evil of wrong and inadequate thoughts of grace, that it disparages God's infinite goodness, and the value of Christ's work.

It is a right thing for a Christian to be desiring holiness, and to be mourning over his want of conformity to Christ; but what is it that gives the power of holiness, and that produces practical conformity to Christ?

The grace of God is not merely negative in its operations. There is a transforming power in the very gaze of the soul on Him, through whose grace we are saved, and who is the object of God's delight.

The true character of this grace can never be maintained in the soul, apart from walking in the abiding sense of the presence of the Lord. Out of that presence I lack the light that manifests it, and the darkness of the world produces a hebetude of the faculties that apprehend it.

It is the province of faith to be continually lifting up our souls out of this world, and all that is passing around us and within us, and to show us things-the only realities-in the light of God.

And it is just as we get above the region of sense; and are acted upon by the realities of faith, that we are established in grace, and that our comfort and joy as the children of God are advanced, and our walk and ways here are according to God.

What we are as the children of God can only be known to faith; and the infinite depths of grace, and the bright prospects of glory, are laid open only to the eye of faith.

It is a true and blessed fruit of the Father's grace "that we should be called the sons of God"-but then it is added-" therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not." It is not in the scope of the world's knowledge to know the children of God.

But this knowledge is essential to all who would walk as the children of God. Without it, and without the constant exercise of soul on this most blessed truth, there cannot be the taking or the maintaining of our right place in the world, as exhibiting the grace that is to be God's witness to the world-" blameless and harmless the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

What we are is necessary to be known and cherished in the soul as the power and ground of exhibiting what we should be. It was so with the Lord. Had He not been what He was, his whole course through the world would have been altered by it. Could He have forgotten -or denied his claim that he was the Son of God-then (I speak not of his work but) his whole character and ways would have sunk to another level in the world.

But this is a truth known and admitted by us all. Still faith needs to be strengthened against the continual contradiction of the world and sense, and our hearts to be recalled to the grace in which we stand.

Zechariah 13

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.

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