

SERMONS OF T H REYNOLDS

by T.H. Reynolds

Reynolds' spiritual meditations on coming to Christ outside worldly concerns, emphasizing Christ as the center of Christian experience and the church as Christ's dwelling place among His people.

47 Chapters

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00.00. Renolds, T. H. Articles

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S. A Reading

A Reading.

Matthew 11:25-30; Matthew 13:44-46.

You notice the Scripture I read opens with the words "At that time." We are introduced to an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to His Father.

It was a special moment. Even John the Baptist began to doubt; and he sent his disciples, saying, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" He had been told that the One upon whom he should see the Spirit descending and abiding was He, and he "saw and bare record that" Jesus "was the Son of God." What could have made the difference in John's thoughts? He saw the Lord rejected in this world, and that in spite of all the good He did in the world. The Lord Jesus came, as it were, piping the news of grace, and they heard it not; people did not believe Him. A few fishermen of Galilee believed on Him, but none of the leaders. Do they receive Him now? Not at all. Don't you think He felt it when He was here? Ah, He did feel it, and He feels it still, and He is conscious of it. The Lord Jesus Christ did not go amongst the ranks of angels to find companions, but He came amongst men in the streets and lanes of the city. The Lord wanted saved sinners to be His companions in eternal glory. Are you answering to His mind? Do you know what it is to be walking in company with a Christ that the world will not have? We can give joy to His heart by being true to Him. People may be very grateful to the Lord for what He did for them, without being near Him. The Father loves to teach us about His own Blessed Son. Do you know how precious Christ is to the Father, and what it must have been to God to see His Son rejected on the earth? The Son turns to the Father at that time of His rejection, and thanks Him that whilst the wise of this world did not receive His things, He had revealed them unto babes who did not know the ways of the world. I have been converted for fifty years, and I know of nothing more blessed than to take all my blessings from the hand of my precious Saviour. It was to the babes that the Father revealed the preciousness of Christ; not to those who care for what is going on in this world today. He says to them, I will tell you what I think of my dear Son. Men rejected Him, but the Father so loved Him that He put everything into His hands; and when He puts any thing into the hands of His Son, He will never let it drop; and He has put you into His hands, and He will not let you drop either. If the Lord Jesus Christ spoke words of grace to any poor sinner on earth, it was as One who knew all the love of the Father's heart. I want to engage your hearts with two things; on the one hand the world rejecting Christ, and on the other that solitary Man, the Object of the Father's love, He who could tell all the secrets of that love, and yet was rejected. Now He turns round and says, "Come unto Me." I want this test for those who do know their sins forgiven. Have you ever come to Christ as the Object of the Father's love outside the world? He stood outside it all and said, "Come unto Me." There are numbers of Christians who know the work of Christ, are clear of judgment, and have a title to heaven, but they have not found the company of Christ outside the world. I believe there is many a weary and heavy-laden saint who has not the sense of having everything in Christ outside the world. The "rest" is to be found in His company. When God made this universe, what

do you think He made it for? He made it that He might have His own delight in the work of His hands for His glory, and He is going to have a company of poor sinners, saved and made like to Christ, in whom He will have His own eternal delights.

God wanted Himself to be known by His creatures, that they might be acquainted with Him. How? His own Blessed Son came down to make Him known. Then He took up men, saved them, and became their life, their righteousness; and all created intelligences will see, in Christ, and in the saints in the likeness of Christ, what a blessed God He is. I wish you to get into the company of Christ so that you may know you are part of that company, the church, in whom all the lineaments of Christ are to shine out to the glory of God for ever. I will give you an illustration. In the morning you may see the countless drops of dew upon the grass, and each dewdrop is like a little sun. It is nothing but a drop of water, but it reflects the sun. So will it be with the saints - each will be a reflection of Christ. Every believer is nothing but a little particle himself, but all will be like Christ. What will that be for God to look at? If you look at the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1-27, there is nobody seen in it. It is the dwelling-place of the glory of God and of the Lamb; and they dwell in it. The New Jerusalem is the saints. It is all Christ, but Christ shining in the saints, the metropolis of glory, and God dwells there.

I may be only a little bit of the jasper wall, so to speak, but it is all one crystal vessel lighted up with the glory of God. I want you to see what God is making: a dwelling-place where He will rest for ever and ever. The evangelist goes and finds a poor sinner, one that Christ will put into that heavenly city, and a pastor or teacher builds that soul up in Christ, that all that is of Christ may be formed in that soul. How is that done? All the teaching in the world would not do it of itself. If by God's power I am able to put your soul in contact with Christ so that you get near Him, it will make your face shine. You cannot get into the company of Christ without being formed into His mind. You will find in His company He is everything to you. I want to commend Christ to you so that you may want His company, and so that you may be separated from the world, which can only debase us.

If you get into the company of that blessed Christ, His company will form you. I want the feeblest believers to have the sense that Christ is everything to them. You find all you want in Christ, and you cannot get it anywhere but there. That lowly, rejected Man stood outside this world with only a few poor disciples and said, "Come unto Me." If you get into the company of Christ you will get into contact with all the world of glory, even while you are here.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 : "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." These verses shew what God has wrought us for. All that is of Christ in your heart the Spirit of God has written there, and it is all in accord with heaven. All that is wrought of Christ in you belongs to heaven, and soon He will take us there in bodies which are heavenly. The power for forming your body for heaven all comes from heaven, and God wants you to know Christ now as life, and righteousness, and all else. The Son of God takes you in all your emptiness, and fills you so that you may be entering into all the joy of heaven now. He is going to have you in His own likeness, and He wants you for His own joy now; but for that you must answer to His mind. Christ found a treasure in the world, and you, as saints, are part of it. He gave up all that He had to possess you. He bought you. What is Christ's treasure

in this world? Are you a part of it? Do you believe you are very precious to Him? When He took you up as a poor, lost sinner it was not for what you were, but for what He could make you.

God took a handful of dust to make a wonderful being - man: and he goes back to a handful of dust! God is going to make a wonderful thing in glory, and He takes up a poor degraded sinner to make him an heir of glory, something suited to Himself.

It is all hidden now, but I know that Christ is written on your heart, dear believer, and Christ's thought is to build up in your soul all that is of Himself, so that you may say there is no place like His company. I want your heart to understand that you are His treasure. The Spirit of God devotes Himself to the graving of Christ in your heart. The pearl is one; it is to shew the unity of the thing. Every colour in the various flowers is a ray of the sun, just a reflection of the light in the sun, but it takes all the colours of the various flowers to shew it out, and so it will take all the saints in glory to shew out the beauties of Christ, but all are one. The Church is one. Christ bought the pearl because He saw His own beauty in it, and He will shew out His own beauty and glory for ever in that scene of eternal delights. May we each one seek to answer to the heart of Christ! If you come to Christ you will find yourself in the company of those who have that same Blessed Person before them. Have you found that Blessed One who is outside all that is in this world? That Blessed Christ! Do you know Himself, and is your heart connected with all that world of glory? May something more of Christ be found in your hearts, and may you know that you are part of His treasure here for His name's sake.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. Acceptance, Communion, and Obedience.

Acceptance, Communion, and Obedience.

Numbers 15:1-41.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 1. When the Lord took up the nation of Israel to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt, He not only regarded their misery, but expressed the desire of His own heart, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:7.) Later on in their history the prophetic Spirit in Israel thus recognizes another purpose in their call. Jehovah had said unto them, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isaiah 49:3.) In fulfilment of this, they will yet become "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord." Then "righteousness and praise" will "spring forth before all the nations;" not as the result of keeping the law, but of being clothed with Jehovah's robe of righteousness. That which has failed under the law is yet to be accomplished in grace. Had it been possible that they could have been established under the law as a holy people to the Lord, the nations around would have learned from them two things. First, what a blessed people they were; and, secondly, what a God their Jehovah was. (Compare Deuteronomy 4:6-8.) How everything broke down with them on the ground of their own responsibility their history records. At the same time the desires of the Lord's heart are expressed in many ways. At Sinai we see them a delivered people, brought to God; and there the Lord acquaints Moses with His desire that they should make a tabernacle that He might dwell among them, a place that should be sanctified with His glory, and in which at the altar of burnt-offering He could meet with them. Before Moses could make this desire known they had corrupted themselves, "and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." Through the intercession of Moses they are pardoned and placed upon the ground of long-suffering mercy (Exodus 34:6; Exodus 34:9), and he then communicates to them this desire of the Lord. It was a happy time for them while engaged in preparing an habitation for their God. When it was completed and set up, the glory of the Lord filled it. Jehovah took His place between the cherubim, dwelling in their midst.

They are now ready to start for the land given to them of the Lord, carrying with them the tabernacle of the testimony of God. A journey of eleven days brought them to Kadesh-Barnea, the southern limit of their promised possessions. Here the murmuring, which had characterized them before, reached its height; and they despise the pleasant land, and in their hearts turn back to Egypt. But at this moment faith shines out very brightly in Caleb and Joshua. In the sense of the purpose of God to have a people for Himself, they speak to the congregation, not only of the exceeding goodness of the land given to them for their own blessing, but they add, "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." (Numbers 14:8.) If any poor sinner now thinks of what happiness it will be that he should possess the heavenly Canaan, there is a deeper joy than his, - the Lord's delight to have him there. (Luke 15:1-32.) But we may say that the Lord was then robbed of His delight, save in the two men of faith, and the people consequently are turned back in

the desert to bear their iniquities. It is at this moment that the Lord does not give up His purpose of being glorified in Israel. It could not be accomplished in the generation that grieved Him, and they must perish in the wilderness, but He expresses His determined purpose thus: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:21.) It will yet be accomplished when Israel will be fully established under the favour of God in their own land, and He will be glorified in them. This is anticipated by the remnant of Israel in the words of Psalms 67:1-7, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us . . . that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." In the certainty of His own purpose the Lord (Numbers 15:1-41) speaks to them thus: "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you." Some must enter therein, though those to whom the glad tidings of Canaan were first preached (Exodus 3:16-17) did not enter in because of unbelief. Blessed in that exceeding good land those who entered in would be. There they would eat bread without scarceness, and not lack anything in it. But their own blessings in the land is not the subject before us in this chapter. It is the Blessor, who anticipates the approach to Himself in the joy of worship of those whom He has blessed. At rest in the land of their habitations, their happy service will be to make a sweet savour to the Lord. No doubt there will be holy convocations and set times in which they can offer, but here the free-will offerings of thankful hearts apart from ordered seasons is anticipated. The details of these sweet-savour offerings are given elsewhere. Chief among them is the burnt-offering, which went up wholly as a sweet savour to God; representing thus the intrinsic perfection, so fully proved in devotedness even to death, of Him who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." How acceptable to God this offering was is shown by its being entirely a sweet savour; and in all this fragrance and acceptability He desires to have worshippers before Himself. But the great point to notice here is the special ordinance, connected with the burnt-offering or peace-offering, of a meat-offering and drink-offering. In other words, they were to be in communion and joy before Him, as well as in acceptance. The meat-offering speaks of the perfections of Christ as a man before God. It was in a Man these perfections were. Hence we, as men, when taught of God, are able to enter into them. No part of the burnt-offering was eaten. In its sweet savour the worshipper knew his acceptance, but in the meat-offering there was communion. God has been well pleased in a Man.

"Grace and truth, in love unceasing, Rivers on the thirsty ground, Every step to God well pleasing, Spread their heavenly savour round."

Mark, the communion was not founded on that which the natural man could appreciate - to his selfish heart it would be merely benevolence - but on the apprehension that these perfections were in the blessed Man who said, "I do always those things that please Him." The Lord had His handful from the meat-offering, while those who ate the remainder in priestly nearness were in communion with the deep and spiritual perfections of Christ represented in the fine flour mingled with oil. Then there was the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man." This sets before us the happiness and joy of those who were in this acceptance and communion. It has been noticed that all being grace here, there is one law and manner for all. The stranger is permitted to share in this happy delight of approaching the Lord. Isaiah speaks thus of the sons of the stranger in the purpose and grace of God: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7.) So far we see the communion and joy before the Lord of an accepted people. These are their deepest joys. But. while He smells the sweet

savour of their freewill-offerings to Him, He also anticipates their eating of the bread of the land. This is more for their own sustenance and blessing, yet even here they are privileged to bring a cake of the first of their dough as a heave-offering to the Lord. He nourishes us with the food of His own land, and the heart is gladdened in knowing that what He feeds us with is acceptable to Him. Just as the pot of manna, the food of the wilderness, was laid up before the Lord, so the bread of the land is offered to Him, though it sustained Israel there. He has always His own share in the preciousness of Christ with which He feeds us.

Following upon these intimations of the Lord's desire to have a people in happy communion with Himself, comes the provision for sins of ignorance against the commandments of the Lord. It could not be supposed that any who were in conscious acceptance, and happy with the Lord, but would also delight in His commandments. Hence, when fully established in the land, and the law written in their hearts, the blessedness is announced of those who walk in the law of the Lord, of those who keep His testimonies, and seek Him with their whole heart. (Psalms 119:1-2.) The statutes, commandments, and judgments of the Lord are also spoken of as "more to be desired . . . than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalms 19:10.) How much more can the Christian say, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous"! Knowing his acceptance in the Beloved, and brought into communion with the perfections of Christ, he knows also that every commandment given must be the expression of the perfect will of Him who has given it, and therefore must be blessed. Presumptuously traversing that will is the very opposite to the joy of communion, and when grace has offered such a portion, it is the despisal of grace. It is always the character of flesh to be in rebellion; but flesh has been judged in the cross, and the one who knows this must not revive it. There is no provision therefore for presumptuous sins. Grace and the will of God are alike despised. Errors, or sins of ignorance, are those which unwittingly are in contrariety to the good and perfect and acceptable will of God, with whom they were in acceptance and communion. The sense of nearness enables us to perceive that which is contrary to His blessed will. Many a thing in which we once saw no harm, or justified, is judged when we are in the light of the Lord's presence. There is nothing hidden there, the night shineth as the day. As individuals, through lack of nearness and communion, we may be ignorant of much that is the will of the Lord; but the Christian state is "light in the Lord," and so "understanding what the will of the Lord is," walking as children of light, and proving what is acceptable to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:1-33.) As we are in the light the commandment is true in us as it says, "Which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (1 John 2:8.) Yet we often feel as to our actual state how much we need the prayer of the apostle, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." (Colossians 1:9-10.)

It is a great thing to see that intelligent subjection to the will of God is closely connected with our entering into and enjoyment of the place of acceptance in which we are set. Hence when the whole congregation sinned ignorantly, they offered first a burnt-offering with its meat-offering and drink-offering according to the manner, before they offered the special sacrifice which met their error. The burnt-offering is "unto Jehovah," the sin-offering "before Jehovah." The standing of the whole congregation, as set in acceptance and happy communion with the Lord, is thus recognized first; and then in accordance with that, the error now seen in its true character is judged as sin

atoned for in the sin-offering, and it is forgiven. The status of the congregation is common to all, hence, in the case of an individual, there is only the judgment of the sin, and it is forgiven.

We may note here that though an Israelite could not feed on the meat-offering, and his state was not light in the Lord, and therefore he depended upon a priest both as to communion and intelligence in the Lord's will, yet now even the "little children" have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. We may further note, how the common portion of Christians in the most blessed intimacy and communion - walking in the light, the blood cleansing from all sin, and forgiveness on confession, is brought out in John's epistle. John puts us in the light, where the blood cleanses so that we can be there, in order that we should not sin. And then he tells us of the advocacy of Christ which is carried on when we sin, to make us conscious of everything inconsistent with, and unsuitable to, the place of communion and light into which we are introduced. In the end of the epistle there is an intimation of "a sin unto death," a very near approach to the presumptuous sin of old. There may be in a Christian an allowance of that evil nature which God condemned in the cross. Unbroken will and unbridled flesh may so mark its working that it becomes a sin unto death. This is very solemn, and the soul is cut off from among his people. No doubt it is the judgment of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. To be taken out of the circle of the fellowship of the saints on earth, as they enjoy the perfections of Christ in the Lord's own presence, is a solemn thing. May the Lord keep us in the sense of the desires of His own heart, not only in the place of acceptance, but endeavouring to be acceptable to Him. But however sure and immutable the purpose of the Lord to have a worshipping people in His land, Israel were actually in the wilderness. God had brought them out of Egypt to be there with Him, therefore He puts upon them the colour which denoted that they belonged to Him, that they were a holy people to their God. It was their privilege no longer to walk after their own heart and their own eyes, but according to the commandments of the Lord. All the vessels that belonged to the holy places had coverings of blue as they were borne through the wilderness. Notably amongst them it was seen upon the ark. Its place was the holy of holies, - figure of heaven itself. Hence when it "went before them" (Numbers 10:33), only the heavenly colour was seen. This was true in Jesus. He was the perfect manifestation of God in a Man, and as a man ever the heavenly One. When an Israelite looked on the ribband of blue, he saw on the border of his own garment, that which was nearest the earth, the colour which was upon the Ark. We have thus the foreshadowing of the Son of God becoming a Man - the Second Man out of heaven, yet in this world, and a people that are to express His character of blessed obedience in their walk. We can now say, "Which thing is true in Him and in us." We do not become heavenly by trying to be heavenly, but the perfect love of God has made us what Christ is. "As He is, so are we in this world." The ribband of blue was not for others to see, but for the Israelite himself. God has put upon us this heavenly colour, so that we may have the conscious sense of belonging to Him, according to the boundless grace which in eternal ages chose a people for Himself.

T. H. R.

S. An acceptable time.

"An acceptable time."

Isaiah 49:8.

All things which the Lord doeth are known from eternity. (See Acts 15:1-41. R.V.) He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. If He unfolds to us His way, of which He is the Beginning, in Genesis; He also is shown to be the End of it in Revelation. Moreover, one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. One is led to the remembrance of these scriptures in meditating on such a passage as the one before us. In the first three verses of the chapter, Christ, by the Spirit of prophecy, takes His place as in the midst of Israel, and states what Jehovah's purpose was as to them: "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But by the same Spirit He declares, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." This was the result of His seeking fruit on the fig tree of Israel during the three years of His ministry. Nor did the further digging about it and dunging it avail (Luke 13:7-8); for Israel was not gathered, as His words in Luke 13:34 testify: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Still He could say, "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward" (margin, see also Revised Version) "with my God." And what a reward it was! He will yet, as Jehovah's Servant, raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel; but that alone were a light thing. He is given for a light to the Gentiles, that He may be Jehovah's salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here we may pause to consider what had to take place ere this could be accomplished. He, the One whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth, must take the place of rejection and death. We learn this from His reply to Philip, when the Greeks came and "desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." Then the truth is announced: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Jesus must die and rise again. In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. But there was a moment when He was not only despised and rejected of men, but forsaken of God; when He could not say, "As for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time" (Psalms 69:13); when His utterance was, "I cry, but thou hearest not." This moment of unutterable woe must be passed through, and it was passed through in atonement for our sins; and then He was heard from the horns of the unicorns. He who in grace gave Himself up to die, and in dying bore the holy judgment of God, could not be delivered from all the sorrow and evil that pressed upon Him until, transfixed upon the cross, that judgment had been endured; then He who was crucified in weakness was raised by the power of God. Hence Jehovah can now say to Him in resurrection, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." Jesus has Himself been heard out of the depths, and succoured on the ground of full atonement made. But there is yet more; for Jehovah adds, "I will preserve thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, to

establish the earth" (or the land), "and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." Thus a flood-tide of blessing will be poured out to the nation that rejected Him. Jesus is preserved, treasured up in the heavens now, awaiting the moment of the ingathering of Israel. But let me ask the reader, What is it that comes in between the paragraphs of Psalms 69:8 - between Christ's being heard in an acceptable time, and then given for a covenant of the people (Israel)? Cannot we tell of the deep purposes of love which lay hidden in the close of the first paragraph, and now which are unfolded in Him who is preserved in the heavens? 2 Corinthians 6:2 tells us that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Who among Old Testament saints, that read of Messiah's being personally heard in an accepted time and succoured in a day of salvation, and dimly saw that Israel's coming forth from the north and west, and from the land of Sinim, depended upon it, could have known that there would be a people who would be accepted in His acceptance, who would be saved in His own salvation from out of death and judgment, who would be able to say that by His resurrection they were risen with Him? And not only so; but now that He is treasured in the heavens, they too are kept as in Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also." And again, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." None could have told what was bound up in the first half of this precious verse, had not the Spirit of God, by Paul, made it known to us in beseeching us not to receive the grace of God in vain. "I have heard thee in a time of acceptance" was addressed by Jehovah to Christ personally. The Spirit of God has made us acquainted that we, through grace, are now included in "Thee." The reason is given in 2 Corinthians 5:21 : "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." May we heed the exhortation to the Corinthians, not to receive the grace of God in vain.

T. H. Reynolds. The sinner is first converted, then purified by the blood of Christ, and finally sealed by the Holy Ghost. Through Him we are fully assured of sharing in an accomplished redemption by virtue of our blessed relationship to God and to Christ, as He is the earnest of "the future" glory. But all flows from the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

S. Extract from Letter.

Extract from Letter.

"I was much struck in reading Luke 3:1-38 this morning. The Lord's land, and the rightful heir to it just born in a manger, parcelled out among Gentiles; and an anomalous condition in the religious polity of Israel, two high priests. Then a voice breaks in on this state of things, but it is not the rams'-horn trumpets of Joshua's day, claiming the land for the Lord. That would not have been confessing the ruined condition and the sins of Israel. John is not driving back Jordan to prepare the way of the Lord, but calling a people down there to confess their sins. It is taking the true place before the Lord of utter failure, and this remnant Jesus joins. He can attach Himself in grace to such, and when taking that position was sealed by the Holy Ghost, and owned by the Father's voice. How good it is to be in the secret of the Lord! In later days He writes the name of His God, and of the city of His God, and His own new name, on the lowly remnant who hold fast His word and do not deny His name. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Fellowship: Its Bond and Power

Fellowship: Its Bond and Power (The following pages have been extracted from a little book bearing the above title.) In such a state of things (Luke 22:1-6), Luke records the new fellowship, of which the Supper is the outward sign and bond, while John gives the inward and intimate link. In the moment when man gave Him up, the Lord drew closer to His own, and drew His own closer to Himself. Here in Luke it is the Lord who proposes to them to go and prepare the Passover: the record in the other Gospels begins with their asking, "Where wilt Thou that we prepare?" Here, too, He speaks of His desire to eat this Passover with them before He suffers. I see in this, that at the moment of His rejection, when Satan had put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him, and He well knew the violence and wickedness that was going on in the city (Psalms 55:9-12), and when the Passover was about to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, how the Lord drew His own closer to Himself and drew closer to them, uttering those wonderful words of love with which He instituted the memorials of Himself in death, by which we are drawn together in the fellowship of that death!

There is not one Christian in this room that does not understand the benefits of His death; but do you understand that He died? As George Herbert said, "Have you not heard that my Lord Jesus died?" And when He was about to pass out of this scene as refused here, He drew them together, and gave them the bread and wine, after they had eaten the Passover Supper, which spoke to the Jew of redemption from the iron bondage of Egypt, and hence laid the basis for Jewish thoughts and associations.

What is the ground of our fellowship here but the great fact that the Lord Jesus died? We have the bond that linked the disciples' hearts together when the Jew, the world, would not have Him. We often eat the bread and drink the wine as a solace to our own hearts, and many a heart gets the comfort of what He did for us; but that is not the proper thought of the Supper as commemorating the death of Christ. It is the great fact that the Lord Jesus died here, and His death becomes the great bond that links together our hearts with Himself in the fellowship of that death. We see that when He died He passed out of all connected with Judaism, and then He links His own with Himself as about to die.

How do we look at the Lord's Supper? It would have immense force in our souls if we looked at it according to His thoughts and mind. In the Church of England the Supper is made individual, but 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 teaches that it was a question of uniting them in the new fellowship of His death outside Jewish associations. There could be no other fellowship for us, for He has been refused and rejected in this world, and therefore I believe the Supper lays the basis for all our Christian fellowship, and rightly begins the week. Every meeting in the week is linked with it; we gather together at all times as those who are in the fellowship of His death. The door is thus closed on our old associations, and the Lord feeds us in new pastures. We worship and we read the Word together, we pray together, as those who are in the secret of association with Him whom the world refused, and as knowing the value and fulness of His name. In the day in which this was instituted, Jew and Gentile were apart, but what put them together was the death of Christ; both were

reconciled to God in one body by the cross. But now I come closer home than Jew and Gentile. If there were two men in the same business, living side by side, and the customers of one leave him and go to the other, would it not create a feeling of distance between them? But supposing I am in the power of this fellowship, would it create any distance then? I speak of it to show what a little thing would hinder us, except as we own that we have nothing here, and that our living links are elsewhere. If Christ were here I would stop here very happily, but "hast thou not heard that my Lord Jesus died?" We might be wise enough not to notice it in the case I have supposed, and say "I ought not to mind it," but after all, you do mind it; and what will set you free? The death of Christ. He died out of this world; He is lost to us in it; we cannot have Him here. All we have here is a memorial of Him, which becomes our bond of fellowship. All here is set aside by the cross, and the ground of association is that death which severs us from all here. Christ has drawn us outside the scene here because He is outside it. The Lord felt His rejection, the enmity of the Jew, the treachery of Judas, lover and friend failing. He had said as to Jewish associations: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" Did He not feel it? And then He gathers these disciples around Him, and draws them closer to His heart. Dear brethren, do we remember how we belong to the Lord, that He loved us, and gave Himself for us - that He died to redeem us from our former vain conversation, and to unite us together in the fellowship of His death? The Supper is more the outward character of this fellowship; not that it has not an inward power - I do not mean that at all - but it lays the basis of our new association. It was a great thing for the Lord. He would have gathered Israel if it had been possible, but every earthly association was broken, and He felt it, and therefore draws His own together in the bonds of love and gives them the memorials of His death. They are known to belong to Him now that the world has rejected Him; He has us for the comfort of His own heart. He said, "With, desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you."

Now I turn for a moment to John 13:1-38, where the same thing comes out, only it goes further; the Lord drawing our hearts into association with Himself. Not only is there an association of believers in His death as still in a hostile world, but we are shown how He could draw us to have part with Him where He is. The Lord's Supper is here in a certain sense, though we eat it as those who have been brought on to heavenly-ground. It is as being actually in this scene, that two might be separated by jealousy, but are drawn close together as being in the fellowship of His death, and know the love of the Lord drawing them to Himself. John 13:1-38 mentions the same details, the Passover Supper, the betrayal; but beyond all that, Jesus knew He was about to depart to the Father; He was entering another scene. In the Assembly Christ makes His presence known, but it is the presence of One who has left this scene and gone to the Father. In John 13:1-38 you have the service of love, by which He fits you for companionship with Him. In John 14:1-31 He makes known the place where He is gone, and you are so drawn into His company by the service of His love, that you follow Him where He is. His great thought is to draw them to the other side by washing their feet. It is the down-stooping of love. He was going to the Father, and He stoops down to wash their feet. By the Spirit God gives us the sense of the Lord Jesus Christ stooping down to wash our feet. Why the feet? Because it is a question of where you walk. Is it to be that your feet walk in this world, or do they carry you direct to Him where He is? It is beautiful to see the Lord in the consciousness of going to the Father, though rejected here, addressing Himself to this service of love.

People apply the washing of John 13:1-38 to actual faults, but at that moment the disciples must have been ceremonially clean to eat the Passover, so it was not that there was any uncleanness on them, but it involved the whole character and place of their walk. They had walked in Judaism; the very fact of the Passover recalled the great privilege of Judaism; but He rises from Supper and begins to wash their feet. His death broke the links with the earthly people. The thought of the water is, that it brings home the truth of His death to our hearts; that He has gone out of this world to the Father, and thus He takes them off Jewish ground and earthly associations. They were clean enough for earthly association, but heavenly association is another thing.

We little know how much we need to be cleansed from earthly associations. . Christ is not here, He has gone out of the world. If even a worldly person had lost a friend, a near relation, and he were asked to go to the theatre, he would say, "Oh! no. I have lost my mother, my friend." It would not be the thought of the thing being wrong, but mere outward propriety would forbid it. We do not think enough like that of the death of the Lord. How often we are entangled and held back by earthly association! We are in the fellowship of His death; the Supper perpetuates it to us, but we do not keep true to it. People do not feel that His death has cast its shadow on this scene. It ought to affect our hearts if there is love for Him. I doubt not that John was greatly affected by the washing of his feet, for we see him on the bosom of the Lord immediately after, and in the intimacy and secret of that place He is sheltered; so that, without any doubting, he can say, "Lord, who is it?" when Jesus said, "One of you shall betray Me."

Thus we have the down-stooping love which addresses itself to that with which we touch the earth, where our Lord was delivered up, and put to death, applying to us in the tenderest way the truth of His departure by death out of this world; so that our hearts might be drawn close to Him, as gone to the Father; and as we are drawn close to Him, so shall we be knit together in love. Washing one another's feet is following the Lord in the lowly place of love; for the service of love to each other must bring with it the intimacy of love. So in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 we have all the gracious way of love, after the outward bond of fellowship in the Supper has been given in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. Nothing can produce intimacy so much as to be served by love, and the character of this service is shown us in John 13:1-38. May the Lord give us to respond to it! T. H. Reynolds.

S. Holy Convocations.

Holy Convocations.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 1.

It is very blessed when the soul, delivered from its own fears and anxieties, is free to apprehend the unfoldings of the thoughts of God Himself, by the Spirit, in the Word. To be occupied with the good pleasure of His will is an immense gain, because thus we can learn in some little measure, through grace, to answer to His mind concerning us. What a difference it must have produced in the heart of a godly Israelite, whether he regarded the times of assembling before the Lord mentioned in Leviticus 23:1-44 as feasts of Jehovah, or whether they sank in his estimation to his own level, and so were regarded merely as feasts of the Jews (John 5:1, John 6:4, John 7:2); whether they were moments which told of the delight of their God in gathering His people round Himself in connection with the special dealings of His own grace with them, as the prodigal found himself in the joy of the father's house, or whether, like the elder son, their own joy, characterized by the self within, and a kid to make merry with their friends, had possession of their hearts. We may well pause to ask ourselves whether we apprehend these outgoings of the heart of our God, made known to us in Him who came to us in a manger that He might be with us in humiliation, who spoke of them in the parables of Luke 15:1-32, who gathered the repentant remnant of Israel around Himself, and drew publicans and sinners by the attractions of His grace, who as the lifted up Son of man now draws all men to Him, and who is waiting to gather us together to Himself in the clouds according to His own word - "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

These times which Jehovah called "my feasts" moments which foreshadowed the fuller revelation made to us in such words as "let us eat and be merry" - were seven. They were holy convocations, holy seasons of the calling together of the people of God; but of these there were three which held the principal place, while the others may be regarded more as accessories to them. They were the passover, the feast of weeks or Pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. At these three feasts the people were convoked and assembled before Jehovah on certain known grounds. With respect to Israel, the passover, with its accompanying feast of unleavened bread, told of their redemption from Egypt on the ground of the blood which sheltered them from judgment. (Exodus 12:42, Exodus 13:9; Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 16:1-3.) Pentecost, with the previous waving of the sheaf of first-fruits, spoke altogether of a new ground of assembling, of God's harvest time begun after the corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died; while the feast of tabernacles was a feast of ingathering consequent on the trumpet summons on the first day of the seventh month, followed by the solemn day of affliction and atonement on the tenth.

While we have noticed that the first and leading thought in these feasts is that the Lord called the people around Himself in the delight of His own heart, yet on their part these times were to be

characterized, secondly, by an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Details of these offerings are given in Numbers 28:1-31; Numbers 29:1-40. They were thus seasons of approach to God in holy solemnity when they were before Him on special grounds, but in all the value of the sweet savour of the appointed offerings. Thirdly, in Deuteronomy 16:1-22 we are further told in connection with these three feasts of the state of heart and conduct which befitted them in the worship on these occasions. Let us note then these three points which we may not disregard, though one may be more prominently before us at any given moment than another; viz., the varied grounds on which it pleases God to gather a people around Himself. This we have in our present chapter; then that part in their worship which is specially for the Lord. "My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour" (a savour of rest; marg., compare Zephaniah 3:17) "unto me." This is mentioned here, but fully developed in Numbers 28:1-31; Numbers 29:1-40; and lastly, the worship as it affected their own souls in connection with the special ground on which they were gathered before the Lord in each feast. At the passover they were to turn in the morning and go unto their tents; then they were to eat the bread of affliction for seven days. At Pentecost they came with a tribute of a freewill-offering of their hand according as the Lord had blessed them, and to rejoice before the Lord; and at the feast of tabernacles they were to rejoice in their feast, because they were blessed in their increase, and in all the work of their hands. What is figured by the passover eternally abides as the first ground on which God could gather a people around Himself. The passage of the Red Sea was the power, the means by which He brought them to Himself on the ground of the sheltering blood of the passover Lamb. There was no memorial feast kept of the passage of the sea. They themselves as a delivered people were the memorial of that. It was the passover which was celebrated as a night much to be remembered with its feast of unleavened bread. There could have been no succeeding ground on which to be gathered apart from the redemption by blood figured in the passover. The Pentecostal ground of gathering, and the subsequent convocation of the great congregation when they will "joy before thee as in the joy of harvest," are as added stories to the foundation work of redemption by the blood of the cross.

It must also be remembered that these are "seasons" (Leviticus 23:4), and therefore connected with the ways of God, and not with His eternal counsels, though these may be shared, as they certainly will, by those gathered on Pentecostal ground. Still the point before us in this chapter is the development in the ways of God of the successive grounds of convocation; for they reach from the first redemption out of Egypt to the full gathering of the peoples to Shiloh in millennial days, though Israel will then have a joy peculiarly their own, when their long wilderness - history of sorrow shall have closed in a sabbath of rest.

We need not ask on which of these grounds God has gathered the saints at this time; for surely we know well that the day of Pentecost has fully come, while Israel's repentance and subsequent rest and joy are still future. But we may well ask ourselves whether we apprehend this Pentecostal ground on which God is now gathering, according to the desires of His own heart.

We have already noticed that the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits was a prelude to the feast of weeks, and that it was the beginning of God's harvest time in the land of promise; nor could any of the fruits of the land be enjoyed until it and its accompanying offering had been presented. It is evident that we are altogether on new ground here. In the passover feast they were gathered on the ground of redemption, but that could take place in the wilderness. (Numbers 9:1-23.) The waving too of the Levites (Numbers 8:11, margin), as a wave-offering before the Lord by Aaron for

service, was on the same ground. (vv. 16, 17.) But in the wave sheaf, man is presented to God, not for service in a worldly sanctuary, but in a wholly new way, as an offering to God in resurrection. The sheaf was waved on the morrow after the sabbath, even as "Christ, the first-fruits," rose from the dead on the morning following the sabbath - the morning of the week's first day. The Pentecostal ground of convocation must accordingly be resurrection ground. God's gathering a people round Himself in the present time is based upon the wondrous truth, that He who was and is always the object of eternal favour, in grace knew the hiding of God's face and tasted death, that, having thus gone into the place of distance which was ours, He might bring us in the power of resurrection into that wondrous place of nearness and acceptance in which He now is as the blessed risen Man, with His God and Father. Aaron therefore had to "wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you," or more correctly, "for your acceptance." We have thus a new place of acceptance in resurrection brought in, and on the ground of this the assembling at Pentecost takes place, for the fifty days were reckoned from the waving of the sheaf. The new meat-offering then presented is said (Numbers 28:26) to be brought "in the day of the first-fruits." It is called new, because no such meat-offering had before been presented to God. A meat-offering with leaven in it had never before been offered. The Levites had indeed been waved before the Lord and given to Aaron and his sons for service; but that was not on resurrection ground, nor was it exactly the presentation of man to God, but of his service based on redemption. But now that it is the day of the first-fruits, and the wave sheaf has been offered for our acceptance - the day of Pentecost being fully come - this new ground of God's gathering around Himself is disclosed, and men having sin in them are shown to be accepted in Christ's acceptance by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. When the tabernacle of boards and curtains was set up, the glory of the Lord filled and took possession of it. Now men assembled on the ground of resurrection are taken possession of and sealed by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:2-4.) Thus God has a new meat-offering for Himself and His people gathered round Him as "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18), according to His own counsel. The loaves baken with leaven are "first-fruits unto the Lord." Will the reader note this? These are firstfruits of His creatures - loaves, the first-fruit produce of His land. The blessed Lord even when on earth was "the Son of Man who is in heaven;" and as the first man is out of the earth made of dust, so the second Man is out of heaven. But further, as is the heavenly One, so are the heavenly ones - these first-fruits of His creatures, though there be leaven in them, are of the same order as the wave sheaf, they are the produce of His land.

We have remarked that, besides each feast having a special ground on which the people were assembled, in this case the waving of the two loaves each had also its accompanying worship. With the wave sheaf there was simply a burnt-offering to the Lord with its meat-offering and drink-offering, but though the loaves are of the same order, yet, leaven being present, a sin-offering was needed, because the soul can only enjoy this blessed position of acceptance truly as it enters into the fact that sin - my sin, for I am a sinner - has been dealt with by God in the person of Jesus. Here also there are peace-offerings, not with the wave sheaf, where the worshipper is occupied with what Christ is to God as an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. At Pentecost there is the joy of communion; we taste in spirit of the joy that can say, "Let us eat and be merry." This joy is more fully developed in Deuteronomy 16:1-22. They were to keep the feast with a tribute of a freewill-offering of their hand which they were to give "according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." This connects the saints of this Pentecostal period with Ephesians 1:3 : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath

blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." As the soul enters into these blessings so it rejoices before the Lord, and renders the worship of a willing heart. If the Israelite's blessings were supplied from "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills," the saint now can say of the heavenly city of God, "All my springs are in thee." The Spirit of God is come to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Who shall to me that joy Of saint-thronged courts declare?

What eternal springs are there! They are ours, though we taste them so feebly. Yes, they are ours - though we were bondmen in Egypt. As we remember this, do we not say that it is all "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved"? This contrast between being bondmen in Egypt and the blessings enjoyed in the land is vividly portrayed in Ephesians 2:1-4 : "And you . . . dead in trespasses and sins. But God, who is rich in mercy . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ." It was a marvel of grace that, consequent on the death of Christ, a thief could go from the depth of human degradation to be "with me in paradise;" but now in resurrection we are brought into the acceptance in which Christ is before God. One more contrast may serve to show what the present favour is in which the saints stand in this Pentecostal period. Ere Israel can enjoy the blessing which is peculiarly theirs, and which is figured by the feast of tabernacles, they will have to pass through that character of the day of atonement which is spoken of in Leviticus 23:1-44 - a special moment of affliction of soul. It is doubtless more or less true in the history of every awakened soul; but we are now speaking of its dispensational import. It will be the moment spoken of in Zechariah 12:1-14 - "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him;" when they will mourn "every family apart, and their wives apart;" when "whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

Here we have the effect of looking on Him whom they have pierced. It is the result of their rejection of grace. Contrast this with the moment when He, who knew the forsaking of God and those unutterable depths of anguish consequent thereon, was heard from the horns of the unicorns. (Psalms 22:21.) At once He says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." This is not the same as the whole land mourning. Consequently, when, on the evening of the first day of the week, He stood in the midst of the disciples, and spake peace to them, and then as the pierced One showed to them His hands and His side, we read, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." This is the special grace and joy of the Pentecostal time, the blessing of those who have not seen, and yet have believed. No doubt, as we have said, the individual passes through more or less of affliction of soul ere it reads its title to peace in the blood of the Lamb, and it should be so. But the dispensational grace of this period has its own character, and according to its own riches reveals the favour into which He who suffered could bring those whom He calls His brethren with Himself after He had been heard from the horns of the unicorns. This feast then is indeed a holy convocation to us, a day of worship as the Lord hath blessed us, and of rejoicing before Him. Israel will wait for their moment of blessing until the harvest is gathered in, and the vintage trodden. It is our privilege to keep this Pentecostal era with the joy of a worship which Christ Himself leads, as in grace He gives us to enter into the sense of being blessed in the springing wells of eternal life, the heavenly things brought to us by

the Holy Ghost sent down by an exalted and glorified Christ. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Intimacy with the Lord.

Intimacy with the Lord.

Notes of a lecture, revised.

Luke 5:4-11, Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8, John 20:14-18; Revelation 22:14-18.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 261.

What I desire to bring before you is the way in which the Lord draws our hearts to Himself. I do not speak of how the conscience is set at rest. I trust every one here is at rest, through the work of Christ, as to all questions of sin and judgment. But it is possible to know the work of the Lord, and greatly rejoice in it, and yet never really to have touched His company. These scriptures show how the Lord values our company, our affections, our love. In Peter we get the way the soul is first set at ease in the company of the Lord. If a poor man received a great benefit from a nobleman, he would better enjoy his gift than his company. This feeling needs to be removed. While we only appreciate the grace of the Lord in having paid our debts, how little we know His love. There is a difference between grace and love. We can enjoy grace a great way off, but to enjoy love there must be nearness; we must be in the company of the one who loves us. When the Lord came from heaven He did not come into the midst of angels, but of men, in order to find companions for eternal glory. Peter had already known the Lord, but now it dawned on him who the One was whom he knew. He learnt lay the miraculous draught of fishes that Christ was the Lord of earth and heaven, who could command the fish to come into his net. When we apprehend in some measure the person of the Lord, we wonder that He should want to bring such as we are into His own company. We see the attraction that was in His person. Peter says, "Depart from me"; yet he was attracted to Him all the while. We get now the grace of the Lord. Now, notwithstanding our sense of disparity, He sets us at ease in His presence. He says, "Fear not." Peter is set at ease with the Lord. It is not only to believe what He has done for us on the cross, but how He would take away every suggestion of fear, and make us at home in His company. Have we learnt this?

"Oh ever homeless stranger, Thou dearest friend to me, An outcast in a manger That Thou mightst with us be."

We with Him, and He with us. We shall be with Him for ever, but do we know His company now?

Luke 10:38. We have an advance here. In Luke 5:1-39 the Lord had come down in grace to minister to man, and Peter is drawn into His company. Now we are in another scene. We find here the Lord on His way to suffer. (Luke 9:51.) "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 10:38.) "As they went, He came to a certain village." After the Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses and Elias spake to Him of His decease, He was on His way to death, He was passim', out of the world. On the way "Martha received Him into leer house." She had not the sense of the path the Lord was taking, that He was not staying in this world, so she invites Him into her house, and

seeks to entertain Him with her things. She did value His company, but she would like to entertain Him with her things. She did not understand what was before the Lord at this time, and she was cumbered about much serving. She was making the Lord her guest. Mary was the Lord's guest, and He was entertaining her with His things. Martha served Him, I doubt not, to the best of her ability, with her house, her means, her time, her labour. Mary is in the company of the Lord. Martha wants the Lord in her company, to bring the Lord to her side of things. Mary goes to the Lord's side. Do we know a little of that? He has this object in bringing us to His company, to bring us to His side of things. The Lord did use what was Peter's, his boat, but this is more. He wants to bring us to the path that Mary chose. Martha blamed her for idleness. The Lord says, "Mary hath chosen that good part." What is the good part? It is the Lord's things. It cannot be taken away. We might be using our wealth for the Lord, and it might all be taken away; but if I get to His side of things, and let Him open out that to me, so that I become His guest and He entertains me with His things, it is a good part that cannot be taken away. See where we are brought to in getting into the company of the Lord. Our part is to let Him take us up to His place, let Him be the entertainer, so to speak. Let Him open to us all that He can tell us of His things.

Turn now to John 12:1-8, and you will find an advance again. The Lord has reached Jerusalem, and His circumstances are greatly altered. Three things come out in the first part of this chapter. They represent three different states of soul. It was most grateful to the heart of the Lord to turn aside to Bethany, and to find those who would appreciate Him. There will be a moment in the history of the earth when the rejected One will know a people who will gladly receive and welcome Him. This is foreshadowed here in Martha. Ours is to go out of the scene with Him, but He will come back to earthly things again. Lazarus is there. He represents the nation of Israel brought back again to life in this world. It is not here the resurrection that puts in heavenly glory, but that which brings back to life in this world, as it is said of Israel, "Thy dead men shall live." It will be a wonderful thing when the remnant receives Him, and the nation is brought back as from death. But we have a third thing. In Mary we have one who already in spirit had gone to the Lord's side of things. And she still represents that to us, as seen in John 12:3. That is her service. Judas, as one who had companied with the Lord, represents apostate Christianity. He represents those who have had to do with Christianity and its blessings, and yet who will turn and give up Christianity and apostatise from Christ. Only two men are called in scripture "The son of perdition" - Judas and anti-Christ. Judas was about to sell Christ; he had not the smallest appreciation of Him. Only think how people may have all the love and grace of Christ put before them, and yet not appreciate Christ. They may do good to men, and yet not have one atom of appreciation of Christ. How very much even Christians are tainted with this spirit of the world! Mary stands out beautifully; she represents the affections of the true Church. Where do her affections go? She has a sense, taught of God doubtless, that Christ is going out of the world. "Well," she says, "my heart goes out with Him." The most precious thing she has got she pours on Him for His burial. Christ interpreted it so. The same with His disciples. (John 17:6.) The Lord puts His interpretation on their poor little affections. So here with the devotedness of Mary. I do not say she understood the meaning of her act; but a kind of instinct in her apprehended the danger that awaited Him, and she appreciated Him the more; but the Lord understands, and puts the full meaning on it: "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." If drawn into His company, where do our affections go? Are we free from the spirit of the world that can have all the grace of Christ before it, and yet withhold from Him? The Lord give us to understand how He lays hold of our hearts to draw us into His company,

and have us go outside this world to where He has gone

John 20:1-31. Now the Lord has come out of death in resurrection. In Mary Magdalene we have one greatly attached to Him. He had cast out from her seven devils. She is mentioned elsewhere as following Him, and ministering to Him of her substance. She seeks Him in death, but in very deep affection. She thought she had lost Him. When we have lost a friend we find out how much we love him. Now Mary's affections came out in this way. She is inconsolable; the one thing she wants is Himself, though it be in death, His body. It has been called ignorant affection. Would to God we had more of it! He must be first; we often want to put our love first. George Herbert puts it thus:

"As when the heart says, sighing to be approved, Oh, that I could love! God writeth - Loved." Do not say, "Oh, that I could love!" Be occupied with His love, and love because He loves. Mary loved Him, and she is the one to whom the Lord first appears. She knows the intimacy of John 10:1-42 - an inward intimacy. The Spirit of God alone can teach it. He saith unto her, "Mary." She is a figure of the Church learning Him in resurrection. At first she is in the place of the Jewish remnant. She thought she had got Him back here again; she springs forward as much as to say, "I have got Him back." "No," says the Lord, "touch me not." He is conducting her out of the place of the Jewish remnant into the place of the Church. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God"; I am going to that scene there. "Go and tell my brethren" - they were to be with Him where He is. He brings us to His side of things before the Father, into the affections that He knows with the Father. Surely that is deep and blessed intimacy! If you have been conducted along this line, if you know the Lord now in resurrection and in ascension, you will be prepared for the last, and that is the next thing, His coming again.

Turn now to Revelation 22:1-21. Here, at the close of the book, the person of the Lord shines out. Through the book He has been revealed in many and various characters as Jehovah, the First and the Last, the One clad in a priestly garment, as a warrior, a Lamb, as One in angelic guise. Spiritual perceptions may say in many cases, I see the Lord in these varied characters; but when we come to this last chapter, all at once the sweet words break in, "I, Jesus." It is as when the disciples were in the storm. "They were afraid." But He said unto them, "It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship." It is the person of the Lord there brought out. So here, at the close of the book, "I Jesus . . . I am the root and the offspring of David." That is what He is for the earth; the Sun of righteousness will arise; the remnant will receive and know the Lord. He is presented in two characters here, "the root and the offspring of David" - that is the guarantee of all blessing for the earth" the bright and Morning Star." That is a heavenly Christ, the portion of the Church. It is the peculiar character of the Church's relationship to Christ. She belongs to Christ while He is in heaven, she knows Him there. The Jews will not know Him till He comes back to earth. His relationship will be renewed with them on earth. Abraham saw Christ's day on earth; but his faith penetrated even farther, he looked for "a city which hath foundations," etc., that is, the Church. Abraham will see the glory of Christ reflected in the Church, but there will be no company of saints, but the Church will ever be in relationship with Christ while He is absent. "The Morning Star" is a heavenly Christ, and that is our portion to know Him thus. When the day breaks it will be Christ shining on earth. The Morning Star does not belong to the day. The Church belongs entirely to heaven, we have our own peculiar portion in association with a heavenly Christ. It is the privilege of the Church here to respond for both, the earth and the heavens. "The Spirit and the

Bride say, Come." All the administration of heavenly glory to the earth will be by the Bride. The Church must go into heavenly glory before the earth can get its blessing. "I Jesus." Do you say, "I know Him"? You may not understand all connected with His person, you may not appreciate all; but can you say, "I know Him"? Immediately "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." If I know what is to be found in the company of Christ, to have tasted His love in the smallest way, I must surely know a little what it is to desire His coming. I do not doubt there are many hindrances; but the Lord is expressing His affection in the words, "I come quickly," and He counts on a response from His Church. The Spirit utters it in the Bride, "Come, Lord Jesus." Then, though I may not be able to enter fully and intelligently into the proper affections of the Bride to the heavenly Bridegroom, yet I hear what is said - this challenge of the Lord - introducing Himself to our notice, "I Jesus," and the response of the Spirit and Bride - "do I hear it?" "Let him that heareth say, "Come." This is what the Lord is doing, bringing His own person before His beloved saints, conducting them to intimacy with Himself. The response will be, "Come!" It does not hinder service, for we shall surely all the more invite thirsty souls. "Let him that is athirst, Come." The Lord lead our hearts more into it for His name's sake! T. H. R.

S. Jacob at Peniel.

Scripture Notes.

Jacob at Peniel.

Genesis 32:1-32.

We could not doubt for a moment that Jacob at Peniel learnt a deep lesson when God broke him down as he was planning, and had left God out of his calculations. God came in to show He would not be left out. His love and purposes of blessing won't allow Him to let us leave Him out in the workings of our own hearts. Broken down that night, he says, "I have seen God face to face." He really learnt the lesson, but he was not then able to put it into practice. It was a partial thing too; for while he got a new name himself, when he asks the Lord for His name He will not give it. He did give it to Abraham and Isaac. He made Himself known to them as God Almighty. Jacob does not learn His name then, but "He blessed him there." At once he goes and settles down at Shalem, and so far from going on with the God he had met, he does not at that moment profit by the lesson he had really learnt. He did not take it up in the practical experience of his soul until God disturbed the scene around him. He upsets Jacob thoroughly, and when he is broken down in his circumstances he does go to Bethel, and there God appears to him and reveals His name. It is only there he gets hold of it, and immediately all he has got by his planning begins to go. Deborah dies; Rachel dies; Joseph is taken down into Egypt; the famine comes over the land; and you see him at the end worshipping God. All he had (all of Jacob) was gone, and he takes the place of Israel (Genesis 48:1-22); and his own heart is just filled with the thoughts of God. God's thoughts are filling his soul. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Maintaining the Truth of the Assembly.

Maintaining the Truth of the Assembly.

I am old enough to have known those dear men of God who began to meet as "brethren" (so called) some 93 years ago — a privilege, which next to my conversion. I unfeignedly thank the God of all grace for. What struck me as a young Christian was, not only the full Gospel light that was with them, but the maintenance of the holiness, that became an assembly of saints gathered to the Lord's Name, in which they sought to act; and this separation from evil enabled them to be recipients of further light from the Lord. Now I cannot ignore this light as to the assembly which they received; and what I would point out to my brethren if they will listen to me, is that seeking to "withdraw" from a wicked person, instead of acting in obedience to the command of 1 Corinthians 5:13, is a distinct giving up of Church or assembly position: by that I mean the gathering together of two or three to the Lord's Name which ensures His presence in their midst. It may be said, Where is the church of God now? I reply in Mr Darby's words: Ruin is found in this, that the church such as God formed and fashioned it, does not exist at all, save as He sanctions two or three meeting in the Name of Jesus." But there certainly is a church or assembly which Christ loves upon this earth now, and which He cannot cease to nourish and cherish. . . . T. H. Reynolds, 1920.

S. My times are in thy hand

"My times are in thy hand."

Psalms 31:15. The text at the head of this paper is from a psalm in which the Spirit of Christ leads the soul into thorough confidence in the Lord, and that on the ground of righteousness. Mercy too being rejoiced in, and God known as a God of truth, everything is trusted with the Lord - "my spirit" (Psalms 31:5), "my times." (Psalms 31:15) Trials were there - fightings without, and fears within; but the One who is trusted "has known my soul in adversities," and in the sense that all is in His hands, the one who trusts has the present assurance of the goodness that is laid up for the faithful, and the hopers in Jehovah are strengthened and encouraged. (Psalms 31:24)

Passing on to Psalms 32:1-11, we have the blessedness of a forgiven sinner. Not only does the exercised soul turn to the Lord as to the only confidence in the midst of times and troubles, but in this psalm he learns to unburden his heart to Him in the confession of sin - the heart is emptied out to the Lord, and the burning fever within is assuaged by the forgiveness of transgressions and iniquity. Jehovah is known now as a hiding-place, instead of One to be hidden from. There is no fear where this is realized that the rest in "the secret of His presence" (Psalms 31:20) can be disturbed from within or from without. Jehovah compasses him about with songs of deliverance, instructs and leads him intelligently, and if necessary with bit and bridle. Trusting in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about, and in true uprightness of heart there is gladness and shouting for joy.

Psalms 33:1-22 takes up this joy; for it is not joy in self, or in circumstances, but in the Lord (comp. Php 4:1-23), and for the first time in the Psalms we have "a new song." The saint had been compassed about with songs of deliverance by the Lord; but God Himself is now become the object of rejoicing and song. Not that this new song yet rises higher than the time-scene of this earth; but the great thing in it is that Jehovah is known and praised. Two special things are here celebrated - His word and His works (Psalms 33:4); His righteousness, and His goodness or mercy. (Psalms 33:5) True the scene around is full of the counsels of man - Psalms 2:2 tells us to what a height they rise; but the heart is not occupied with that, but with the Lord; His word is right, His works are truth. The heavens, the sea, the earth bear witness. He has counsels too as to His own creation, as to that which when He spake it was done, when He commanded it stood fast. Shall not they be carried out? Faith rejoicing in the Lord can say that the counsel of the heathen shall be brought to nought, and the devices of the people be made of none effect, but "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever: the thoughts of His heart to all generations." It is this "for ever" which we may see spoken of in Ecclesiastes 3:14; and whatever may be the present apparent prosperity of the counsels of man, underlying it all we may be sure there is the work that God maketh from beginning to end. In Matthew 13:24-30 we see the outward effect of the enemy's work; but in Mark 4:26-29 we have described this underlying work done by the Son of man. Seed is cast into the ground, "times" of sunshine and storm doubtless pass over it, and it is as if the sower should sleep and rise night and day; but the seed springs and grows he knoweth not how, but eventually the

fruit is brought forth, and the harvest comes. It is the work which God maketh from beginning to end. The heart being thus assured that the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the Spirit of God passes on in Psalms 33:12 to the happiness of those whose God is this Jehovah - of being the people whom He has chosen. He had purposes about them. They were to be His inheritance for the earth (even as the Church learns what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints who are associated with Him who is in the heavens, and in whom everything is to be headed up both in heaven and on earth). He took notice of all that was going on among men as He looked down from heaven; He saw the place of their confidence; but His eye was resting upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy. Not only do they know Him, but He knows them. (Comp. John 10:14; Galatians 4:9.) They are the objects of His care, and learn, while He allows men for a time to use His creation according to their own counsels, to wait for the Lord as well as to trust in Him - their help and shield. Thus while the heart rejoices in Him, trusting in His holy name, the patience of hope is produced in the soul. The "times" are running on, and they form the epoch between the declaration of the counsels of the Lord and their fulfilment, during which the counsels of men are sought to be established. These the Lord will eventually frustrate and bring to nought, so that the thoughts of His heart may stand to all generations. During these times faith is tried, a trial much more precious than of gold that perisheth, and the soul is exercised and chastened, and taught to wait for the Lord. How blessed to know there is One who passed through them perfectly, who could say, as come to do the will of God, "In waiting I waited for the Lord!" (Psalms 40:1.) In perfect patience He waited until from the depth of sorrows He was heard, and brought up out of them with a new song in His mouth, even praise unto our God.

It is this One who speaks in Psalms 34:1-22. He is passing through the times in which He accomplished the will of God, and during which He attached to Himself those who, according to Psalms 16:1-11, were the excellent of the earth - the saints who, however feebly, were walking in the path of faith into which He in grace had entered, so that He might be with those in whom He had found His delight. "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one." He it is who goes before the sheep when He leads them out. It is in the hearing of these companions - the humble who hear Him and are glad - that He thus speaks: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Prophets and kings had desired to hear such things (Luke 10:24) as the disciples listened to "at that time." When standing by they heard Jesus say, in the hour of His rejection, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It was at a time when city after city which had witnessed His mighty works refused to listen, and yet how perfectly does He "praise, bearing witness to His Father," because it was "well pleasing in His sight." What perfect bowing to His good pleasure! He knew the Father, whose good pleasure it was to carry out His ways by hiding these things from the wise and prudent - those who found their sphere in the present, and by revealing them to babes. Knowing thus the Father's mind, He invites the weary and heavy-laden - those who found that in the present scene "all things are full of labour," to come to Himself, where they would find His rest as this meek and lowly One. Those who thus found His company are the humble of Psalms 34:1-22, who hear Him and are glad. Personally they are weak and feeble, and He knows it; and oft-times on earth He had to say to them, "O ye of little faith." And yet what company was like His? It had such attraction that it made Thomas say to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." The attraction and the affection were there, though the flesh was weak; for as they

were in the way going up to Jerusalem, though Jesus went before them, "they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." (Mark 10:32.) He had to speak to them of the times of suffering and rejection that He must pass through ere the time of rest and glory could be reached. It was necessary for the very maintenance of that glory that it should be so; but they were dull of hearing, and "understood none of these things." (Luke 18:34.) Still it was His path, because it was the Father's will; and if they would go after Him they must take up the cross and follow.

We, as they, often fail to apprehend the holiness and righteousness, as well as the graciousness and mercy, of the ways of God. In His holy government it is right that man should reap, even in the present, that which he sows. The history of Israel develops these ways of His holy government. For ages they had been sowing to the flesh and turning their backs to God, and they had to receive at His hand double for all their sins. Moreover, they were guilty of refusing the One who had come in grace to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows. Mercy was thus rejected when it came to them in God's "Mercy One" (Psalms 89:19), and His lips, that spake such gracious words that all wondered, had to utter, "Woe to thee! woe to thee!" (Matthew 11:1-30); and while He wept, to foretell Jerusalem's coming desolation because she knew not the time of her visitation. She would be trodden down of the Gentiles according to the word of God, and Jesus Himself be delivered to them to be put to death, so completely did He enter into the sorrows and pathway of His people, whose sins obliged Jehovah to give the dearly beloved of His soul into the hand of her enemies. It is not of atonement that we are now speaking, well as we know that it was accomplished in the death of Jesus on the cross, where He did the will of God in that body which was prepared for Him, but of the ways of wisdom, by which He so orders that man should prove himself to be both a transgressor and a rejecter of God Himself in grace, notwithstanding all His longsuffering and patience, and by which He also displays Himself in His own unchangeable nature and character, while He manifests that He has no compromise with evil even in His own people more than in the ungodly. With the latter His long-suffering will finally give way to judgment, after all His dealings to exercise the conscience and attract the heart have been of no avail, judgment which at the last will be full and final. By these same dealings the saints are taught to discern good and evil while they endure them as chastening for their profit, that they might be partakers of His holiness. In Caleb and Joshua we learn how the saints may have to pass through the times during which God thus displays His ways and vindicates His character; but they become the opportunity by which God is better known to them, and the power of faith increased by its exercise. Thus Joshua is taught to be strong and very courageous, so that he may lead the people at last into the land with cities walled up to heaven; and Caleb attains a power of faith by which he takes possession of the inheritance on which his feet had trodden with a vigour unabated by forty years of wandering. God was better known to each as the One who had delight in His people, as well as in the confidence and faithfulness of an individual saint.

While thus learning God we taste His compassions; for He knows our frame, He remembers we are dust, and He gives strong consolation to those whose eyes rest on the Forerunner who has gone before as the Leader and Completer of faith. He entered into the pathway through these "times," and walked in it in the perfectness of faith in His Father and in obedience to His will even to death. We see, in Zechariah 13:5, how Messiah was brought by man into the same position in which he was as a tiller of the ground - a servant - and also into the place of death in the house of His friends. Man was in those circumstances, and Jesus entered into them in grace, thus to

become, in the perfectness of His own walk in the midst of them, the sustainer of the hearts of those who were there. He could say to them, "Take my yoke, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls" - rest in being in company with Him, and learning to be of His spirit. To say "I will bless the Lord at all times" would otherwise prove to be difficult, the words would tremble on our lips; but in company with Him, though realizing our own weakness, we hear them uttered by Him, and taste the marvellous grace which bids us join with Him in magnifying the Lord: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Thus have we the privilege of being in company, in spirit, with One who ever turned to His Father; of hearing Him say, "I thank thee, Father," and for our encouragement in the needed exercises of these "times." "I sought the Lord, and He heard me;" and again, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard." Hearing such words, He directs our hearts to His own refuge; and thus "they" (His companions) "looked unto Him" (Jehovah, for us the Father) "and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." We respond to His invitation, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," and learn the blessedness of trusting in Him; or, as Peter puts it, for those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," or "is the preciousness" of God's chief corner-stone. The present government of God has thus its effect in producing the state of heart and spirit which the Lord can be nigh unto. (Psalms 33:18) No sorrow can go further than He pleases; for "my times are in thy hands." It was needful that every wave of sorrow should dash against the blessed Lord, all must roll over Him, that, as Captain of salvation, He might be made perfect through sufferings, but not one that was not needed for the accomplishing of all things. He whose Spirit in the prophets of old had written of these sufferings was now passing through them, and when all were accomplished that His Spirit had foretold He could say, "It is finished" (John 19:28); and then not a bone of Him was broken. (John 19:36.) "Many may be the afflictions of the righteous," yet personally he is kept. "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken;" and through delivering mercy it will be testified - "Garments fresh and feet unwearied Tell how God hath brought thee through."

Yes; the Lord is gracious. Israel will by these psalms learn in their times of sorrow the deep sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, and be sustained by the knowledge of unchanging love - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3) - when Jehovah allures them again into the wilderness, and teaches them to sing there. How much more do we know that same eternal love, made known to us in the Son! The Church too, as well as the individual, has her "times" of sorrow. Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 show us the "times" which pass over her, and it is well if, in the light of the searching eyes of the Son of man, any are awakened to know the times, and learn what Israel ought to do. (1 Chronicles 12:32.) It is not to set up again that which has failed, but, in the sense of failure, to understand that these times also are "in thy hands." There we can rest, holding fast that we have (through His grace) until He comes, in whom, as the faithful and true witness, all will yet be brought out in glory at His appearing, which in its own "times" He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is on the ground of atonement that this blessed "for ever" can take place. To that, as to all God's works, "nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." The smiting of Jehovah's fellow, and the hiding of God's face, when the holy soul of Jesus was made an offering for sin, form the basis of these ways of God, and of the work that He maketh from beginning to end, until all issues in a new heaven and a new earth, where the former things are passed away, and God's "for ever"

takes the place of times and seasons.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. Readiness for the Lord's Return.

Readiness for the Lord's Return.

John 13:1-14; John 14:1-6.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 17, 1890, p. 237.

We were having before us this morning, beloved brethren, the coming of the Lord, and I could not help feeling how necessary it is not only that our hearts should be stirred up to the fact that He is coming, but there is another thing that would weigh upon the heart of every servant of the Lord, certainly on the spirit of all those who have known a little bit of what it is to traverse this scene; that is, a sense of what it is to be ready. I am not speaking at all now of what it is to be saved; we are ready for the coming of the Lord in that sense, but there is a preparedness here. I know that in virtue of that cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the dying thief could go straight to paradise. There is one fitness, and, thank God, every believer now in His presence has it; there is only one way to go to heaven, and that is by Christ, as the dying thief upon the cross dropped there and then the thief, and went to heaven in nothing but Christ. That is just how we all go there. But there is another thing, and that is, that while we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, there should be conduct befitting. Looked at as in Christ, we have the wedding garment.

There is no one who knows what it is to have fled to Christ for salvation, and who knows Christ as his righteousness, but has the wedding garment. But let me ask you as to the real preparation of heart and spirit which was brought before you this morning, that as soon as Rebecca knew Isaac was coming, that they were about to meet, she took a veil and covered herself. It is the sense of that I want to put upon your heart. There is a demeanour in us, a propriety of walk and ways, that befits those that say, "Lord Jesus, come." It is easy to sing a hymn, and get a bit excited over it, and say, "What joy!" Beloved friends, do you think of what it will be to enter His presence? I could not really think of entering into the presence of the true Isaac without having the sense that there was a demeanour, a suitability to Him, a preparedness for it. I know we are made meet. All I ask is, Are our souls in the present sense as we speak of the coming of the Lord? Are our souls in the sense of the suitability for the heavenly Bridegroom? I know you have the wedding garment; but, remember, it does not say He made the marriage for the guests, the marriage was made for His Son, therefore I have the sense of whom I am to be presented to. Whom? Yes, the heavenly One, the heavenly Bridegroom. In the resurrection we shall be made fit by putting on the image of the heavenly One. It is the deepest joy of our hearts that we shall be like Him; not a single stain of sin there. As you tread that crystal floor you leave no stain. Christ is our fitness, and you will not leave a stain as you tread the crystal floor of heaven. But when the apostle speaks of being presented, he says, "Unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight." He speaks of being blameless. There is a suitability for Him. There is a sense wrought in our souls that we want to greet Him, and when we greet Him, not only that I know I have the wedding garment, but in reality I have been dropping

everything that is unsuitable to Him. I want to take it home to my own soul. If my conscience did not answer to it, it would not do for me to speak to you about it. How far is it on our hearts and consciences? I want to drop everything that is unsuitable to Him. It is not only that I am made meet, it is not only you have to go into heaven, but you have to come out of heaven. I do not think people think much about that. When I get into heaven I shall be there with the Lord; you see I shall have done with everything of flesh, sin, and the world, but you have to come out of heaven.

Dear friends, when the Lord comes out of heaven to come to this earth, you have to come with Him; and that will be the time when all that has taken place down here will come out. This prospect should exercise all our consciences. The Lord has to display us according to all we have been here. We come back to this earth with the Lord. When He comes back we come back with Him, and we are displayed. I grant you it is in the heavenlies the display takes place; but it is to the earth Christ wants to say of each one, This is my righteous one, this is the one that gave up for me, that walked here blameless and harmless as a son of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. God's working in us for the working out of our salvation is to this end.

I have read these two scriptures because you get the Lord's service here in a double way; the one service is, that He goes to prepare a place for us. I do not doubt, as was said, the place is now prepared; but He was going away, and would come again, to receive them unto Himself. Their great thought was that the Lord Jesus would reign upon the earth, and that they would reign with Him. They said to Him, after His resurrection, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" So little had they taken in John 14:1-31. The Lord was going away - giving up all that He was not going to take into the kingdom, therefore He instructs their heart about this new service of His love. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Heaven belonged to Him. He could say, "My Father's house." He could say, "I go to the Father." That was His own place; He could go there. These dear Jewish disciples knew there was to be the coming kingdom, the coming glory; they knew they were to have their part in that; but He said, "You will not wait for that. I am going away, and I shall come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." You will not have to wait two thousand years. There He is the blessed Servant of the Father's glory; it is prepared now for the saints where He is.

These believers did not really understand it. How much do we understand what that place is? Have you the sense of what it is to be presented to Him there? to enter into the presence of the heavenly One, the Church to be the companion of the heavenly One? Oh, may the Lord lay it upon our hearts! It is our portion. We could not insist too much on that. I press again, it is the portion of the youngest believer here.

Nothing weighs, I think, more on my spirit, where I see it, than the way young people are coming in now. I don't see that they give up the world. I see they get the blessed knowledge of salvation, but I do not see they really drop the world. It seems to me that a beautiful gospel is preached - so clear, so plain - and I thank God for it. They know the work is finished, but they don't go through much exercise. It was different when I was young. I grant you it was all the wrong way about, because the exercise was legal, but it was good exercise. There was the old saying, A person had got into the way. They did not mean to heaven, but to salvation. But I know this, that what used to be pressed upon us was, that it was a narrow way; and I do want you, beloved young believers, to remember it is a narrow way. I don't see the dropping of the ways of the world, the fashions of the

world, the games of the world. I don't see the acceptance of the narrow path. There is no room in it for the world. There is only room for you and Christ to walk together.

I have given a word for the conscience. I want to give a word for the heart. John 13:1-38 brings before us the other service of the blessed Lord, that we should have a part with Him.

Dear friends, believe that service goes on whether you know it or not - you may not even be conscious of it; it is done in such a beautiful way. If I were to go and say to a believer, "Now, you know such or such a thing is not suitable to a heavenly path," I might do it in a rough way. The Lord does it so tenderly. I don't say there is not pain. He won't let us carry a lot of earthly things along a heavenly path. There is all the tender forbearance and grace of His heart, in which He says to us, "Now, drop that, that won't do." Now, that is the service of His blessed grace, that is the meaning of washing our feet. There is a service when there is actual, positive defilement, as when a man touched a bone or a dead body. Then this service of the blessed Lord comes in, but it goes further than the type. It is the way the blessed Lord is dealing with us. The Father has put our feet into Christ's hand to wash them according to His counsels. He says, as it were, "I have put these sheep into your hands to bring them home." He is not only the Servant of our need but of the Father's glory. He brings me to the Father's house. He not only gives me the best robe, but He detaches me from what is unsuitable.

Now, beloved fellow-believers, young and old, you are sure to get this ministry, for He loves you, the Lord loves you, and therefore you are sure to get this service. He won't let you carry a lot of earthly things in the heavenly path. He wants you to travel with Him, to go that way His blessed feet have trodden. Some get this thought, and say, "If I were to have a fall, a great tumble, I should need the Lord to come in." Beloved friends, you want it every day of your lives, and you get it too. I don't say how you get it, but you do get it; every day you get it, and you are sure to have it, because the Lord loves you. Let me say, it becomes a very solemn thing, the intercession of the Lord - very solemn to think the Lord is always occupied about me there. I will give you an illustration that will make it plain. A relative of my own, who was converted, wanted to go on with the world. He chose the world. Somehow he was always in trouble, never in peace. One day he said, "How can I have any peace when I know So-and-so is praying for me?" He would have the world, but he could not enjoy it. Christ is praying for you. That is a solemn thing. It is not a poor relative who is praying for you; it is CHRIST. You will get all His blessed dealings. It is a serious and solemn thing - Christ is praying for me. It is a most blessed thing to think I am an object of His interest; it will sweeten the cup of sorrow. A person may say, These are the dealings of the Lord; or, as Job said, "His hand hath touched me." But Job did not know what the hand was, like you and I do. If I get sorrow or affliction, I am sensible of the touch of His hand. Don't give up the thought of His love one single moment. He wants you in glory, but He wants you there suitable to Himself. He must remove everything unsuitable. All the trouble He takes, if I may use a human expression, all the trouble He has taken with some of those in this room, shows that He is leading us along. Here we are tasting His love afresh, I trust, this evening. Has He ever forgotten us? No, thank God, He never will! Never forget, young or old, the young ones especially, the love of the Lord Jesus.

John 13:5. "After that He poureth water into a bason." The water means that He brings the Word to bear upon us in one way or another. He might have to bring to bear upon us the word of the cross.

It may be a tender word of grace or sympathy. He brings the Word to bear upon us. What the bason may be I do not know; perhaps affliction. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but I have I kept Thy word." Affliction, beloved friends, does not do you any good apart from the tender ministry of Christ in His word. Affliction is to bring your ear to the Word. Christ always wants to drop a word into your ear. He knows how to help the weary with a word. When you get up in the morning, have you not the sweet sense, Christ can drop a word into my ear that will help me all day? You say, "I am so poor, so feeble! How shall I get along today?" It comes, perhaps, in the form of manna; still it is a word He brings to bear. If we are not listening we lose it. If you do not bend your ear to hear He may bring a word to bear in another way. Many read the Word, and it does nothing but make them uncomfortable. The more uncomfortable it makes you feel, if really the will is wrong, the better. But the great thing in affliction is to bring the Word, that He may blessedly whisper it in my ear. When you kneel down, for instance, you say, "I want to have Thy will done in me." It is a good, acceptable, and perfect will. I may not understand the workings; I may have to pause, and say - "His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.

"Deep in unfathomable mines Of never-failing skill, He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will."

Now a word that may perhaps help you on the Psalms. In the end of the Psalms there is a burst of praise, and all the Psalms lead up to it; but the great end of all the exercises of the Psalms was to bring the people up to praise God, and it has taken the Lord now nearly four thousand years of discipline with Israel, before they will be able to utter those hallelujahs. The blessed Lord gives the keynote (Psalms 146:1-10), "Praise ye the Lord," and all bursts forth into praise. It has taken four thousand years to bring them to that. "Now you praise Jehovah." He says, You are the people I have found for myself; you shall show forth my praise. (Isaiah 43:21.) He could not give the keynote until He had been through it Himself. "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." (Psalms 34:1.) He knew what it was to go through pressure. How does it all come out? In Psalms 145:1-21 : He praises: "I will bless Thy name for ever and ever." Then He leads the praises of His people. "Praise ye Jehovah" (Psalms 146:1-10), and everything bursts forth. There is another note in heaven above still, the Lord leading it. He who has washed our feet. He who has wrought it all with the afflictions, the sorrows, the chastenings of the way. Oh, what will it be when He lays down that service, and has us in heaven, and says, "Now PRAISE," and we all burst forth into praise! Oh, won't that be wonderful, as we surround the blessed Lord, as we not only know how He laid down His life that all I am might be put aside in the cross, that all He is, as divine righteousness, might be mine, but how He wrought in us to put away all that was unsuitable to Himself, so that we may have part with Him in the many mansions of the Father's house! I want your heart to be thoroughly in the sense of how the Lord loves you. The thirteenth chapter is His service down here, the fourteenth is when His service down here is ended. Now comes another service of the blessed Lord, How are you going to get to heaven? Peter said, in Luke 20:33, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison, and to death;" he counted on his own competency. Now, do you think you are competent to tread the path up there? You say, "Perhaps my feet are treading the heavenly road." You say, "I hope I shall get on and get there." You know what Peter was. No, that will not do; the Lord puts Peter all aside. Peter, you will deny me. Now I will tell you what I will do. "I will come again, and fetch you;" that is how you will go to heaven. That

will be the blessed service of the Lord on the morning of the resurrection. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven," etc. etc. He comes to fetch us, and that is how we get to heaven. Just one word more for your conscience. Now, I have shown you how we get to heaven, now one word more about coming out of heaven. It is not any new thought to most of you. We find in the Book of Revelation, that just before we come out of heaven, we are presented. I do not think we are presented when we go in; the moment comes of presentation, and there the acclamations ring out in heaven - "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. Now she is presented to the Bridegroom, but the "fine linen" is "the righteousnesses of the saints," not the righteousness of God. You are to be presented to Christ in the righteousnesses of the saints. Some one may say, "I am afraid I have very little." That is a great step to find out how little I have got. It says of the earthly bride, "Her clothing is of wrought gold" but the moment it speaks of presentation. "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." "Wrought gold" is divine righteousness; but the moment it is presentation, it is the raiment of needlework, - as has been said, wrought stitch by stitch, red, therefore, it is the righteousness of saints. Do you say, "I am afraid I have very few stitches"? It does not take long to do it, that may be a comfort to some. Now I have referred to the service of the blessed Lord, all the patience He exercises with us, to make us drop the things that are unsuitable, before you put on the veil and wear the demeanour that is suitable to Him. I say it may take forty years, like it did with Israel, to get you to drop the earth. I don't think it takes one minute to flood your heart with Christ when you have dropped it. It is Christ in you, flooding the heart with all His perfections, that will make the demeanour all right. Now, suppose I get a person with an irritable temper; he has struggled with it, but instead of being meek and lowly, there it is always. How will the Lord deal with it? He is so patient with us in doing it. His service is, Now I must work with you in order to make you drop that; and when He has brought you to the judgment of it, and we drop it, Christ can turn round and say, "That is my meek one. It took me forty years to make him that, and now I am going to display him in glory as my meek one." Blessed Lord, to work thus with us. Beloved young believer, do you court the scrutiny of Christ? Don't you get away from the ministry of His word; do you seek the ministry of His word? Very often those who cannot get it would like to have it, and those who have it at their very door, don't trouble much about it. And in private, read His word. You say, "Well, I read it, but I don't quite understand it." Never you mind, it's like putting coals into a grate. Never mind, store it up, the Spirit of God will give a light and power to that word you never saw before. The more you are in His company, and feel His hand dealing with you, bringing the Word to bear upon you even if it is to make you feel uncomfortable, the more you will get these heavenly springs in the desert - for every day; and when you know His company and the service of His love, and how He is coming for you, the more you will look forward to be presented to Him. T. H. R.

S. Responsibility.

Responsibility. A Christian, every one will admit, ought to be a Christian in conduct and walk as well as in name; how else is the character which stamps him as such, the life of Christ in him, to be seen? In these days of worldliness and declension we often have to leave the question whether a person is really a Christian or not. We know that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His;" but it is incumbent on "every one that names the name of the Lord to depart from iniquity." It is not the walk which makes the Christian, though to walk in some measure as Christ walked entitles such an one to the name; for what a Christian is before God should be reproduced in his walk. Before God he is seen in Christ as holy and without blame in love (Ephesians 1:4), and such a character should mark him now. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13.) He is in the same position before God as Christ is; he has no other standing; for he is in it as the effect of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows it by the Holy Ghost, which dwells in him, through whom he enjoys all the results of that death and resurrection, whether present or future. His "sins have been forgiven for His name's sake." He is in Christ saved for ever from judgment; for love with him has been made perfect, so that it can be said, "As He [Christ] is so are we [Christians] in this world." God sees each believer as such absolutely; he is complete in Christ.

Let each one take it home, and say, "Yes; through God's grace that is what I am. I will own no other description of me than His. I will take it, and see how far my walk answers to God's thought about me." The question is not how far we have attained. Paul had to say, "Not as though I had already attained . . . but I pursue." But are we walking on the same principle? He could say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20.) The world and the flesh would never own the lowly Man whom it scorned and crucified to be the Son of God. He was declared to be so, in spite of the world and the flesh, by resurrection from the dead, and as such he was revealed to Paul in glory. A new Person filled his soul, and consequently a new principle of living down here. As men we gather our motives from men; what others do, we do. We are shaped by the current of things around us which are of the first Adam in all his developments, whether natural or religious; but "the faith of the Son of God," to whose image we are to be conformed, is altogether another principle of life. Himself too is the object of that life. Ought we not to press this on one another?

Further, has the state of Christendom, which is a witness of the ruin of true Christian profession, altered one bit what a Christian is, and consequently what his walk should be? True, the altered condition of things around us from those of early days, and the varying phases of that which bears the name of Christ, and therefore stands in the responsible place of answering to that name, may and do make the circumstances more difficult in the midst of which Christian walk has to be maintained; but should not I ask myself still, "Ought I not to be true to what I am through God's infinite grace?"

Again, if we see what the Church is in God's thoughts, and consequently what it should be down here in answer to those thoughts, other than individual responsibility will present itself to us. First, it is the object of the deepest affections of Christ. "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," to this end, that it might be for Himself. The moment the sense of this was lost decline set in, not in outward walk, but the bloom of the first love was gone. (Revelation 2:4.) By the Church now, in contrast with Israel of old as a witness in earthly places, the principalities and powers in heavenly places are to learn the manifold wisdom of God. Further, upon earth "the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth." The Lord's words to the Churches of Pergamos and Thyatira attest how soon the heavenly position was forgotten, and an earthly one assumed, as well as the corruption of the truth by Balaam and Jezebel allowed. The Church in Smyrna had to bear the blasphemy of a rival - an earthly religious system, which had the light for the earth in its day, but had become the synagogue of Satan; but that should have more fully established and manifested the heavenly character of the Church; for the truth, of which it is the pillar and support, is, that He who was manifest in flesh is not now in the world, or among the Jews, but is preached to the Gentiles, an object of faith only in the world, and has been received up into glory. In Pergamos, the place of Satan's throne had become the Church's dwelling. Balaam and Jezebel soon did their work of corruption; and it might be asked, as by the spirit of prophecy of old, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jeremiah 13:20.) The fresh work of the Spirit in Sardis did not produce in it any witness of the heavenly character of the Church; for it is threatened with the same treatment as the world. A remnant only walk with undefiled garments. In its responsible Church character it was not "a faithful witness that will not lie." (Proverbs 14:5.) Was there nothing then which the Lord could own as a "true witness that delivereth souls" (Proverbs 14:25), and before whom He could grant an open door, even though it had little strength?

We do find in Philadelphia that which, as still having a candlestick character, He does own, and, more blessed still, He identifies it with Himself. It is, as in the other epistles, the angel of the Church in Philadelphia who is addressed; for the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. It, as Smyrna, had a rival (Laodicea it could not be, for that is a candlestick also); but again it is the synagogue of Satan with its pretensions, "which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie" - "a false witness which speaketh lies," one of the seven things the Lord hates. The Lord grants to this system of Satan that He will make those who are of it to bend before the feet of this feeble Church, and know that He loved it. He acknowledges it in its candlestick character as a witness, and grants it an open door; for it had kept His word, and not denied His name. It is not a question of conversion, but of witness. Lot was a righteous man, but not a witness; nor did he find an open door for his testimony even in his own family, for "he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law." Reality is needed, being true to His word, and name, and the hope of His coming. Surely every saint ought to take the position which the grace of Christ's heart now assigns to all - the Kohathite service of keeping the charge of that which is most holy, because so immediately connected with Christ Himself - my word, my name - and such a service all the more blessed now that the external order of the Church is broken up. To every saint also belongs the position of girded loins and burning lamps, "like unto men that wait for their Lord." It is well to challenge ourselves as to whether we answer to the grace bestowed on us, or whether, like Lot, we fail to be witnesses of the position assigned to every saint. He was kept from the doom of Sodom, as each whom the Lord knows to be one of His own, witness or no witness, will be kept by Him from the world's coming hour of temptation. The Philadelphian position is surely to be desired by every

saint; it is what the Lord approves. He is sovereign, and when there is break down and failure His testimony may be borne in a way that He could not identify Himself with. The break down of Moses was the occasion of the seventy elders prophesying, and two of them - Eldad (God's love) and Medad. (love), prophesied in the camp instead of at the door of the tabernacle. (Numbers 11:1-35) The Lord identifies the witness of Philadelphia with Himself, and stamps on the overcomer all the character of His own heavenly associations. Our crown is the possession of such a holy service as Aaron's crown was the anointing of His God upon him. (Leviticus 21:12.) We want to know the power of the name of the One who is holy and true, who cannot deny Himself, so that we may hold fast the position of witness which the Lord can thus own, if indeed in any little measure we can say we are of it, as really desiring through His grace to answer in our walk and conduct to what is our proper and only true character in these last days. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Revelation, Sympathy, and Association

Revelation, Sympathy, and Association

There are three points to which our attention has been often drawn in reading the Epistle to the Hebrews. First, the revelation which God has made to His people in the person of the Son; to this we are called to give more earnest heed. Connected with this, the system of glory purposed of God in Christ is brought to light, in that the Son, who is the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, has made purification for sins and seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high. To the heavenly part of this glorious system inaugurated by the Son we are called; and, to use a well-known example, it is the revelation to us of all that centres in the person of Jesus which makes us, as Peter of old, leave the ship to go to Him.

Secondly, He is not only the revelation to us of God, and of His purposes in the Son become man - a revelation brought so close to us in Him that the exercised heart responds to the revelation in the spirit of her who said, "My Beloved is mine" - but He has in the days of His flesh so entered into the sorrows of humanity that He is able to sympathise with weak and suffering men, and yet the support thus given is according to the greatness of One who has traversed the heavens. In other words, He is so for us according to the power of divine love, that we are made conscious of what His interest in us is, and in this consciousness the heart learns further to say, "I am my Beloved's."

Thirdly, the believer, who has learnt the divine fulness and glory of the Person who has become to us the expression of God in all the outflow of His love, together with the revelation of His purpose in that Jesus as Son of man is crowned with glory and honour, and who is also able, according to the same divine fulness, to sympathise with us in our weakness here, is now led into the place of association with Him who has entered into the sanctuary as the Minister of the holy place and the great Priest over the house of God. To be in His company involves that we accept His death as that which has ended the whole order of the first man in judgment; then our highest privilege is that we are of His order, and are associated with Him in the holiest, having entrance by the new and living way which He has inaugurated for us, in that He has entered through death and resurrection into the holy place where He now ministers.

It has often been said that in the gospels we have patterns given us of those truths which are doctrinally set before us in the epistles; and in regard to the three points: above mentioned as characterising the Epistle to the Hebrews, the three occasions on which Mary of Bethany is brought before our notice in the gospels illustrate the way in which the believer apprehends' those points, which we may call revelation, sympathy, and association. In Luke 10:1-42 Mary is brought before us as one who gives more earnest heed to the things spoken by the Lord. Her attitude betokened her appreciation of the Person to whose words she listened. His words revealed Himself, and He was the full vessel of the grace of God here below. At His feet, and listening to Him, she possessed the good part which should not be taken from her. He was known to her in His words, and it is evident that her soul was held in their power. They were to her communications which detached her spirit from the sphere of Martha's anxiety, while they engaged her heart with

the place to which He belonged - the sphere where His spirit lived - Himself the revelation to her of that blessed sphere. The next occasion on which Mary comes before us is in the moment of her own and Martha's sorrow. On the first occasion her heart had been drawn to the Lord by the communication of His voice; on this one she experienced that His heart bore its company in her sorrow, and felt for her in the fulness of divine love that flowed through a human heart. To Martha the Lord had spoken of relief, "Thy brother shall rise again," while Mary experienced the outgoing of His heart in sympathy. Yes, He companied with her in her sorrow, while His heart felt for her as she wept at His feet. She must have had a deep sense that He carried her sorrow in His heart as He wept with her. Nothing could have so assured her of His sympathy, and also of His personal interest and love. Here, then, we have the pattern of His priesthood in its exercise for her - her heart not only assured of His love, but sustained. Thus is the believer sustained in the sense that no circumstance can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Mary had still the good part that nothing could take from her - Himself known more intimately in the presence of that which has come upon man through sin, and presses heavily upon him; Himself known in the movements of divine love which flowed in Him according to the divine glory. In John 12:1-50 Mary is the pattern of the priestly place of the Church. A woman indeed may not speak in the assembly, nor does Mary here, but she is none the less a priest as she pours the ointment on the Lord's feet. Her heart is in association with the One who is rejected here, and the Lord interprets her act as expressive of devotedness to Himself, as to One who had no place in this world. She has still the good part which cannot be taken from her. He has carried her heart with Him out of this world. In spirit she quits the scene where He is rejected, and touches the sphere where His worth is owned; it is figured by the house being filled with the odour of the ointment. She is in association with Him, and occupies in spirit the priestly place. In the accounts of this circumstance given in the Gospels by Matthew and Mark, we are shown how the testimony of the gospel was to carry with it the memorial of this priestly place of devoted nearness of heart. Here the Levite, so to speak, is under the hand of the priest, and along with the testimony of the grace of God is borne the memorial of how His love revealed in Jesus can affect a heart and produce the response of love - a love which nothing will satisfy but worship given to Himself, and the fragrance of which fills the house where it is poured forth.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

We have to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts. (1 Peter 3:15.) Failing this, we take refuge in "a confederacy" (Isaiah 8:12-14), some scheme of our own, for we are unable then to see things on God's side. In Genesis 20:1-18, Abraham had left the plains of Mamre, and was sojourning in Gerar. He was on the edge of the place of blessing, and not in the heart of it; and instead of the Lord being his fear and his dread, he is afraid of the king of Gerar. This leads to a confederacy, an unholy compact between Abraham and Sarah to deny the true and rightful place of the latter; and the mother of the promised seed, the child of holy laughter and joy, is taken into the house of Abimelech. What degradation! when the Lord should have been their sanctuary. Yet so it is. But that is only looking at it from their own side, and on that side there is failure, sorrow, degradation, rebuke, and the involving others in judgment, but for God's merciful interference. If we look at it from God's side, what, we may ask with reverence, were His thoughts as He saw the depositaries of all His promises, both for the heaven and the earth, making a compact which in result separated the mother of the seed of promise, in whom all nations were to be blessed, from him who was the "covering of her eyes," and placed her in the house of the king of Gerar. It is when we see the church as the vessel in which there is to be glory to God in Christ Jesus through eternal ages, and in which angels are now learning the manifold wisdom of God, that we could consent to nothing, if we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, which would falsify its position with regard to Him who loved it and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself. On man's side, Paul spoke foolishly in commending himself to the Corinthians; but it was the earnestness that was jealous over them with a jealousy of God, for he had espoused them to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Scripture Jottings.

Scripture Jottings.

1. Luke 5:33; Luke 6:1-49. The Lord had been displaying His works, which spoke of a new order in the midst of Israel - the old order; but Israel was unsuited as a vessel to hold the new wine. Hence in Luke 6:1-49. He infringes the established order of things by virtually setting aside the sabbath; for, like David of old, He is the rejected and neglected One. The sabbath was the sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Ezekiel 20:12); but the Son of man in the counsels of God has everything put under Him, therefore He is Lord also of the sabbath. The old order could allow the One in whom goodness and grace were being manifested, and His disciples, to be poor and hungry; the latter were doing on account of hunger (Matthew 12:1) what was allowed (Deuteronomy 23:25) after the wave-sheaf had been offered. (Leviticus 23:14.) A new piece could not be put upon the old garment, and therefore the old must give place to the new. Hence He asserts His title as Son of man over the sabbath. Then, in Luke 6:6, etc., sovereign goodness asserts its own right to display itself, notwithstanding their thoughts, and to do good on the sabbath days. It cannot be restrained in its actings towards want and woe by the established order.

Consequently new vessels are chosen adapted to hold the new wine which was flowing forth; but first (Luke 6:12) we see Him all night in prayer to God. Who can speak of what was breathed out into the ear of God from the heart of the lowly, dependent Man, who Himself bare our griefs and carried our sorrows, and "when it was day" of the fresh actings in perfect communion with the heart and mind of God? We trace now some of these actings in choosing the twelve to link them in with the outflow of grace. He comes down and stands with them in the plain or plateau, and a great multitude came round to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases. Then the new wine flows out. "The whole multitude sought to touch Him: for virtue went out of Him." How one lingers over such a moment, drinking of the new wine which gladdens the heart as we witness the exquisite tenderness of grace! Virtue went out of Him and healed them all. What of hunger now, as those eyes are lifted up upon His disciples, and "Blessed, blessed," comes from His lips and bespeaks their portion? Poor and hungry, sorrowful and rejected, they might be; but blessed in His company. Blessed above prophets and kings who had been before them, but had never witnessed what greeted now their sight. (Luke 10:23-24) As we linger on such a scene, it may be profitable in our own day to take heed to the tendency there is to revert to that which is ready to vanish away. "No man when he hath drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better." Laodicea is rich and full now. It has reverted to the old order, and got down into the earth, and it excludes Christ. Ignorant of its true condition, it knows not its loss in Christ being outside. In Philadelphia, on the contrary, there is rejection by that which claims to be the established order; but identification with Christ, and a part in that order which has its sphere in the city and temple of my God.

2. Luke 24:1-53.

How little do we as saints realize that a new power has already entered this world of death! Man has a vague thought of resurrection at a future day. We too may often speak of it as a doctrine, but there is more - that power has been actually manifested here.

We are well acquainted with another power working all around us - the power of death. It is a power dreaded by man, but familiar to him; it oftentimes compels his attention. The flowers and wreaths that are strewn upon the bier and the grave are tokens of the attention which death receives. It is only knowledge of the new power which can divert our attention; but we are often as really ignorant as the poor affectionate women who went with their spices and ointment to the sepulchre. In Luke 23:55-56, we see them occupied with death - death in no ordinary form, but still with death - "They beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid." Then they return and prepare spices and ointments; but the rest of the sabbath-day prevents their doing what would have been wholly out of character. God had ordered that the Lord should not be anointed for His burial in the tomb, but in the house at Bethany, where the presence of Lazarus attested the power of resurrection, and where the odour of the ointment which Mary poured on Him who is the resurrection and the life filled the house.

These dear women are still occupied with the adverse power as they go early in the morning of the first day of the week to the sepulchre. There they find that this new power had been in exercise - the stone is rolled away, and they find not the body of the Lord Jesus. But they are not yet acquainted with it; on the contrary, "they were much perplexed thereabout." And surely we may ask ourselves whether, in the midst of the perplexity caused by the adverse power working here, we know what it is to have confidence in the God of resurrection. How could the power of death hold "the living One"? And yet these devoted women were seeking the living One among the dead. They need not have been ignorant; for the angels remind them of the words He had spoken in Galilee - not when dangers were thickening round Him in Jerusalem; but in the moment when Peter made confession to His person, "about an eight days" before He went up the holy mount, and was there greeted from the excellent glory by the Father's voice - "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." They remember His words, and retrace their steps from the sepulchre to tell the tidings to the eleven and the rest. With what unbelief are they received? "Their words seemed to them as idle tales;" for not yet were they conscious of the power that had already wrought in this scene of death. There is a strange unbelief in man's heart, familiarized with his own lot, as to the working of the God of resurrection; and yet, without rising up in thought to the counsels of God secured therein, how fruitful has it already been to us. It has given back Jesus to us, a living, blessed Man, as the disciples had known Him in the days of His flesh - in resurrection life, it is true; but the same Jesus, no more to die. This is portrayed to us in what follows. Two are going to Emmaus, talking together of all that had happened, when "Jesus drew nigh, and went with them." As at the beginning of this gospel it was said to the shepherds, "To you is born this day . . . a Saviour" - and the sign to them was "a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger,"

"Once cradled in a manger, That Thou mightst with us be " so at the close of the narrative He whom wicked hands had taken from those sorrowing disciples is given back to them by resurrection power. He walks and talks with the downcast travellers until their hearts burn within them, though as yet they know Him not; for questionings had still hold of their minds. A vision of angels had been seen, who said that He was alive. Had these two believed the report, it would

have detained them at Jerusalem in the attitude of expectation. As it is, another motive leads them elsewhere. What tenderness of love that drew near and went with them! He has to call them senseless and unbelieving; and we may take His words home to our own hearts when we fail to comprehend in any way the pathway He has trodden. As in Galilee, so now, He has to speak of the necessity of His sufferings. "Must not Christ suffer these things, and enter into His glory?" But He tarries on the way, ere He enters into glory, to walk and talk and eat and drink with them after His resurrection. The same Jesus, known to them in the familiar act of breaking bread. What a power has already entered this scene! What fresh companionship with Jesus did it give, though of a new order! What a pledge we have of what is to be enjoyed for ever with Himself. May He interpret it to our hearts.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. Scripture Notes

Scripture Notes.

I.

Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-17. Is there any contradiction in the teaching of these several passages? That is impossible; but it is exceedingly interesting to trace out their connection. In Colossians 2:1-23 we have the consequence for the believer, in one aspect, of death with Christ. In Romans 6:1-23 we are delivered from sin - in Romans 7:1-25, from the law - through having died with Him. But in Colossians 2:1-23 we are delivered from man, whether it be on the side of philosophy or of religion. As dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, we are not "as alive in the world" to be subject to ordinances. No human precepts or religious rites or observances have thus any claim upon the believer, because, through death with Christ, he has passed altogether out from under the yoke of the first man. He acknowledges, on the new ground of death and resurrection with Christ, the authority of Christ alone. Everything else, however sacred from long usage, all "the traditions of the elders," he entirely refuses, even the meats, drinks, holy days, new moons, and sabbaths of Judaism; for they have now become to him but "rudiments of the world," and were never, at any time, more than a shadow of things to come, while the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:11) In Galatians the apostle had to encounter a strenuous effort to reimpose the yoke of Judaism on the saints, and this he would not bear with for a moment. It was a total denial of grace, and hence he does not hesitate to withstand even Peter to the face, "because he was to be blamed" for countenancing the Judaistic spirit, which led to a distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers. (See Galatians 2:1-21) When therefore these teachers of the circumcision made Jewish observances obligatory, the apostle declares that they were turning again to the beggarly elements, unto which they sought again to be in bondage; and he says, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Galatians 4:10-11.) No quarter would he give to the imposition of such a yoke.

Passing now to the Romans, the case is very different. It is here a question of one who was "weak in the faith" (Romans 14:1); and such was to be received, but not "to doubtful disputations." He might as yet be undelivered from many things, as was often, the case with Jewish converts; he might still be entangled with many a Jewish habit as to meats, and as to the observance of holy days. Still, such an one was to be received, borne with, even while seeking to lead him on to the full truth of the Christian position; and the apostle reminds us that we are not to judge another man's servant, or set at nought our brother, or put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his way. In a word, weak consciences are to be respected (Romans 14:20-21), and the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves, incited to this course by the blessed example of Christ, who pleased not Himself, but, as it is written, "the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." (Romans 15:1-3.)

II.

2 Timothy 2:20-21. The difficulty which is often felt by many as to this scripture would be at once removed by giving attention to the exact language employed by the apostle. He does not say, "In the house of God," but "In a great house there are not only vessels," etc. In fact, he uses an illustration to set forth what professing Christianity - the house of God, indeed, as built by man (1 Corinthians 3:1-23) - has become; 1:e., it has become a mixed thing, like a great house with vessels of honour and vessels of dishonour in it. The question therefore whether the vessels are teachers or saints proceeds upon a misconception, inasmuch as they only illustrate the fact pointed out, that the professing church has become so mixed and corrupt that separation is now necessary within its own borders. Whether converted or unconverted is not the point, for all are on that ground as professors; and all, whether converted or otherwise, must be separated from it if, like the vessels to dishonour, they are polluted by unholy associations or employments.

If a man therefore purge himself from these - the vessels to dishonour - he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. The next verse (2 Timothy 2:22) points out that there must also be moral separation, and fellowship with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. E. D.

III.

Matthew 28:19.

"The formula which I have used in baptizing is, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus I baptize thee unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' My reason is, that two things are thus owned - the Lordship of Christ, and the full and Christian revelation of the name of God, which is thus called upon the baptized person. Surely baptism is connected with these two important truths. "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Corinthians 8:6.)

I quite admit that Scripture gives us no historical account of any carrying out of the commission in Matthew 28:1-20 to the nations; but that does not alter the significance of the form, as to baptism, there given by our Lord especially for Gentiles. They had previously no connection with the name of God - 1:e., the Jehovah of Israel (Isaiah 63:19) - though Amos (Amos 9:12) prophesied of Gentiles who would be called by His name. Acts 15:14; Acts 15:17, shows how that part of the prophecy had received a kind of accomplishment by Peter baptizing Cornelius and his household. This use of the full name of God is important to my mind or there would be no administrative bringing of the Gentiles into connection with it; and I confess I do not feel happy in any one using a formula which omits it. Surely it is of moment that there should be a people upon earth thus formally connected with the name of God, as fully revealed in Christianity. We see the principle of this as early as Genesis 4:26, in the family of Seth. In the development of the ways of God, which is given us in the Acts, a great point is the establishing of the Lordship of Christ, quite as important as, and intimately connected with, owning the name of the one true God. (Compare Isaiah 45:22-23, with Php 2:10-11.) 'Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.' The whole administration of the ways of God is in His hands, all ministry and power is there; all authority and rule are made subject to Him. It was therefore necessary for Jews, who were already in connection with the name of Jehovah by circumcision, to own Him whom God had made Lord and Christ. It is stating too much to say that the apostles never used the formula of Matthew 28:1-20. We know that negatives are dangerous statements to make; in fact, I judge there is no record given of the

formula they used; for we cannot gather it from the various expressions which the Spirit records. 'In [en] the name of Jesus Christ,' or 'the Lord Jesus,' connects baptism, I think, with the power and authority of that name; while 'Unto the name' would be to the confession of His name as Lord, and this has to be confessed and owned to the glory of God the Father.

It would be a mistake to take the words, 'In the name of Jesus Christ,' or, 'Unto the name of the Lord Jesus,' as a formula. There is much implied in baptism which is not expressed in the formula used, such as moral cleansing, salvation, and being planted in the likeness of Christ's death; but to me the real formula is in the words of our Lord, in Matthew 28:1-20. But then His Lordship is distinctly connected with it there; for He states that all power is given to Him in heaven and earth, though baptism only refers to His authority as administered upon earth. The form of this administration on earth, so far as Scripture tells us, has not been carried out yet according to Matthew 28:1-20, but according to Luke, and in the way described in the Acts. Still our Lord's words remain, that baptism was to be in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." T. H. Reynolds.

IV.

2 Kings 2:12.

"My impression as to the 'chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof' is, that faith in Elisha connects the chariots of God with Israel. (Compare Psalms 68:17-18.) Hence he calls it the chariot of Israel. He sees prophetically in the angelic power which was taking up the ascending Elijah the deliverance of Israel by the same power. For us it is the power which wrought in the Christ when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Connect, for this power which will finally deliver Israel, Deuteronomy 33:2; 2 Samuel 22:9-11; then Psalms 68:17 (it is remarkable, 'Adonai is among them'); Habakkuk 3:3-8; Revelation 8:5; Psalms 18:12-13; Psalms 104:3-4, etc.

I suppose Elisha knew the secret of this power when he picked up the mantle of Elijah - a power not yet displayed fully for Israel, but - Elisha was in its secret. (See 2 Kings 6:16-17.) Elijah had passed through the waters by a power that rolled them back; the full deliverance will come because that power has been exercised in the depths through which Jesus has passed. (Psalms 18:14-15.) I think there is something analogous to Elisha being in the secret of a power not yet fully exercised in Revelation 5:1-14. We are surely in the secret of that chapter. The Lamb in the midst of the throne having overcome to take and open the book. The throne is not yet openly acting, and the rider on the white horse not yet come forth; but I believe we are in this secret, that even now, in all the political actings, and amid the schemes of men, there is the secret acting of the throne, because the Lamb is in the midst of it. The suffering one has overcome, and is there, and the actings of God, even now providentially, are all in connection with Him. As to crisis, it is all future; but if our eyes are open, we know now the secret of the power which will accomplish all. In 2 Kings 13:14 the vessel of this power is just departing, and the words of Joash recognize that Elisha was the vessel of the power of deliverance for Israel. It was a wonderful scene as the window was opened, and the arrow of the Lord's deliverance sped on its way; but everything breaks down in man's hand, and there is no faith in the king to use the power."

T. H. Reynolds.

S. Searched and Known.

Searched and Known.

Psalms 139:1-24.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 85.

What is brought before us in this psalm is the searching power of the Spirit of Jehovah. It is not merely the omniscience of God, nor His omnipresence, which is felt when the truth of this psalm is realized, but the soul is brought into the presence of God. The very innermost recesses of the heart are pervaded by an all-searching power. "Thou understandest my thought afar off." The conduct, the walk, and the words - indeed, all that flesh is and does - are known, but known in such a way that the soul becomes conscious of the searching power of the Spirit of God.

Moreover, there is no hiding from it, no place where it is not. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Heaven? Not only God is there; His presence fills it. Hades? Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering." (Job 26:6.) No wonder the psalmist should say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." It is not that anyone might say, "God knows everything; and, of course, He knows all about me." A person might have that consciousness and yet not know what it is to be searched by the Spirit of God. We must come into the sense of it. Until it is so there will not be the full sense of what the salvation of God is.

It is in reference to the subject of this psalm that in Hebrews 4:13 it is written, "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Two things are brought before us in the end of this chapter - the piercing, discerning power of the word of God; and "His sight." The Word is the instrument of the Spirit. By it the Spirit of God deals with me; but, further, He makes me conscious of being manifest to God. There is no created thing that is not manifest in His sight. Thus I am not only sensible of the action of the discerning power of the Word, but of the all-pervading, all-searching power of the Spirit and presence of God; for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Everything is open before Him - heaven and hades, the place of the dead, as well as the recesses of the heart of man.

We could not say perhaps that we have Christ personally in this psalm; but we could not understand it in its completeness, if we do not see Him in connection with it. He is the filling out of all Scripture. Supposing I quiver, in the sense of the searching out of the Spirit of God, and am ready to say, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" I know the Spirit has also searched Christ. Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. He has taken flesh, and as such been fully tested, only to find absolute perfection. At His birth He was "that holy thing" formed by the Spirit of God. The sealing of the Holy Ghost, and the voice from heaven at His baptism, attest the Father's good pleasure in Him; but it was upon the cross that the full testing of the Holy One of

God took place. There He was searched in the most solemn way. He offered Himself as the burnt-offering to God. The searching in the burnt-offering was upon the altar. First the blood was shed in atonement, then the animal was flayed. The skin answers to the outer character, what is seen before men. We may have a fair outer appearance, covering the moral depravity within; but lovely as His ways were among men, He was all perfect within. The animal was divided, and the very inwards exposed and offered, subjected to the searching power of the all-penetrating judgment of God. In Christ it discovered nothing but absolute perfection; nothing but a heart that turned to God at the moment when as the Sin-bearer He was forsaken. There, in those moments of suffering under the eye of God, sin got its character as nowhere else. It was searched out there, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us. Death, too, as the judgment of God on flesh - what it is as the Lord Jesus knew it in all its terribleness - has been met. Hades, the place of the power of death, is naked before God, but Jesus has been there; He has filled it. If now we look up into heaven, every ray of glory in that blessed place shines in Him, and proclaims His title to be there. He fills it. He who has thus been searched has filled the place of death and judgment, and He fills that bright scene of glory.

There is a further truth disclosed. The psalmist recognizes himself to be the handiwork of God. "Thou hast possessed my reins . . . I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Here, again, if we could not connect Christ with this psalm, and so pass on to being the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus, where all has been wrought under the eye of God, instead of praising, we should quail under the sense of being manifested in His presence. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8.) We have then, in Ephesians 2:1-10, the fulness of that which the Spirit of Christ utters in Psalms 139:1-24. There we have Christ in death. He descended into the lower parts of the earth. (Psalms 139:15; Ephesians 4:9.) It is there we see Him in this epistle, and that is the birthplace of the Church; we are quickened together with Him. He is the Head of the body, the Church, who is the firstborn from the dead. "Curiously wrought," is the word used for the embroidery of the hangings for the doors of the tabernacle. (Exodus 26:36; Exodus 36:37.) The veil was of "cunning work." This word has the sense of "purpose" or "device." That was represented in the inside veil. What was seen outside was the beautiful embroidery which answered to that which was of cunning device inside - every grace that was manifested in Christ and reproduced by the Spirit in the saints. In Psalms 45:14 it is mentioned in connection with Israel: "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework." That is the reproduction of Christ outwardly, as the wrought gold is the glory within.

We may note another point in connection with the workmanship of God. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Why "fearfully"? Because the travail of the soul of Christ in death is the birthplace of the Church. Her origin is from the place of His sorrows and sufferings. A passage in Exodus 34:1-35 will help to illustrate the connection of these sorrows with Psalms 139:1-24. The future birthplace of Israel as a nation will be in the terrible moment of Jacob's trouble, but in the depth of their misery they will find their deliverance in One who has borne their griefs and carried their sorrows. Their salvation is entirely the result of the death of their Messiah. In Exodus 34:10 the Lord thus answers the intercession of Moses, to take a stiff-necked people as His inheritance (Exodus 34:9): "Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels." The people are looked at entirely in relation to the mediator, as in Exodus 34:27 : "After the tenor of these words I

have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." The Lord proceeds, "And all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." "Terrible" is here the same word as "fearfully" in Psalms 139:1-24, and in its full application refers to the great tribulation through which Israel will pass. Moses does not actually pass through it, but as the mediator he has to take it up in spirit. Christ, as we have seen, has taken into His own soul those terrible, fearful sorrows here announced. There too, as we have said, in those unutterable depths of anguish, where not only governmental wrath against an ungodly nation was tasted, but where all the power of death and the judgment of God were fully known, did He travail, according to the will and purpose of God, for the members written in His book. We may well say, "I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The birthplace of glory could only be in the sufferings of Christ. All has been wrought in the lower parts of the earth. There were the members formed that are quickened together with Him. In the closing verses of the psalm the Spirit of God leads the soul to desire this searching in order to its treading the upward path - the way everlasting - without hindrance. This way leads up to where He, who has traversed the whole path of sorrow, even to the lower parts of the earth, is now in the glory of God. It was all traversed under the searching eye of God, and now awake in resurrection He is still with Him. He has reached that place of perfection for man in divine righteousness and glory. Having been made perfect through sufferings, the many sons are being brought to the glory where their Leader is. That is the way everlasting; and if our hearts are in that path which He has trodden, we shall desire the searching which would expose any and everything in us that would prove a hindrance.

It is the office of the Spirit of God to take of the things of that glorified Man, and show them to us; but if there is a "way of grief" in us, He has then to search us as to it, so that there may be no hindrance to the soul being in the light of heavenly glory. There all is Christ. We are indeed in the scene where He suffered, but we understand what brought Him into it - the needs be for those sufferings under the eye of God; and in our measure, and according to the grace given us, we learn to suffer with Him. It is natural for us to shrink from suffering. But when we see how not only flesh, but the whole created scene is searched by the eye and Spirit of God, we shall seek to avoid savouring of the things of men, as Peter did when he said, "That be far from thee, Lord." We understand those sufferings as the introduction to that glory which can never be disturbed. May the Lord give us to tread the upward path which leads thither, accepting through grace something of the fellowship of His sufferings. T. H. R.

S. Service, Worship, and the Priesthood.

Service, Worship, and the Priesthood.

Exodus 27:20; Exodus 28:1-43.

Having considered the structure of the Tabernacle and its vessels, we now find in this portion its services and worship, with the position and character of those who served in it - the chief and central figure being the person of the high priest. The subject is introduced by a command to the children of Israel to bring pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. This command revealed another detail of the great privileges accorded at that time to the children of Israel. They were associated with the giving forth of the light which God ordained in the sanctuary which He had pitched among them. We are not now considering the vessel of the light, but the giving it forth. It shone then in connection with the shadows of good things to come. Nowhere else could the light of God have been found among men but in Israel. The action of the Spirit of God in testimony was in the midst of that people, and had they treasured the privilege, the testimony would have been light to the nations around. (See Deuteronomy 4:6.) We have only to read what is written in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms, to see that Israel was the depositary of every testimony of God, and of every revelation of Himself and of His purposes and ways, by the Spirit in His word. This testimony was necessarily in measure then, for it was only when He came who was the Son, the sent One speaking the words of God, that the Spirit was given without measure. When Israel will have received this One, then this purpose of God for the giving forth light upon earth will be accomplished in them. It is when the Redeemer has come to Zion that Jehovah's covenant with them will be established in the words following: "My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." This is immediately followed by the prophetic summons, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." (Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 60:1.) But the light is here introduced in connection with a feeble though privileged people; hence we now read of the light being maintained through the service of the priestly family. The service of the children of Israel was to bring the oil to cause the lamp to burn always, but the speciality of the care of Aaron and his sons was to order it from evening to morning before the Lord. The next chapter will open out to us the character of the priest on whom after all (see Leviticus 24:3) the maintenance of the light in Israel, and so for all nations (looked at as such), depended during the darkness of the night. That is, during the dark night of Israel's history, the ordering of the light is the care of the priestly family, but in reality depends on the High Priest, that is, upon Christ in the heavens.

Whatever analogy there may be in the great Priest maintaining the light in connection with a failed church, so that in spite of the failure the testimony of God has been recovered to the church with something of its original lustre (not that its own lustre fails, it is dimmed, alas! by the vessels), yet the Christian position to which we have been recalled is that we walk in the light as He is in the light - that we are light in the Lord. Let us trace this light in connection with Christianity. First, in

John 1:1-51, we have the declaration as to the word. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." True, the darkness did not comprehend it; but there it was in its own intrinsic character. It was the light of life, and that for men. So the Lord speaks in John 8:1-59, "I am the light of the world." It could not now be confined to Israel. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He was the Word, and yet a man, the Son, the sent One upon earth, speaking the words of God. The Spirit also was there without measure, and (as another has said) the words of God were realised in the life of a man. The light of life was there; His words were Spirit and life. As long as He was in the world He was the light of the world, but the darkness closed in upon those to whom He specially came, until it culminated in His being delivered up by Judas, and night was there. (John 13:30.) And now in the glorifying of God in the cross, and Christ's consequent place in glory, we have the full revelation of God in light. The Christian is in the light of this revelation, and the effect of it is that being the word of life to the believer, he is now a child of light. (Comp. John 12:36.) He is light in the Lord, for what the word reveals is true in Him and in the believer. Thus the true light now shineth, the Spirit of God who abides with us being the energy by which the light is given. It is really by means of Christ and the saints as the priestly company (Aaron and his sons) that the light is ordered and maintained (hiring the darkness of Israel's night; but we can go further (for the great purpose of the lamp was to burn always), and see how the ordering of the light when Israel's darkness is past is still connected with Christ and the church as the vessel of light (Revelation 21:23-24), for the holy city will be the shekinah of glory that will arise upon Israel. The purpose in separating a priestly family to Himself is here described in the words of the Lord to Moses. First, that Aaron might minister to him in the priest's office (Exodus 28:1, Exodus 28:3-4), and, secondly, that his sons might be joined with him (Exodus 28:41) in this ministry to the Lord. We have to notice here that "ministering to Him" is not the question of a soul drawing near for acceptance to the place of meeting provided for a sinner at the brazen altar, but of the privilege of drawing near, according to the desire of the Lord Himself, into the sanctuary, according to the glory and perfection of His own presence. The sanctuary was thus not only a witness in its construction of what those glories and perfections were, but also the place of service of the anointed priest, according to the same glories and perfections. In the administration of the fulness of times the will of God will be accomplished in the heading up of everything in heaven and earth in Christ, and the universe of bliss will be filled with the glories of the anointed Man. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the Lord seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He is thus seen as occupying the place of dignity and power as the appointed Heir of all things; but in His priestly character He is first presented to us as the High Priest of our profession, able to succour the tempted and to sympathise with our weakness. (Exodus 4:1-31) In Exodus 9:1-35 we reach the great truth that He appears in the presence of God for us, and in Exodus 10:1-29 that He has come to do the will of God, and also that He is a great Priest over the house of God. In order that the glories of such a Priest should be figured in Aaron, it was necessary to clothe him with garments that were made for glory and beauty. What is personally and officially true in Christ was thus set forth. The first and chief garment is called the ephod. Like the veil, it was made of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen; there was also gold, while cherubim are absent; for in the priest it was not the question of maintaining by judicial action that which was due to the Lord in His own sanctuary, but of ministering to Him therein. In the ephod then we have first, gold - God's righteousness, suitability for His presence according to His holy character. The other beautiful materials were wrought with the gold into the

garment of fine twined linen, which figured the person of Him who said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me." The embroidered girdle was of the same materials, and bespeaks the great characteristic of the garment we are considering, indeed the word "ephod" has the sense of being "girded on"; we can thus understand how ministry to the Lord was therein portrayed, finding its accomplishment in Him who also said, "I come to do Thy will, O God." The blessed Lord emptied Himself, taking a servant's form, becoming in the likeness of men. Thus He took the place in which He could be the girded servant of God's glory. In the majesty of the heavens He now sustains in His own person the varied glories in which God is to be displayed according to His own righteousness; and also in blessed love He sustains the people of that love, in whom the display of the same glory is to be made good.

Two precious stones set in gold were placed on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod and fastened to it with chains of gold. The names of the children of Israel were graven therein according to their birth. Their birth was their title. In the dealings of God with each He might distinguish one from another, either in His sovereignty or His government, as Ephraim was set before Manasseh, or Judah given the royal place, or Levi the priesthood. Here all are borne, according to their birth, on the shoulders of the high priest for a memorial before the Lord. In addition, there was another piece of embroidered work, likewise of the same materials as the ephod, and inseparably connected with it, called the breastplate of judgment. In this were settings of twelve precious stones, with the names of the children of Israel also engraven in them, each several gem bearing a name. We notice, that as with the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces, so here, the names of the precious stones alone are given, the names of the tribes are not mentioned. Each name was in a gem, but the name is lost in the gem, and the gem alone is seen. It is thus in the heavenly city. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are in the foundations, but their names remain unmentioned, and they are seen alone in the beauty and value of the costly stones with which the foundation was garnished. The breastplate was attached to the ephod above the embroidered girdle with a lace of blue that it should not be loosed from the ephod: The high priest could not be in the presence of God without bearing on his heart the names of the people of God before Him. Whether it be power or love, both alike are good to the feeblest heart. The breastplate is called the breastplate of judgment. We might have thought that it would be called the breastplate of love, but it is in this that love is made perfect with us, that we might have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world. What can the holy judgment of God say to those who are only seen as written in each precious stone? Connected with this holy judgment, Moses was to put into the breastplate the Urim and Thummim - lights and perfections - that is all we know as to the meaning of those words. They shone in the breast-plate, and made manifest the beauty and perfectness of the setting of the names according to the judgment of God. When the saints are manifested before the judgment seat of Christ in bodies conformed to His body of glory, the judgment-seat can only declare the divine satisfaction with each saint who appears in that glorious likeness. Other details as to works will come out, and everything come into manifestation, but the brighter the light that shines there, the more will be manifested the perfection of Christ in which each saint appears. What will be actually true in the saints then is realised here as faith looks at the breast-plate of the High Priest.

We refer to one other subject connected with Urim and Thummim. By these enquiry was made of the Lord for the guidance and direction of His people. (Numbers 27:21.) If all our conduct is to

come into manifestation at the judgment-seat of Christ, it is well for us to know, that present direction as to it is in accordance with the light of God's holy judgment as to the position in which grace has set us before Himself in Christ.

Thus far we have considered the garment which specially characterised the office of the high priest. Another garment called the robe of the ephod was worn beneath. This was entirely of blue, and designated that which was personal, as the ephod that which was more official. It brings before us the person of the Lord as the heavenly Man. It is blessed to look beneath the glories and offices of Christ and see the heavenly nature and character which were His - He that came down from heaven, and who has ascended up where He was before. On the hem of this robe were golden bells, and pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet alternately. The fruits which flow from the glories of Christ, and the testimony of divine righteousness, were connected with His heavenly character. The robe was upon Aaron to minister, so that his sound should be heard when he went into the holy place, and when he came out. The testimony of divine righteousness is first heard on the entrance of Christ into the holy place. He is there as Jesus Christ the righteous, but the bells being upon the hem of the robe of heavenly blue would show that the sound is for those upon earth, but in the first instance by the Spirit in the church. Now that Jesus has gone into heaven the Spirit has come from thence to those who now form the assembly, and bears witness as to righteousness, because Jesus is with the Father. (John 16:7-10.) When, as the High Priest, He comes out, and the sound of divine righteousness is heard by the earthly saints, it will still be made manifest that righteousness has been established in the heavens in the person of Jesus, and from thence it will look down upon the earth. (Psalms 85:11.) Fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God are inseparably connected with the sound of divine righteousness testified in the heavenly Man. The curse pronounced on the fig tree - "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever" (Matthew 21:19) - teaches us the solemn fact that the first man, even under the cultivation of God as in Israel, is now under the sentence of God as a withered and worthless tree. It is from the heavenly Man that fruit-bearing must come (John 15:4), and it is now by the Spirit that fruits are produced (Galatians 5:22), which are to the glory and praise of God. When the time comes for Israel to revive, they will blossom and bud and fill the earth with fruit, the testimony of divine righteousness in Christ will have reached their ears, and they will know that the source of their fruit-bearing is no longer to be sought in their ability to keep the law, but in the Jehovah who has received them in grace, Jesus their Saviour, who prophetically has told them, "From me is thy fruit found." (Hosea 14:8.) T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Altar of Incense

The Altar of Incense, etc.

Exodus 30:1-38.

We have noticed the double character of worship connected with the brazen and golden altars, and also that communications were made to Moses from those two places; for though the golden altar was outside the veil, yet its position was before the mercy-seat, where God met with the mediator. No doubt the service of the golden altar was primarily in respect of Israel. Christ Himself is the antitype to that altar, as to all else in the tabernacle, and His perfect desires for that people will yet be accomplished - they will yet be the vessel of light in His hand. But as those who are of the priestly family, we are privileged to draw near, and to enter into the desires of Christ as now expressed while intercession for Israel is in abeyance. We listen to these desires for "His own" in John 17:1-26. We are privileged to enter into the breathings which went up to the Father - His first thought the Father's glory; but that glory in deepest grace bound up with the Son, making Him known to us. Then the Father's words given to His own that they might take the place in the world of being for Him, sanctified by the truth of the Father's word.

Testimony and communion go together. The incense was burnt when the lamps were dressed and lighted. And again in verse 36 the incense beaten small was placed before the testimony, where the Lord met with Moses to speak to him. The fragrance of the incense was connected with the communications there made. How blessed that there is One who has much more than answered to the feeble shadow. In Him were thoughts, and feelings, and desires which were those of the Son who was ever in the bosom of the Father, and which as perfections in a Man can be and were expressed to God His Father, and all based upon the glorifying of God by His own accomplished work. It is feebly that we can speak of the inexpressible delight of God in the perfections of Christ; but this blessed One is the word of life to us, so that we should have communion with and know these perfections better, and be witnesses for Him as growing up in His nature. The church, as the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, will fulfil the desires expressed by the Lord in John 17:22-23. It will be the vessel of light through which the glory of the heavenly will shine upon the earth. The words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses" (Exodus 30:11), begin another detail of the service, which was henceforth to be associated with the tabernacle and priesthood. The sum of the children of Israel is to be taken. The details of the numbering are given in the early chapters of the book of Numbers. God's pleasure is to register His people, whether for earth or heaven. The latter are referred to in Hebrews 12:23, as "the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven," while Psalms 87:6 speaks of the former, "the people," written by Jehovah as born of Zion. In our present chapter we have the registry of those whom He had redeemed and brought out of Egypt. Every one is numbered, for the Lord has a personal interest in each. That is the Lord's side of it, but on the people's side there must be the acknowledgment, that only on the ground of atonement could each one be counted as amongst His people. And here there is no difference between rich or poor, all are equally on the same ground; each acknowledges by his

half-shekel that on the ground of ransom alone is he a living soul among the people of God. But further, the money was appointed for the service of the tabernacle. Each one registered not only possessed his soul as a ransomed one, but each had his memorial in the service of the sanctuary. This was very blessed for them, for though the people had not as individuals the special privileges of service, yet each one was represented and had his memorial in the tabernacle by this offering. There is an analogy for the Christian. Looked at as associated with Christ, we are all of one company with Him, entering into the holiest, and worshipping there, but as individuals there are privileges which grace accords to each. The Philippians were not set in the same individual path of service as Paul, but they were not debarred thereby from having fellowship with the ministry of the gospel specially entrusted to him, and he owns their privilege in the words, "Both in my bonds; and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." The feeblest saint has the privilege of having his memorial in the service of the interests of Christ. Not only is he written as one of the redeemed, but he has his part in association with the interests of the Lord.

Then follows (Exodus 30:17) the provision for the maintenance in priestly communion of those who ministered in the sanctuary. We have seen in Exodus 29:4 that they had been already washed or bathed in water. Thus they were clean, as our Lord said to His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Word is that which converts the soul; by which the thoughts and desires of the natural man are judged, and supplanted by new and holy affections and thoughts which are of God. But a soul thus converted and born again can only find in the revelation of the things of God that which responds to these new affections and desires. Such a revelation was figuratively made in the tabernacle and its services. Hence we find such utterances in the lips of saints of old as these: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4); and again, "My soul thirsteth for Thee . . . to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Psalms 63:1-2); and yet again, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." (Psalms 84:1-2, Psalms 84:10) To serve in the sanctuary was the privilege of the priestly company; but in order to their enjoyment of it, all that would hinder their communion and service must be judged by the Word, and their intimacy with these privileges be according to its requirements. It will not allow anything inconsistent with priestly nearness. The place of the laver was between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar. (Exodus 30:18) Its position shows on the one side an imperative necessity ("that they die not"), and on the other a gracious provision for those who approached. The washing of water judged and removed all that was contrary to holiness, so that the Lord should not judge (1 Corinthians 11:31), and also gave fitness for communion with the mind of God as expressed and revealed in the sanctuary. The Lord's gracious action in washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-38) is of the same character. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." When a priest entered into the sanctuary he was not occupied with the needs or the acceptance of men, as at the brazen altar (though he must be clean for that), but with Him who dwelt there, and with the manifestation of Himself, now known in Christ. The sovereignty of grace flowed out in Christ when He came into this world. Here He died for our sins, but He has gone out of the world to the Father, and His service is to give us intimacy with Himself there. The Word revealing the truth, not only as to His death, but as to His resurrection and departure to the Father, is that which judges all that is of man and associates us with Christ in the place where He is. The type could not

foreshadow this, it could not go beyond the intimation of a people in nearness according to the then revelation of God. The place of intimacy into which the Son would bring His own, when about to depart out of this world to the Father, could not be known until He revealed it. The "oil of holy ointment" is next brought before us. With it the tabernacle and its vessels were to be anointed and sanctified. All was to be set apart for God as holy to Him. The priests who carried on the service and worship of the sanctuary were also anointed. What is for God must be in the power of the Spirit. It figures a scene and service where the energy and will of man have no place. All is sanctified for God. Upon man's flesh, that is upon man as such, the oil must not be poured. Upon a priest it could, that is, upon one taken out of the standing of man in the flesh. The washing of Aaron and his sons from their old associations finds its antitype now in the purification of believers by the death of Christ. Blood too was applied to them. The water and blood from the side of a dead Christ witness that the believer is no longer in the standing of flesh. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." And the Spirit is the power by which the believer lives to God.

We cannot have shadowed here the privileges which believers possess as anointed by the Spirit. They are 'thus enabled to know the things which are freely given of God. He is too "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." Hence by one Spirit we have, through Christ, access to the Father. By the Spirit we are baptized into one body, and united to Christ in heaven. Nothing of this comes before us in the type, and even in that in which we now find an analogy; the antitype surpasses. We can look at believers as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. They are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit, and so far they answer to what is typified, but the saints who compose the church are a new creation in Christ. In Him the whole building fitly framed together grows to a holy temple in the Lord. It will, too, be the heavenly tabernacle of God, the vessel of the Spirit's power towards Israel and the earth in the millennium. The saints of this dispensation will take the place of the priestly family - Aaron and his sons - to Israel. It is this aspect of worship which comes before us in the book of Revelation; we do not find that character of worship which tells of the relationship either of sons before the Father, or of the members of the body of Christ. It is as looking towards the earth that they say, "Unto Him that loveth us, and has washed us from our sins, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father"; and again, the new song of Revelation 5:1-14 celebrates redemption to God with a view to reigning upon the earth. Still it will be a blessed moment when the Spirit is poured out from on high, a river of refreshing from the heavenly city.

We have partly anticipated the incense, having looked at it as burnt upon the golden altar, or put before the mercy-seat. In either case it was for God, "holy unto the Lord." The perfections of Christ were for God, while in the anointing oil we have the perfections with which the created scene (the tabernacle) is to be filled in the power of the Spirit. It was too for the anointing of the priests, that they might be sanctified and enabled to minister in the knowledge and savour of these perfections. The incense was for God, nevertheless we are privileged to enter into the delight which He has in Christ. The priests enjoyed the fragrance of the incense while offering it to God.

It seems to me that there is something beyond this which the love of Christ has made ours. He has said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." I do not think the tabernacle goes beyond the created scene, and what Christ is as the manifestation of God in man, and what He is as man for God, and all this is very blessed and

wonderful. But in the verse we have quoted, it is what the Son is with the Father, loved before the foundation of the world. True, He enters that glory as Man, but it is the glory that He had before there was a created scene. He wills that we should see it. Marvellous blessing - fruit of divine and eternal love. Lord, may our hearts respond to it for Thy name's sake! T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Boards of the Tabernacle and the Veil.

The Boards of the Tabernacle and the Veil.

Exodus 26:15-37. In further considering the structure of the tabernacle, we must still keep before our minds that the first and great thought of God was to have a place where He would dwell, and in which He would display Himself according to His purpose. This must necessarily be in Christ; hence we do not look first for the means of our approach, or participation in the blessing consequent on the display or manifestation of Himself, but for that which is verified in Christ, as the centre of His purpose. The boards of the tabernacle were made of the same material as the ark and the table of showbread - shittim wood and gold. It is a figure of Christ as the righteousness of God. Nothing but the gold was seen, the wood being covered with it. Everything in the sanctuary, though brought out in man, must be according to God; all is upheld in the power of divine righteousness. Adam's place in the scene that God created was that of an innocent man, not knowing good and evil. Here is the intimation of another scene - the dwelling-place of God - where all subsists in the power of divine righteousness, and Christ is it; there will yet be a new heaven and earth wherein righteousness will dwell.

Thus we have foreshadowed a creation suited to God, where He would dwell. No longer a fair creation made and committed to the hands of an innocent man, and become subject to vanity through sin entering into it by that man, but a creation characterised by Him who is its beginning. Already the saints of this dispensation are created anew in Christ Jesus; the new man is created according to God in holiness and righteousness of truth. In order for this, Christ must go into death, where we were under the judgment of God, that we might be quickened together with Him out of it. We are not here considering the question of man's responsibility to God as man, and set in the earth which He had made. All that must indeed be met - and it is most blessed to think of the fact that the Lord Jesus did not take the actual place of "the beginning of the creation of God" until every question of good and evil had been settled for eternity on the cross. Evil came out fully there, but perfect good was there also, and God was perfectly glorified. There was no passing by of evil; but divine righteousness (ever regarded as subsisting in Christ, whether in purpose or actually when He took part in flesh) was established after in His cross evil had been proved to be evil and had been judged there. Thus believers can now have a place in the holiest as the righteousness of God in Christ.

Under these boards were sockets of silver. Nothing is here said of whence the silver came. We learn afterwards (Exodus 38:25-27) that the sockets were made of the money taken from Israel as atonement money, and appointed for the service of the tabernacle (Exodus 30:16) to be a memorial for them before the Lord. This may show us that a people numbered by God have their memorial in His sanctuary as a ransomed people according to His grace, but in this chapter we have the simple fact that the sockets were of silver. Silver sockets gave stability to the boards. We have thus a definite use of silver. We have seen too that there was no silver in the construction of the temple; the foundations there were large and costly stones. Gold, silver, and brass, each set

forth what is according to the holy nature and character of God, but seen in Christ. The work of Christ is needed to give any a place in the holy sanctuary of God; but our approach is not yet the subject, but His dwelling-place and the manifestation of Himself therein. If we let the glory of God be first with us, and perceive that it centres in Christ, our sense of the work which has made us suited to it will be greatly enhanced.

Now the tabernacle was the figure for the time then being of the purpose of God for a universe of bliss, and it was placed among men while they yet stood before Him upon the ground of creature responsibility. While thus a witness of God's future, it was on the way to it, and hence His ways of grace and faithfulness come in. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The words of the Lord are compared to refined silver (Psalms 12:6), and this in contrast to faithfulness failing among the children of men. No purpose will He ever give up, though we might think that our failure and sin would lead Him to do so, nor will He alter the word that has gone out of His lips. If He pitched His tent amongst those who sinned and provoked Him, the establishment of His purpose must be secured apart from their conduct, and this is done in Christ. Whatever are the promises of God "in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for GLORY TO GOD," that is the first and great point, but then it is added "by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20), for grace gives us a place there, and immutably secures it in Christ. Israel through the atonement money had their memorial in the tabernacle of God, it was a memorial of a people redeemed from Egypt, who would have forfeited everything if God's ways had not been based upon grace. It is a blessed thing that grace gives an unchanging character to the ways of God while working out through those ways the accomplishment of His own glory in Christ, and wonderful that we can say "in us." The veil divided the holy place from the Most Holy. It was made of the same material as the inside curtains called "the tabernacle." There is this difference, that in the description the fine twined linen is mentioned after the blue, the purple, and the scarlet. In the curtains the fine twined linen is first, because we have there the great fact that the Word tabernacled in flesh; but in the veil (and the veil was His flesh, Hebrews 10:20) we have His mediatorial glory, hence the glories that He alone could take up for God are seen first, but they are taken up in a Man. Cherubim are there. All judicial action is vested in Man. It is committed to the Son because He is the Son of man. God will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, but then He judges for God and according to God.

It is not the rending of the veil which we have here, but the hanging it up. (5: 33.) Behind it God dwelt. It is called, in Exodus 35:12, "the veil of the covering," for He was hidden behind it. He could not fully reveal Himself until it was rent, but in hanging it up He indicated to us this mediatorial character of Christ. There is "one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." If any system of blessing is to come out from God to men it must be mediatorially; nor could man in an earthly standing, even as reconstituted in the millennium, be established in blessing save through a mediator. Now the veil is rent, and God is fully revealed, and the way into the Holiest opened, so that believers should enter in by a new and living way. This is man, no longer in an earthly standing receiving blessing mediatorially from God, but man brought into the very place and blessing of the Mediator Himself. In bringing many sons to glory, it became God to make the Leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. The death of Christ has opened the way for God to come out in the full revelation of His own glory, in order to take the sanctified in. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. This now is the place of believers before Him. The pillars on which the veil hung rested

on sockets of silver, while the hooks were of gold; but besides this there was another hanging made to divide between the holy place and the court. This hung upon pillars of shittim wood and gold, as did the veil, and was suspended by golden hooks, but the sockets were of brass. Cherubim are not here - taking cognizance of and maintaining the holy character of God according to divine righteousness; but the brazen sockets give us the idea, that in entering into the holy place there must be the judgment of evil, and this was, as we have said, by the brazen altar in the first instance, and then by the water of the laver. This hanging was of the same material as the veil, setting forth Christ's mediatorial character. He alone is the door through whom any place of relationship could be entered, either earthly or heavenly. In hanging up the veil, it was based upon the immutability of God's purpose in grace, while the hanging of the holy place was based upon responsibility having been fully maintained and met in Him who loved righteousness and hated iniquity. The entering in of the sons of Aaron to accomplish their service, either at the table of administration or in the lighting of the lamps, was through the door which stood upon the ground of the holy judgment of evil. It is well for us to bear this in mind. May there be with us in our priestly service this sense of the judgment of evil. If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged of the Lord. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Brazen Altar and the Court of the Tabernacle.

The Brazen Altar and the Court of the Tabernacle.

Exodus 27:1-21. The closing verses of Exodus 26:1-37 show the arrangement of the holy and most holy places (Exodus 26:33-35), with the hanging for the door of the tent. All the figures of the manifestation of God in Christ were thus enclosed. Aaron and his sons alone could serve in the holy place, but the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. There was yet a further manifestation of God in the brazen altar, not exactly in this case in the person of Christ, yet not apart from the person, but rather in the work wrought by that blessed Person through sacrifice. The altar was the great place of sacrifice; for this it had its grate and firepans. It was also the place where man, as man, could approach, drawing near to God by virtue of a sacrifice accepted for him, and in virtue of which he was accepted. It had horns on which the blood that made atonement for the offerer was placed. This was for the eye of God, witnessing before Him that His righteous claims on the sinner had been met. Directly man became a sinner, and was driven out of Paradise by God, the only possible ground of approach to Him was by sacrifice. This was witnessed in Abel's offering. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." In Noah's sacrifice we have a further development. For the first time there is the record of an altar built to the Lord, and the sacrifices are called burnt-offerings giving forth a sweet savour to the Lord. Sin had brought in the judgment of God by the flood, and though judgment may prepare the way, yet there was no rest for God in judgment - it is His strange act - but from Noah's altar of burnt offering the Lord smelled a savour of rest. This laid the basis for God's renewed dealings with men and the earth. In virtue of the rest which God has found in the sacrifice of Christ, He can even now deal in providence with this earth, and eventually both man and the earth will enjoy His sabbath. Later on, when Noah's world had departed from God into idolatry, another principle is developed in Abraham - God's calling. He calls a man out from his surroundings to be with Him in a land which He would show him. Here, then, on the one side is the call of God; on the other, separation from the world. In the land the Lord appears to Abraham, and he builds there an altar to the Lord. He had no altar when he went down into Egypt to sojourn there; he could not draw near to the Lord there; but on his return to the land, he returns also to the place of his altar. (Genesis 13:4.) This will prepare us for the consideration of the position of the altar. It was in an enclosure, formed by hangings of fine twined linen, called (Exodus 26:9) "the court of the tabernacle," and its position was "before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." (Exodus 40:6) Another moral feature of its position is given in Leviticus 16:18 : it is "before the Lord." There could be no drawing near to God in the world outside, as Abraham could have no altar in Egypt. We are not now considering the blessed fact that Christians have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ, nor of being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; but that the first approach to God must be on the ground of blood-shedding indeed, but also of the savour of rest which He has found in the sacrifice of Christ, and necessarily also in separation from the world of fallen man's lust and will. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The altar was not inside the tabernacle, nor was it outside in the camp, but in an enclosure which we have yet to consider.

We have spoken of brass as setting forth God's righteousness with respect to good and evil; judging evil, and maintaining and accepting good. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." In the cross evil in man was fully manifested, and goodness in God fully displayed, and there God made good His righteousness with regard to both. Hence in Revelation 16:7 the utterance of the altar* itself is, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." Though the altar was the place of sacrifice, and we must necessarily so regard it, yet in this chapter we are not engaged with the offerings upon it, but with the altar itself. It has its own voice. In the sacrifice we can easily see the expression of God's judgment of sin, and His love of righteousness in accepting that which so perfectly answered to the demand of His righteousness; but the altar expressed the same, for of Messiah it was said, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." The answer to every figure is found in Christ. He is the Altar as well as the Priest and the Victim. It is well for us to consider that the sacrifice of Christ was not a mere act of compassionate grace to free us from God's judgment of sin, but that He hated the sin which He died to free us from. The altar and the victim were in accord. He loved the righteousness which He vindicated in His cross, maintaining it at all cost. Now from God He is made to us righteousness. The utterance of the altar, speaking of the love of righteousness and the judgment of hated evil, makes apparent that approach to God must be in a place of separation from that world, which, having the knowledge of good and evil, has accepted evil and refused good. It is in the cross that this has been fully manifested.

*The correct reading is, "I heard the altar saying." This leads to the consideration of the enclosure called the "court of the tabernacle." It is evidently a place marked off from man's world, the place of first approach to God for those desiring to draw near to Him. They drew near at the brazen altar upon the ground of atonement made, and of the question of righteousness as between man and God having been settled thereon. It was thus a place of privilege distinct from the outside world, but it did not embrace the privilege of drawing near in the sanctuary. It is the latter which is peculiarly the Christian privilege, only that now there is access to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way through the veil; while of old the priestly company could only enter the first part of the tabernacle, called the holy place. The special privilege of Christians is that they have been "called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Their place is with Him according to the call of God. In the court of the tabernacle righteousness was established and maintained at the brazen altar as between man and God, but in the holiest it has been established between God and His own blessed Son our Lord Jesus Christ in virtue of His estimate of the work which has glorified Him - a work done in respect of sin, but which has brought infinite glory to God Himself. It was the righteous answer of the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness (Psalms 11:7) to the work in which He was glorified, to glorify the Son of man in His own glory. We have been called unto the fellowship of His Son, and consequently our place and portion are determined by the place in glory in which He is now as Man. Hence we have liberty by the Spirit to behold the Lord's glory, and thus to become transformed into the same image. In Hebrews, Christians are looked at as companions of the Christ, for "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," and therefore have their place inside with the great Priest who is over the house of God. The Spirit gives us the present realization of it, while we are on the way to its actual enjoyment in heaven. We cannot insist too much on this great Christian privilege of being called to the fellowship of His Son, and that we have our place with Him according to the righteousness of God which has glorified Him, and according to the love which is the fountain and source of all that love has called us to in Him. But though by the Spirit we realize our place in association with Christ

inside, yet actually we are still upon the earth in the place of responsibility, where we have to discern between good and evil, but where we can discern with exercised senses if we have learned the word (or doctrine) of righteousness according to perfection - that is, according to the glory in which Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Thus in the place of responsibility can we approve the things that are excellent, and be filled with fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Php 1:10-11.) The earthly people (Israel), had they had eyes to see, could only have estimated righteousness according to the declaration of it at the brazen altar, but there are fruits of righteousness which flow from our knowledge of Him as gone within the Holy place.

It is as being still upon earth in the place of responsibility (while our proper Christian privilege is within), that we have a place which answers to the court of the tabernacle. The fine twined linen hangings which surrounded it formed the boundary between the people of God as privileged to approach to Him and the outside world. While on God's side the death of Christ has severed His people from the world in which they still are, yet subjectively the wall of separation is formed by the character of Christ in the saints. They have been redeemed from all lawlessness by Christ, that He might purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The fine twined linen sets forth the purity of Christ as a man. And here we may notice that the whole length of the hangings of the court corresponds with the total length of the ten curtains which formed the tabernacle - in each case 280 cubits. It is as we are formed inside with Christ that His character can be maintained in the place of our responsibility here. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not"; nor is there any righteousness save that which is of Christ, not only before God, but also practically. "If Christ be in you . . . the Spirit is life because of righteousness"; and again, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." The character of Christ formed in His people is the true boundary of separation between the clean and the unclean. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The hangings of the court were sustained by pillars of shittim wood fastened in sockets of brass. The wall of separation - the line of demarcation between conformity to the world, and proving what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God - rests on the foundation of the holy judgment of good and evil as learned in the cross. This is maintained by the cleansing of the Word, but this we shall consider in its place when we come to the description of the laver. The fine twined linen hung upon hooks of silver, and the pillars were filleted with the same. If the holy judgment of good and evil is the foundation, yet all hangs upon grace. It is according to grace that God secures His people as separated from the world, for through grace there is a distinction between the feeblest saint and the outside world; but in order fully to manifest the character of Christ we need also to be adorned with His grace. Of Him it is said "the grace of God was upon Him," while His devoted servant could say "by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." This completes the description of all in the tabernacle which was specially connected with God manifesting Himself in the midst of His people. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Bright and Morning Star

"The Bright and Morning Star."

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 116. The book of Revelation gives us the prophetic record of the closing up of the history of this world as the platform on which the ways of God in time have been worked out. It speaks of the accomplishment of the mystery of God (Revelation 10:7), the ushering of the time-state into eternity. It has been said of this time-state, that it is "a divine parenthesis in the midst of eternity." The eye of man naturally can only look at the condition of things in which as a creature he is set. Hence we read, in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He hath set the world in their hearts," that is, this time epoch (aion), "so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from beginning to end." God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 21:6), while man lives in a state of things by nature where there is a time for every purpose under heaven. God in His goodness uses the travail which belongs to such a state to exercise the sons of men in it; but there is a moment coming when the mystery of God, which from beginning to end He has been working out through this time-state, will be finished. "What God doeth it shall be for ever," and the words, "It is done" (Revelation 21:6), tell us that time is no more. It is God's for ever - eternity.

There is another parenthesis which we must also consider, not now the parenthesis of time in the midst of eternity, but a parenthesis in the history of this world, and of man in it as the subject of the direct dealings of God. It exists during the period in which the Lord Jesus Christ is hidden in the heavens at the right hand of God. The direct course of God's dealings with the world in succeeding dispensations has been interrupted. In order to Christ's taking the inheritance, not only over the earth, but over all things according to the purpose of God, it was needful that the joint heirs who are to reign with Him should be gathered out while He is hidden in the heavens. A heavenly, glorious Christ is theirs. The saints of this parenthesis know Him in that character by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from the glory where He is. They wait not for His return to earth - then they reign as joint heirs with Him - but for the moment of their gathering to Him in the heavens. They wait for Himself. The peculiarity of their relationship to this heavenly Christ is, that He will present them to Himself as His bride. It is true they will reign with Him. They will be manifested in glory as the sons of God, and into the liberty of that glory the groaning creation will yet be delivered. They form part too of the heavenly court and temple, kings and priests, as we see in Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14; but besides these heavenly offices they stand in the closest relation to the exalted Man. They form the assembly, His body, of which it is said, He loved the church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present the church to Himself glorious. (Ephesians 5:25.) All the sin and shame of the first man is gone in the death unto which He delivered Himself up for the church, and she has been formed in the new and heavenly man by the sanctifying power of the truth, so that she might be according to Himself, holy and blameless. There is another joy which belongs to the saints who in this period of His rejection believe on Him

while hidden in the heavens. They will be with Him where He is according to His own desire, and behold His glory as the eternally loved One of the Father; and thus, sweet as will be their own relationship to Him, and blessed to reflect His glory, it will be infinitely greater than our own blessing to enter into what He whom we love is to the Father. To be in glory like Him will enable us to behold His glory.

We shall not catch the force of the expression, "I am the bright and Morning Star," unless in some measure we enter into this peculiarity of our relationship as the assembly to a heavenly and glorious Christ while He is hidden in the heavens before He arises upon this world as the Sun of righteousness. The Lord had said (John 16:7) that His going away would be profitable to His disciples because He would send the Comforter to them. His departure, and the consequent cessation of their knowing Him after the flesh, prepared the way for the Comforter to come and announce to them the truth connected with the new and glorious position into which He had entered. The Holy Spirit when He came would take of His things, the things of the Father into which He was now going, and announce to them. Sorrowful as His departure out of this world was to the disciples, it was better for them, for they would henceforth know Him in this heavenly character. In John 17:19 He adds, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." They were now to be sanctified in this special and peculiar way by the truth of the Lord taking a place apart from the earth, sanctifying Himself in the heavens with the Father where He was going. The saints of the present period, those who believe "through their word," share the heavenly fellowship of the early disciples as sanctified in the power of the same truth, even as they will be perfected into one in the glory.

While the moral elements of the truth which sanctifies the saints now are thus given by John, to Paul was committed the special intelligence, as well as the administration, of the mystery in which, during this parenthesis, was revealed that Jew and Gentile were "joint heirs, a joint body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ," a promise outside of all dispensation, and which could only be made known when Christ, as Head over all things to the Church His body, was set down at God's right hand in the heavenly places. There is not a glory given to Christ as Man which He will not share with us (His own glory as the Son of course excluded). Will He reign? We shall reign with Him. Will He be a Priest upon His throne? We form part of the priestly family; but the peculiarity of the assembly's relationship to Him, is, that by the Holy Ghost sent down she is united to the risen and glorified Man. The assembly is the object of the love of Christ while He has been rejected by the world, and while sitting in patience at God's right hand. The love He has to it is a special love, and, in accordance therewith, He cleanses and sanctifies it in the power of His own present separation to God in the heavens. The Lord presents Himself in many characters in the book of Revelation. In the beginning of the book, He is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, and as such sends greeting to the responsible assemblies on earth. It is the privilege of the Church to have intelligence, and enter into the various glories and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ; but what calls forth her praise and adoration is, that she knows Himself in His love to her. "To Him that loveth us." Between this first communication and the close of the book other characters are mentioned. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who, spite of all the working of Satan in the earth, has redeemed a people for God out of all the sin and ruin. Then there are His mysterious angelic characters. He holds the seal of the living God. As Angel-priest He gives efficacy to the prayers of saints. He claims the sea and earth for God. Then,

as Son of man, He reaps the harvest of the earth, and, though in angelic guise, He treads the winepress of the wrath of God. Further, He comes forth out of heaven as the Warrior Judge, with His many titles and many crowns; and lastly He is seen as Judge upon the throne of God, closing up the whole record of sin and death in the lake of fire for ever. These wonderful characters belong to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of the ways of God. The book which is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus closes with the announcement, that He whose testimony it was would quickly come, and the scene of responsibility would terminate by the final settlement of the question of good and evil. The unjust and filthy would remain so, and the righteous and holy would be still the same. But there is another character in which He makes Himself known to the Church. He who is the Root and Offspring of David, and therefore the Fountain and Source of all blessing for the earth, reveals Himself at the close of the book in the character which belongs to the Bride. He is "the Bright and Morning Star." And now it is not the Lord telling His servants that He is coming, or sustaining the faithful with the promise of it; but the voice of the Spirit in the Church responds to His announcement by saying, "Come?" This heavenly character of Christ is peculiarly the Bride's. The Lord wants us to respond also. Do we hear Christ thus speaking? Do we hear the Bride, as moved by the Spirit, instantly recognising that Jesus, as the Morning Star, belongs to her - the Object of her affection and hopes? Then let him that heareth say, "Come!" What a well-known Person He is "I Jesus!" We might not recognise Him in some of His mysterious characters; and we might regard Him with awe as we survey in prophetic vision some of His glories. When the disciples of old saw Him walking over the stormy waters, and coming to them thus, they cried out for fear. But the words, "It is I, be not afraid," not only calmed their fears, but produced an answer in the heart of Peter. "Peter answered and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the water." His desire was not for the abatement of the storm, or for mere power to walk upon the water, but to reach Jesus. It is eighteen hundred years since Peter heard those words, "It is I," and stepped out of the ship to go to Jesus. If He had little faith he had affection. The last words of Jesus, as the Book of Revelation closes, announce, above and beyond all the storms of judgment, that it is Himself who speaks to us in those words, "I Jesus." Where is the heart of even the feeblest believer who cannot respond to that name? We say at once, "He is my Saviour." But more, He is the Bright and Morning Star, the Harbinger indeed of a day that is yet to break, but known in this heavenly character by the Church before it breaks. He will usher in the morning without clouds, and His glories will shine forth to the earth. But though it will be blessed for the Bride, as the holy city, to be the vessel of the glories of the once rejected and suffering Lamb, it is Himself which causes the Spirit and the Bride to say, "Come!" The present moment is the time when the Spirit is forming a Christ, unseen by the world and hidden in the glory, in the affections of the saints who compose the Bride.

If the Bride is the object of the love of a rejected but glorified Christ, He is also the One who has satisfied the desire which His love has awakened in her. We speak not of how far as individual believers we enter into this satisfaction; but the Spirit could not utter for the Bride anything less than the fulness of desire which He would produce in her. Thus, as knowing by the Spirit the living streams which flow from the Christ in glory, to whom she came and drank, she can echo the desire of His heart that any thirsty one should come to the same fountain. In the consciousness that she is the vessel of that grace whose rich overflowings she has received, she can say, that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. This is very blessed. Judgment is God's strange work. When He does judge, it is to clear away the evil which prevents the fulness of blessing flowing out.

from Himself. So soon as the powers of evil are put down, the heavenly city is seen descending out of heaven from God. Divine glory, light, righteousness, holiness, purity, beauty, symmetry, order, strength, security, every perfection is there. Though it be according to the measure of a man, all is of God. The presence and reign of Christ upon the earth will stablish it in righteousness and peace under His rule; but in the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, will be learnt by the earthly saints far deeper thoughts of love and glory, in that the Father has given to Christ, while He was rejected from the earth, the company of saints who form His Bride, and in whom He will be for ever glorified. Poor sinners saved by grace, they will be the display in the ages to come of the exceeding riches of that grace. Those blessed on the earth will see the heavenly saints in the same glory as Christ, and know that the Son was the sent One of the Father, and that the love wherewith the Father loved the Son as His sent One is the portion of this glorious company. They are loved as Christ is loved. What an administration of governmental glory there will be upon earth! and besides, what an outflow of the beneficence of the heavens from the holy city. What marvellous instructions will it afford to those who see its perfections! but within, what a filling up to the fulness of God! Well may the Spirit, in the consciousness of what the assembly is to Christ, and the peculiarity of her present knowledge of Christ as the Bright and Morning Star, utter through the Bride the invitation to Him to come; and then, in the further consciousness of the grace into which she has drunk, repeat, through her to any one that is athirst, the same blessed invitation to come and take of the water of life freely. "Let him that heareth say, Come."

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Church as the Body of Christ.

The Church as the Body of Christ.

"The Head of the body, the Church." Colossians 1:18.

"The Church, which is His body." Ephesians 1:22-23.

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 29. In considering the Church as the Body of Christ, it is needful to bear in mind at the outset - first, that the body is not complete without the Head; and, secondly, that the Head necessarily gives its character to the body. Any intelligent Christian would admit that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that all believers are members of Christ; but habits of religious thought preclude the right apprehension of these truths; hence the true character of the body is little known. That each believer not only possesses the same life, but as a living fact is united by the Holy Spirit to every other believer in the world, is recognized by a few only. Still less is the truth possessed, that all believers so united together are also (not should be) in vital union by the same Spirit with the Head. The truth of this union of all believers to one another and to the Head is thus expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 : "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The baptism of believers into one body was a complete operation of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The Church as the Body of Christ was then actually formed. It may be well to speak here of the individual position of those who compose it. The great characteristics of a Christian are, that every question as to sin and sins between God and himself has been eternally settled in the cross, and that he has received the Holy Ghost. Two consequences flow from the latter: his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the life of Christ risen in which he is alive to God is characterized by, and is in the power of, the Spirit of God - "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." These are solemn truths, and we may well pause to ask how far we enter into them.

It is impossible to enter rightly into the corporate position, unless the true Christian standing is known. The Body of Christ is not in any sense of the first man; its origin is in being quickened together with Christ out of the death in sins in which men universally (Jew or Gentile) were. Here all distinctions known among men are gone, and Christ is everything and in every one (Colossians 3:2.) In Himself Christ has formed one new man. Thus we get the very nature of the body; it is entirely of Himself; the Head gives its character to the body. It is a body united to the Head; the life of the Head is its life; it derives its support from, and is governed in all its functions, by the Head. This is a weighty consideration for what are called "Bodies of Christians" and "Independent Churches." "Not holding the Head" necessitates being directed by human wisdom and governed by some other headship under the arrangement of men.

Further, though the Church as the Body of Christ was "the mystery from the beginning of the world hid in God," and the subject of "eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord," yet the actual formation of the body could not take place until the last Adam had been in the deep sleep of death. The saints who compose His body are quickened together with Him who, though He went into death, is a quickening Spirit. God has quickened them together with Christ, and He (Christ) has imparted His own life to them as risen out of death. The revelation of the mystery could not be made until the second Man had taken the place destined for Him in eternal counsels at the right hand of God; it was delayed until the full and final enmity of the Jewish nation precluded the hope of Jerusalem again receiving her King; then the new centre at the right hand of God could be disclosed, and He who sat there owned the saints on earth as Himself. (Acts 9:4-5.) What a character this gives to the Church! It is His body which is seated in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. In the millennium His name will be excellent in all the earth, but this is glory set above the heavens in the Son of Man. (Psalms 8:1-9) In Colossians the apostle unfolds the glory of His person (Colossians 1:15; Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9) as the One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, and the saints complete in Him; in Ephesians the place in which he is set as Man, and the name given to Him above every name. When He had taken this place destined for Him in the counsels of God, Head over all things, then could be disclosed that the Church was His body. The consideration of this will show that the Church is not of the world. It is indeed the house of God, and as such the pillar and ground of the truth; but in its own relationship to Christ, it is the body of the exalted and glorified Man. While the ages and dispensations of this world were going on, it was hid in God - a mystery not made known to the sons of men. It was future when Christ was upon earth; its period is between the ascension of Christ and His public manifestation in glory. Hence it is called the mystery, or rather Christ and the Church are the mystery. The economy of the mystery is no part of the public earthly development of the ways of God in Christ. Hence the apostle Paul, as the special vessel of the grace of God in the administration of the mystery, preached among the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of the Christ." In the Person of the Christ, no longer on earth, but a glorified Man, are riches which cannot be traced out. This One, not known after the flesh at all, was preached to the Gentiles.

If we ponder this wealth of glory as well as grace in Christ, and the church as His body - the fulness or complement of Him that filleth all in all - we can, in some little measure, understand how by it is now made known to the heavenly intelligencies the all-various wisdom of God. We understand it as we look at the church united to the Head and not apart. The administration of the mystery cannot separate the Head from the body, Christ from the church. The lustre from the Head is thrown upon the body. Nay, it is Himself. Its formation as also its building up and growth are entirely of Christ. It cannot be supplied from this world, nor from the first man; it is from the Head that the nourishment is ministered by which it grows, and from the same source it is fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. (Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 4:16.) The gifts for its edification are given according to the measure of the gift of Christ when He ascended up on high. The Church is the body of Christ as He now is in glory at the right hand of God, and is nourished from thence.

It may be asked, "Are these thoughts of the body of Christ to be indeed realized in the Church now?" The answer is, "It is not for us to have different thoughts (whatever we may see around)

from those which are in the mind of God." Moreover, it is not by being occupied with the Church, save as we are in communion with the Head about it, that we shall rightly estimate its character. Our eyes must be upon the Head; the more we contemplate His glory, the more we shall recognise what befits His body. Further, our own state of soul may have somewhat to do with our apprehension of this, as of every other truth. Do we then believe that individually we derive everything from Christ? that we are not only "rooted," but also "built up in Him"? that we are "complete in Him"? Do we recognise for ourselves the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, that is, by the cross - the burial out of this world with Christ by baptism? and then, that we who were dead in sins are quickened together with Him? that we are of Him and in Him according to the grace of God? Until this is learnt, that the true Christian condition derives nothing from self, that the flesh and the world cannot minister to it, but that Christ is all, it is impossible to understand rightly how entirely the body is of the Head.

Something also must be known in real enjoyment of the love of the Father as the eternal source of every relationship. Of Him every family is named in heaven and earth. Hence the apostle prays, in Ephesians 3:14-19, (and mark the remarkable words he uses), "I bow my knees to the Father . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory" - Christ, the glorified Man, is the centre of this wealth of glory, as the Father is the source - "to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that the Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." What a marvellous desire, that the One who fills all things (the centre indeed of glory, but the Revealer of such an ocean of love that, as another has said, "The only cognizance we can take of this space is, that we cannot get out of it") should dwell in the poor little heart of a saint; hence, he proceeds, "being rooted and grounded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." This is infinity indeed; but He who dwells in our tiny hearts fills it. We look, as it were, above, it is Christ; below, Christ; this side, Christ; that side, it is still Christ; and here we are lost in this ocean of love. "And to know the love of the Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that ye may be filled to all the fulness of God." A little mote may float in a sunbeam; it cannot indeed comprehend the beam, but it is bathed in it, and filled with it. Thus does the apostle desire (well might he bow his knees) that all saints might know love divine and eternal in a glorified Man; but yet in Him the fulness of Godhead glory. The Church is the vessel of glory to God by Christ Jesus through all ages world without end. But the Church that He will present to Himself in glory without spot or wrinkle is the Church that Christ nourishes and cherishes as His body now. This relationship of the Church to Christ exists now as it will in glory; it is its true and proper relationship. Not to act upon it is to falsify its whole character. In order to our entering into its position as the vessel of glory to God, we are told that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that even an apostle could ask, according to the power that works in us. What but the power of God that wrought in Christ when He was down under our sins in death, to raise Him, and set Him in that place in glory where we have considered Him; and now has quickened together with Him, and raised and seated in Him in heavenly places lost sinners like ourselves, could operate in us to form us in all the power of love into correspondence to the Head. It is not by thinking of ourselves, but of His grace, and how it has been manifested towards us, that we shall be able to enter into our corporate relationship to Him.

It is the good pleasure of God's will that saints now should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. Oh that He might give each one to know better what that grace is! In order to this, let any try

to conceive, if possible, the contrast between an Ephesian walking in darkness and the lowest degradations of heathenism, and the brightness of light, wondrous love, peerless perfections, and heavenly glory of the Lord Jesus; or what the moral distance between a Pharisee such as Paul, bent on establishing his own righteousness at the expense of the murder of the saints of Jesus, and the Lord Jesus Christ, establishing the righteousness and glory of God in the heavens at all cost to Himself on the earth, murdered here, but seated there - and then ponder grace, as the light of glory in His face shone down on the Pharisee and out to the Ephesian, to take up both in its embrace according to the power of redemption, and make them one with the exalted Lord in glory. Such His grace - it will be enhanced in our souls as we grow in acquaintance with Himself. We shall know it in all its fulness when He presents the Church to Himself in glory, and when we enter the Father's house as those accepted in the Beloved.

T. H. R.

S. The Church as the House of God

The Church as the House of God.

1 Corinthians 3:1-23.

T. H. Reynolds.

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We may notice two aspects in which the assembly (church) of God is spoken of in Scripture; first, "the body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18); second, "the house of God." (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:22.) In this second aspect there is again a distinction made in the word of God between the building as it will be in heaven, when every living stone will have been fitted into its place and the whole have grown "unto an holy temple in the Lord," and this building viewed as at any time existing on the earth. Of the former it is evident that Matthew 16:18 speaks, where the Lord declares that against what He builds the gates of hell shall not prevail; and again Ephesians 2:20-21, where the whole building is "FITLY framed together," not yet completed, but "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Of the latter our chapter especially speaks, besides Ephesians 2:22, 1 Timothy 3:15, and other passages, where the assembly of God as existing upon earth, and not in its future, is viewed as "the house of God," "the temple of God," "an habitation of God through the Spirit." This was formed on the day of Pentecost by the gathering together in one of the children of God who before were scattered abroad; and the holy Ghost descended and filled the house - the assembly of God - with His presence. In the wilderness the habitation of God was a tabernacle, and when that was consecrated the glory of Jehovah descended and filled it. (Exodus 40:34-35.) In the kingdom, the tabernacle gave place to Solomon's temple, and again the glory of Jehovah filled it. (1 Kings 8:10-11.) On the day of Pentecost, God again took possession of His house by the Holy Ghost. But ere we proceed, one thing should be noticed with respect to the assembly as the body of Christ. In that, Scripture speaks of a Head and members vitally united together by the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) In the house of God, on the contrary, we have stones and a foundation, and corner-stone and a master-builder, or "architect," and the living God as He who dwells in it. To confuse one line of thought with the other is ruinous to "rightly dividing the word of truth." Moreover there is no such thing as a "member of a church"; in Scripture it is "membership of the body of Christ," and a member of Christ can never cease to be a member; the figure of the natural body is used to show its oneness; and of this natural body Psalms 39:1-13 speaks, "In thy book all my members were written, . . . when as yet there was none of them." How much more true of those who were given to Christ before the foundation of the world. (Compare John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also.") His body is Himself - "His own flesh" - which He nourishes and cherishes, and therefore there cannot be such a thing as a false member of the body of Christ; but there may be bad materials built into the house, as we shall see. And further, this union between Christ and His body is so intimate that in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the whole body, 1:e., Head and members, is called "Christ," just as in Genesis 5:2 it is said that God made man, male and female, and called their name "Adam."

Returning to our chapter, we note that all the saints, at any time existing upon earth, are not only living stones of the heavenly temple, but have been gathered together by human instrumentality into the assembly of God, or, to keep to the figure used, built into the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells; in the case of the Corinthians, by Paul and other labourers. But let us bear in mind that there is not a trace in Scripture of such a thing as independent churches forming themselves into associations according to their own convictions. The only thing known in Scripture is "the assembly of God." Into that the New Testament workmen gathered - the house of God, into that the stones were built. In verse 10 Paul declares that the grace of God was given to him as the "architect," and he had laid the one and only foundation - others might build on it, but other foundation could not be laid. Mark, what is spoken of here is not the foundation of a sinner's salvation, but of the building which is the habitation of God - His temple upon earth. There has been no other architect but Paul appointed by God; there can be no other foundation laid, though many have taken the place of master-builders, and laid down the foundations for the churches they sought to form, in "creeds," "confessions of faith," etc.

If we revert to the tabernacle wherein God dwelt in the wilderness, Moses was, as it were, the architect, receiving the patterns from God (Exodus 25:40, Exodus 26:30); and David, in the same way, was architect of the temple, giving the pattern to Solomon of "all that he had by the Spirit." (1 Chronicles 28:11-12.) Nor could there have been a deviation from it in either case. Alas! we of this dispensation have done so, and formed churches according to our own patterns, one of the chief reasons being, that the idea of "God's house" has been lost, and the church has been regarded more as the dwelling-place of saints than of God the Holy Ghost. For it is evident, if we regard it as the dwelling-place of God, His dwelling must be according to His own mind; and any departure from it is a step towards bringing it into that condition when it could no longer be His habitation, though His patience is long, and His true saints will ever know His presence with them till they are caught up to heaven. The foundation then of the house of God upon earth is "Jesus Christ," and Paul says, "I have laid the foundation;" but note when the heavenly temple is spoken of, apostles and prophets are the foundation stones (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. To return. Paul having laid the foundation, others built on it. "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." "Gold, silver, precious stones" might be built, or "wood, hay, and stubble" might be added; it depended upon the builders; but the coming day would declare it. Paul himself could look forward to that day, and view his work in the light of it; those whom he had gathered he looked to be his hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord at His coming. The work would stand when tried by fire; such an one's work would abide, and he receive a reward. "Ye are our glory and joy in that day." Secondly, a converted man is supposed (5: 15), but his work will not stand the fire - the scrutiny of God's holy judgment; he suffers loss as a workman, though he himself is saved, "yet so as by fire." It is as a man who has surrounded himself with possessions, from the midst of which he is saved, but they are burnt; his work is not his "glory and joy." Thirdly, there is not only a bad workman, but he himself corrupts the temple of God. He is corrupt himself, and therefore he is a corrupter. "Him shall God destroy." Now mark what was the occasion of this solemn warning of the apostle. The Corinthians were a clever people in this world, and they were beginning to bring their own cleverness and energy into the temple of God; they had not learned to become fools that they might be wise. Our own wise thoughts are our greatest hindrance. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." To bring in human wisdom into the assembly of God is so far to

begin to render it unfit for His habitation; it is as if Bezaleel had deemed that his own wisdom could deviate from the patterns given to Moses; instead of which he had wisdom given him to follow out the patterns.

Thus far we have looked at the building. If we now turn to 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 we shall there find the Spirit giving us by the apostle, as it were the furniture and services of the house as he received them from the Lord. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." (1 Corinthians 14:37-38.) Alas! we may say again, that we of this dispensation have been careless as to the building, so that not only have other foundations been sought to be laid, and bad materials built in, but the internal orderings of the assembly also have not been according to the commandments of the Lord. The first point the apostle notes is the Lordship of Christ, of which the Holy Spirit was the witness. The assembly is the sphere of spiritual gifts or manifestations. Anything spoken derogatory of Jesus was not of the Holy Ghost, and no one could say Jesus is Lord but by the same Holy Ghost. Here then is affirmed a solemn first principle, that the Holy Ghost bears witness in every spiritual manifestation to the Lordship of Christ. Compare Hebrews 3:6 : "Christ . . . Son over His own" (1:e., God's own) "house." "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," etc; and He divides to each severally as He will (Hebrews 3:11), so that all needful gifts are from the Holy Spirit. Again, "There are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord." All services are directly under the one and same Lord. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." In whatever way (and there are diversities) a service is carried on, the energizing power is of God. To use a figure, the various members of my body are gifts to my body. Take my hand, as an example, it is one of the most necessary and important; but with it I feed myself. That is a ministry to my body. But how is the operation, of feeding myself to be wrought? It is by the enabling power of Him in whom I live and move, and have my being. So in the assembly. There are gifts of the Holy Ghost; the ministries are under the Lord, and the enabling power is of God. It is not because I have a gift that I am to use it either at my own will, or under the will and control of others, save as all ought to be subject one to the other, as "God has tempered the body together," but under the Lord Christ. If this had been recognized at Corinth, there would not have been the confusion there was, nor would they have gloried in man had they recognized that it was not human power or wisdom, but God who operated each gift in each one ("all in all"). The apostle then speaks of the varied gifts, and, using the comparison of the body, shows how all were in the unity of the body, and not for self. My hand cannot be for itself, nor for one part or other which it may esteem more highly, but for the body. "Now," says the apostle, "ye are Christ's body" (5: 27); and "God has set some in the assembly," etc. The ordering of the house then in its services and furniture is of God, and what we need to realize is, that any other order is confusion. It may not appear so to human wisdom - with it human arrangement would be best - but in God's house it is ruinous disorder.

I would notice the difference now between the sign-gifts; that is, such as were for signs - tongues, miracles, etc.; and edification - gifts, as teaching, exhortation, etc. In Ephesians 4:1-32 we have no sign-gifts mentioned at all. There the Spirit is more speaking of what was the body and bride of Christ, of what He nourishes and cherishes, and will finally present to Himself without a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We find then that the gifts mentioned there are for the perfecting of the saints, etc., "Till we all come . . . to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" that is, they

continue till each individual member of the whole Church is come to the one perfect Man in glory. We are now all growing up into Christ by the ministry of these abiding gifts: first, apostles and prophets - those we have in the word of God; and oh, what wisdom of God to give them to us in that way, so that we have unchangeable foundations! - "Are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." (Ephesians 2:20.) Then we have evangelists, pastors, and teachers; for gathering first, and then perfecting the members of the body. These we may always count upon. They are gifts of the Spirit, given by an ascended Lord, who has led captivity captive for the nourishing of His own body. But the apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 that tongues were for a sign, not to those who believe, but to them that believe not. God had given to the assembly not only gifts for its own edification, but those whereby it might minister the grace of God to the world. First and foremost, tongues, by means of which every man might hear in his own dialect in which he was born the wonderful works of God. Nor were the bodies forgotten, but gifts of healing told that the gospel of God was not words only, blessed as they were, but active love to men; and we find consequently that while handkerchiefs from Paul's body healed the sick Ephesians (Acts 19:12), as a witness, accompanying the word which all Asia heard, yet Paul left Trophimus, himself an Ephesian, sick at Miletum (2 Timothy 4:20), and that when he was begging Timothy to come to him; not that some in the Church were not healed, as Dorcas, but the aspect of such gifts was to the world.

Two things might be affirmed as reasons why they have ceased: (1) the unfaithfulness of the Church, which was already using her ornaments of grace, as in the case at Corinth, for self-exaltation and show, and not to exhibit to the world the worthiness of her Lord; (2) and the fact that Christianity is now "believed on in the world" (1 Timothy 3:16), and needs not miraculous power to establish it; that has been done. But, on the contrary, we are told that in the latter days some shall depart from the faith, and give heed to seducing spirits, etc. (1 Timothy 4:1); that is what has happened. At Corinth they "came behind in no gift." We have no longer sign-gifts; but it is important to see that what we have is set by God in the assembly, and ordered and energized by Him. In 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 we have distinctly the ordering of the assembly, which the disorder of the Corinthians had upset. The great thing was, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church." "Let all things be done to edifying." So much was this to be sought that the prophets were to speak two or three, and the others judge. We can easily see that at any meeting more than two or three speaking would not be to edification. Profit would be lost if too much were given to digest. ALL might speak if they could do so for edification. If there was a revelation all must give place to that. We cannot have that now, as revelation is complete; but the order of God's house we can maintain as against disorder. Moreover, it is true that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." That abides, though the unity of the building has been destroyed, and of no section can it be said that it is "the assembly of God;" yet is there no other ground for those who bow to the Lordship of Christ to take than to gather to the name of Jesus Christ, to maintain that He is Lord of all ministries and services, to own the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, who abides, as sent by Christ, and not on account of our faithfulness, and that all gifts are His, and that the power of using them is alone of God, as also the power of worship. It is useless to assume anything; it is blessed ever to count on the faithfulness of God, for "He abideth faithful;" and thus, What we have hold fast till He comes.

T. H. R.

S. The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons.

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons. The next part of the high priest's dress is connected with the offerings and worship of the people of Israel. We have to remember that the special privileges of Christianity are not seen here; that is, there was no entrance into the holiest for Israel as there is for us now, nor had they the relationship and worship of children with the Father. Christians now see the One who bore their sins, in the glory of God, and have boldness to enter according to the value of the work which glorified God. The Son also places them in relationship with the Father. Still, looked at in ourselves, we are conscious of flesh and of that in us which is unsuited to the presence of God, and therefore can enter into the blessedness of being connected in our worship with One who, as He appears in the presence of God for us, is Himself "holiness to the Lord." The believer's place is now inside with Christ, but, with the sense of infirmity in himself, he has the consciousness of being in company with the great Priest over the house of God, on whose brow holiness appears, and is present to the eye of God. The embroidered linen coat speaks of pure and perfect humanity, and of the graces wrought into that humanity as alone they could be in the person of Christ. The great Priest must needs be a Man, but what wisdom and grace in the power of the Spirit were inherent in Him! It would seem from Leviticus 16:4 that the high priest entered into the holiest in this garment on the day of atonement. The garments made for glory and beauty which we have been considering in their typical import had to be laid aside. This has a voice for us, showing that the glories indicated in them as belonging to the office of the high priest could not be connected with a standing in sinful flesh, and such was the flesh of Aaron and his sons. Sinful flesh in them betrayed itself on the first day of their priestly ministration. (Leviticus 10:1.) Here we have the figure of the purity of the Lord as man - that holy thing born of the virgin, but in order to bring His companions with Himself into the presence of God He must put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This He has done to God's satisfaction, and now all the glories are worn by One who has entered into the holy place by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. On the day of atonement Aaron entered the holiest in the linen garments alone, the coat, the mitre, and the breeches; not with glorious garments, but with blood. He who now wears these glories is of another order, not of earth, but inherently pure as begotten of the Holy Ghost, and gone into heaven, eternal glory having been brought to God by His one offering.

Aaron's sons represent what Christians are as a priestly family, the companions of Christ. They had part with Aaron as a sanctified and consecrated company in "ministry to the Lord." We have seen that the glories of the sanctuary could not be connected with sinful flesh, nor must the nakedness of the flesh appear before God. The obligation of this injunction is seen in the words, "that they bear not iniquity, and die." Thus of old God's people were instructed that His sentence of death was upon the flesh, it could not be uncovered in His presence. We are instructed in other places in scripture as to the wonderful portion allotted to the priestly family, but here the privilege of being of the family sanctified and consecrated to minister to the Lord, is before us. The word consecrate here means to fill their hands. (See Exodus 29:9, margin.) Aaron and his sons were a company whose hands were filled with the excellencies of Christ, and who entered into the delight

of God in Him. The sweet savour of Christ to God filled their hands. In Exodus 29:1-46 the actual sanctification and consecration is given. The first important point is that Aaron and his sons were washed with water. We may regard the washing of Aaron in two ways. First, as a sinful man he needed purifying equally with his sons. Secondly, as a figure of Christ, his washing with his sons presents to us the truth, that the Moral cleansing of those who are Christ's companions is according to the actual truth of it in Him. The type thus sets before us that "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." It was blessed down-stooping in Him, according to the will of God, to come into the place of identification with the first movement of grace in those who needed cleansing. This is seen in that having become a man He went into Jordan with the repentant remnant of Israel. He needed no baptism in those waters, but He identified Himself with those in whom the Word was working through the preaching of John. He who was the Word connects Himself, as far as John's baptism went, with the action of the word in those who repented. Afterwards (see Luke 8:21) He owns those who hear the word of God and do it as connected with Himself. In order to get the full import of the cleansing which now is ours, we must pass on to the death of Christ, when the water of purification flowed from His dead side. His death not only expiates our guilt, but clears away from the eye of God the man who is impure in the moral springs of his being. What is of Christ then becomes the word of life to us, so that the new commandment is that which is true in Him and in us. Our moral cleansing is thus according to what Christ is as the heavenly Man. It is represented in principle here by Aaron and his sons being washed together, for we must remember that the washing was in view of a place in the sanctuary, where we now can enter as companions of Christ.

Aaron is then clothed by Moses, acting on God's behalf, with the priestly garments which set forth the glories of Christ. Thereupon he is anointed, the oil being poured upon his head. This marked him off from his sons in a special way, as in their case the anointing oil with blood from the altar is sprinkled upon them. Psalms 133:1-3 notes this pouring of the oil upon Aaron's head, whence it descended to his garments. When the Spirit of God descended as a dove upon Jesus no others were anointed; it was on His ascending on high that He received, as Head, the Spirit to give to us. He has this place of Head from whom all flows. It is His personally, and though His companions are anointed (see 5: 21), yet in all things He has the pre-eminence. This place of headship having been assumed, typically in the power of the Spirit, Aaron's sons are clothed and then girded, and here Aaron and his sons are together in the girded service of the priesthood. The sons are to worship with filled hands, and to serve in company with the anointed head. It is a blessed thought that the special place of nearness and worship belongs to men, to those who are of the order of Christ, the Anointed Head, to saints, and not to angels. This is set forth in the clothing of the sons of Aaron. Angels celebrate, but saints worship as a priestly company (Revelation 5:1-14), clothed with righteousness. (See Psalms 132:9; Revelation 4:4.)

Now that Aaron and his sons are together associated in the priestly office the offerings are brought, in virtue of which they were sanctified to approach to God. There needs not only moral cleansing, but the dealing with sin before Him according to the exigencies of His holy nature. Sin is abhorrent to Him. Hence the sin offering is first. Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the head of the bullock, and its blood is shed. This takes place at the door of the tabernacle. Some of the blood is put upon the horns of the altar, and the remainder poured out at its base. Note that the blood is not carried inside here, though the carcass of the victim is burned without the camp. Thus we have

the dealing with sin under the judgment of God and guilt met, but not yet the blood carried within to give a place there. It is so in Leviticus 16:1-34, and it is the failure of the priesthood, as here established in connection with the brazen altar, which gave occasion for bringing out the deeper thoughts of grace in its abounding over sin, according to which entrance is now made into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Sin and sins were thus judicially dealt with, as they have been in the cross in order that priestly relations with God might be established. It is on this ground that they go into the sanctuary, but not within the veil.

Two other sacrifices are offered - the burnt-offering, setting forth the acceptance of Aaron and his sons, and the ram of consecration. In the former, by devotedness to death the excellency of the sacrifice was manifested, and the sweet savour arose to God in the fire of the altar. It was wholly for God. In the latter, there was the character of a communion offering, for Aaron and his sons eat of the flesh, but its chief import lay in the putting of the blood first upon the right ear of Aaron, and then upon the right ear of his sons as associated with him in devoted obedience; it is also put upon the thumb of their right hand and upon the great toe of their right foot. This was done also for cleansing the leper with the blood of the trespass-offering. In his case the thoughts and actions and ways were purified according to the estimate of the blood as shed for sin and defilement. In the case of the priests it is the blood of a sweet savour offering which not only purifies but sanctifies. In the one case it is the thoughts, action, and walk of a leper who is to be cleansed, in the other of a washed, clothed, and sanctified priest. In the one it is dissociation from defilement, in the other it is association in mind and conduct with Christ according to His devotedness to God. The sanctification is complete in that the blood is taken from the altar (devotedness to death in the Lord Jesus Christ), and with the anointing oil sprinkled upon Aaron and his garments, and upon his sons and his sons' garments. It thus figures the full and complete setting apart in the power of the Spirit, by which Jesus offered Himself without spot to God. So far we have been looking at the consecration more in the aspect of hallowing or sanctifying (see Exodus 28:1), but consecration or filling the hand is consequent upon Aaron and his sons having been sanctified by the blood and the oil; that is, by the blood of Jesus, who in the power of the Eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God; and by the Spirit in whose power He did so offer Himself in death. Their hands can now be filled with the excellency and value of the offering - the fat and the right shoulder - and also with that which figured the perfections of Christ as man, pure, sinless, holy, anointed by the Spirit. We notice here that his sons are associated fully with Aaron in this worship. As priests we worship in the company of Christ. All that filled their hands is then put upon the altar for a sweet savour to the Lord. We enter into the delight which God has in the perfections of Christ, and He accepts our worship according to Christ's acceptance, for the consecrations were burned upon the burnt-offering. (Leviticus 8:28.) In Leviticus 8:26 the breast is not heaved or offered as with the shoulder. (Leviticus 8:27) It is called the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and was specially Moses' part as the mediator. It would indicate the special communion and enjoyment which Christ has in the love which sanctifies and consecrates a company of which He is the Head and Leader, and who are associated with Him in offering and worship. "He that sanctifieth" has this peculiar joy of love. The heave shoulder is sanctified for Aaron and his sons. It would speak to us of Christ as the power of God. Power that has come in by the cross and death of Jesus. The priestly company are in communion with this power of God by which all will be sustained in blessing for ever.

It only remains to notice the communion and enjoyment for themselves in the precious things that have been offered. The first and great thing was to have the hands filled for the Lord, for a priest must have somewhat to offer, and then they eat the flesh of the ram and the bread from the basket by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. They abide there Seven days (see Leviticus 8:35), a full period of consecration. They thus abide in the full sense of their own consecration before priesthood can begin for Israel as in Leviticus 9:1-24. It is well to note that though the great principles of consecration are set forth, yet the worship and nearness of the Church are not found in this passage. The principles abide, but priesthood was evidently established then in connection with the earthly standing of the people of Israel; hence it is transitional in its character, the great day of atonement bringing in other elements. Now there is entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and the true worshippers have access by one Spirit to the Father, worshipping Him in spirit and truth.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Construction of the Tabernacle.

The Construction of the Tabernacle.

Exodus 31:1-18.

Hitherto we have considered the Lord's communications to Moses upon the mount, where he was also shown the patterns according to which the tabernacle was to be constructed. Every detail was communicated, so that nothing was left for the children of Israel to plan or to arrange for themselves. If God manifests Himself, and dwells in the midst of His people, nothing could truthfully tell out this manifestation if it were not according to His own thoughts. He, too, must ordain the way of approach. The contrary is around us today. The idea is this, that if you are right about the foundation truth of salvation, it does not much matter how you build upon it. No Christians would like to have any other than God's foundation as the resting-place of their souls for salvation; but this foundation needs to be connected in the soul with the glory of God, in order that what is built up may accord with that glory. Otherwise all may be right as to security, but not right in the formation of the soul in Christ, and consequently in the truth of His assembly as the structure in which His purposes in Christ are carried out.

It is easy to see that if the people, in constructing the sanctuary, had departed from the patterns given to Moses, the building would not have answered to God's thoughts as to the display of Himself in Christ and His people; nor would there have been the witness of the blessing and relationship in which the people were set with the God who dwelt among them. We have from God in the word His thoughts as to everything, not only as to the foundation truths of salvation, but His purposes are made known to us as He has established them in Christ for His own glory by us, and the Spirit has been given that we might be in the intelligence of them, while with Israel the tabernacle was to them a witness. So far then we have had the patterns communicated; we now come to God's provision for the making of the tabernacle. The actual construction was as important as the communication of the patterns, hence the Lord provides the suited servant for carrying out His directions, "I have called by name Bezaleel," not merely a man with natural capability and skill - it is possible that he had these - but for this purpose he was filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge. There is said to be this difference between a photograph and a portrait drawn by an artist. The photograph will produce the exact lineaments, so that it may be severely like, but an artist can put a life look into the picture by his own genius and spirit; hence we say "It is a speaking likeness." In order that the tabernacle and its vessels should be a living, "speaking" representation of the things in the heavens, and that the mind of God should be reflected in them, a man filled with the Spirit of God was needed to construct and fashion them with divine wisdom and knowledge. It was not mere accuracy of construction, according to human skill, that was needed, but the true reflection of the wisdom of God. In Colossians 1:28 the apostle speaks of the way in which he laboured, "teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." No doubt in full result that is future; but the labour and conflict of the apostle were to this end, that the saints might be in the

present understanding and knowledge of the purposes of God as to them. The assembly is a structure in which, during the present period, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10); and Paul prays (Ephesians 1:17) that the saints might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God Himself, in order to their knowing the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The Spirit of God alone understands the things of God; hence even in that day of shadows Bezaleel needed the Spirit, in order that he might work out these figurative manifestations of God's thoughts in Christ and His people.

We thus learn that a ministry by the Spirit can alone produce the living expression of Christ in the saints. Paul laboured to this end; it was by his ministry that the Spirit wrote Christ upon the hearts of the Corinthians. By the Spirit also they had been baptized into one body, and been made to drink into one Spirit. Thus there was living power to form the assembly, and also in it, that it might respond to the divine purpose in its formation. We are not speaking here of the failure in the saints to reach, or answer to, the divine intention. In the epistle to the Galatians we see that they were giving up the power of the Spirit to return to the law (Galatians 3:3), and the Corinthians were using the gifts of the Spirit for self-exaltation; thus early was a slight put upon the presence and ministry of the Spirit; but the apostle seeks to recover the Corinthians to the divine intention by presenting the glory of the Lord to them, so that in beholding it they might be fashioned according to it, as by the Lord the Spirit.

Men having been called and endowed of God for this service of making the tabernacle, the Lord speaks to Moses again of the Sabbath. It was the sign between Him and the children of Israel, among whom He was about to dwell. The Lord frequently refers to it in the Old Testament, especially when He made any fresh covenant, or instituted any new arrangement in His relationship with Israel. Here He goes back to the first institution of the Sabbath; it was the rest of God, expressing the satisfaction which He had in His own work. We must not think that God did not find delight in His own creation, because sin has entered and spoiled His rest in it. He saw everything that He had made, and it was very good; and as to man, he is fearfully and wonderfully made, the marvellous handy-work of God, the being for whom God prepared His Sabbath. This rest of God was proposed to Israel under law. They had enjoyed it for a short moment in grace, when the manna was given; and now that He is about to pitch His tabernacle in their midst He gives to them afresh His own rest, as the sign between Him and them for ever. The millennium, though not a perfect condition of things, is a kind of ante-chamber to the eternal state, the full and final rest of God; and in it there will be the keeping of a Sabbath for the earth, the true feast of tabernacles, when Israel will have been delivered fully from captivity and bondage, the earth freed from the usurper, a habitation found for the Lord by the true David, in which He will rest in the midst of His people, and the knowledge of His glory fill the earth. The assembly is the habitation of the glory which will then overshadow the earth, and through it the knowledge of God will cover the earth (John 17:23), while the Lord's presence will be known in a temple yet to be established in His holy hill. In the New Testament the Lord sets aside the Sabbath, this sign of the covenant with Israel; for, on the one hand, He was rejected (Matthew 12:1-8), and on the other He was quickening souls in view of a new creation of which they were subjects. (John 5:1-47.) The first day of the week is that which belongs to the Assembly, the resurrection day on which the Lord took His place in the midst of His own.

Finally, the testimony written with the finger of God is given to Moses for the people; but, as the history shows, it had already been broken by their making a golden calf. Still the testimony remained, though the tables on which it was written were broken at the foot of the mount. Its place was in the Ark in the mind of God, and there it was afterwards deposited, a figure of Him who magnified the law and made it honourable. It is blessed to know that God's holy claims upon man were fully maintained in Jesus. The case seemed hopeless to Moses and he broke the tables, but such an act did not reach up to the thoughts of God. The Ark was His predetermined provision for their integrity and maintenance. In Christ, the Yea and Amen, all God's glory is secured; and, blessed be His name, the sin in man which the law discovered has been put away for the believer by His death, that the full purposes of God, for His own glory in man, may be accomplished. "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21.) T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Continual Burnt Offering.

The Continual Burnt Offering.

Exodus 29:30-36. This verse (Exodus 29:36) shows us more fully that in the first institution of the priesthood an earthly people were primarily in view. We have noticed that in Exodus 29:12-14 the blood was put on the horns of the brazen altar, and yet the carcass of the victim was burned without the camp. As yet the blood was not carried within the veil. The brazen altar was the place where Jehovah met the children of Israel (see Exodus 29:43), where they approached to Him in their worship. They drew near to Him on the ground of atonement having been made, and through the intervention of the priests. The priestly family themselves had a place within the sanctuary as separated to minister to the Lord, but besides this the exercise of their priesthood was in view of the earthly people. This is apparent from what follows. (Exodus 39:38-43) The two lambs, which were to be offered day by day continually with their meat-offering and drink-offering, represented the daily and continual worship of the children of Israel ascending from the brazen altar to the Lord as a sweet savour, though necessarily offered by the priesthood. There was no direct approach for the people. Let us, as Christians, bear in mind that our privilege is entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, not to worship outside through a priesthood, but as part of the priestly family, in the company of the great High Priest who is inside.

There were two things required on the altar before the worship could begin. It must be cleansed by making atonement for it,* and be anointed in order to sanctify it. Atonement was necessary because Israel was a sinful people. It was made by blood being sprinkled upon the altar - this was in view of the people; the anointing set it apart to the Lord. The worship of the people could thus begin upon these two grounds, and from thence it could be maintained in identification with the altar. Their worship could not be apart from the altar. By atonement and anointing it was constituted most holy - "holy of holies," though it stood in the court of the tabernacle. There is nothing like the cross, the place where the Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up, whether for earth or for heaven - nothing so holy, for though the scene enacted on Calvary was not in heaven, yet it was in the presence of God and morally outside of earth. Jesus lifted up between earth and heaven. Innocence is not holiness. Had Adam continued in innocence, he could not have known God, or worshipped Him according to the holiness of His own nature. This alone could be declared in the cross, but then the holiness of the cross affects everything which is connected with it. "Whatsoever touched the altar shall be holy." Our Lord refers to this in Matthew 23:19. Everything offered to God must be according to the holiness witnessed in the cross; that is, it must be on the ground of evil having been judged there, and of the redemption and sanctification consequent on blood-shedding. In Numbers 7:10-88 we get the gifts which the princes of the people offered for the dedication of the altar in the day that it was anointed. They represent the whole-hearted worship of a willing people.

*This is the better rendering of Exodus 29:36.

Besides the two lambs offered daily, which with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings the Lord calls (Numbers 28:2) "My offering, and my bread . . . for a sweet savour unto me," there is another element introduced in connection with the altar, "I will meet you" (plural) - that is, the children of Israel - "to speak there unto thee" - Moses. Communications were made to the mediator for a people who drew near at the door of the tabernacle, and they were made at the altar. There were also communications made from within. (See Exodus 25:22) The contrast is brought out in Numbers 7:1-89, where, after the princes of the people had offered, Moses went within and heard the voice of One speaking to him from off the mercy-seat. We may notice here that though in the last verses of Exodus 29:1-46 the subject in hand is apparently concluded, and so far as the worship of Israel and their place in connection with the tabernacle is concerned it is, yet that Exodus 30:1-10 are connected with that which precedes. In Exodus 30:11 a fresh subject is introduced by the words "And the Lord spake unto Moses." No such break occurs between the worship of the brazen altar and the introduction of the golden altar and the worship connected therewith. It is the one subject of worship, though at two places. We have already noticed that Moses as the apostle of Israel received communications from two places - the altar and the mercy-seat. Blessing too is connected with two places. In Leviticus 9:22 Aaron blessed the people ere he came down from offering the various sacrifices. It was blessing from the altar at the door of the tabernacle. Then Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle, and on coming out blessed the people as from within. There is also the worship at the door of the tabernacle, and the worship at the golden altar before the veil. The one is connected with the work of Christ, the other with His perfections, though based upon the work, for the fire which consumed the incense must be taken from the altar where the burnt-sacrifice was offered. But to return to Exodus 29:1-46. We may notice in connection with the Lord speaking to Moses at the brazen altar that we have the antitype in the communications made to His disciples by the Lord Jesus after He rose from the dead. He gave directions which were based upon the work of the cross. Luke 24:47 gives us such, also Matthew 28:19-20; and again, in Acts 1:2-3, He gave commandments to the apostles He had chosen, and spoke with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Communications as to the assembly and the truths connected therewith were given after His ascension. Matthew 16:18 is not an exception to this. It really reveals the nature and out-of-the-world character of the assembly, but the communications for it in that character are by the Holy Ghost from Christ within. Christians may also be looked at as in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and as taking the place for the moment of Israel as a people upon earth, and in this sense direction and guidance is still given as to the government of a people who share in the sufferings of Christ, witnesses that He has suffered here, and partakers in the glory to be revealed when He comes out as King and Priest. In Luke 24:50 too the Lord blesses His people as upon earth before He was carried up into heaven; but in Ephesians 1:3 they are blessed in the heavenly places, and this is made known to them by the Spirit sent down from Him now that He is there.

It is very blessed to think of the ground which the Lord here lays for the apostolic direction of His people, and consequently for their full and final blessing, and also for His dwelling amongst a redeemed people - the lamb offered upon the altar morning and evening. During the night, when none were conscious of it, the fire was ever burning on the altar (Leviticus 6:9), the sweet savour of the sacrifice was ever before the Lord. Thus during the dark night of Israel's unbelief the work of the Lord Jesus is before God on their behalf, and the very way, as well as the ground, of their blessing is secured. In Exodus 29:44 also we see how the tabernacle and the altar are connected.

Jehovah's glory on the one and Jehovah's sacrifice on the other. Thus He secures the purpose for which He brought a people forth out of the land of Egypt, that He might dwell among them and be their God, and this will yet be accomplished. Though we have partly anticipated the character of the golden altar, yet hitherto we have chiefly been occupied (in the closing verses of Exodus 29:1-46) with the worship and direction and blessing of an earthly people, and we have seen that it is connected with the work of the cross. This is the foundation of all worship, but there is yet more typified here by the burning of incense on the golden altar. We may say that the sweet savour of the incense was to delight the heart of God. It was no question of meeting His claims on men, or of their being accepted, for no burnt sacrifice, or even meat offering, might be offered on it. It is not the work of Christ, but the perfections of Him who did the work with which the worshipper is engaged, as he realises the delight of God in them. There being now no veil, not only the incense goes within, but the worshipper himself is within also, where Christ is supreme, and what He is to the Father is known and uttered forth in worship. We may well ask ourselves how far our worship goes, whether we are contented with recounting the benefits which flow to us from the sacrifice of Christ, or whether we know the place within where all the perfections of Christ fill the holy place.

Furthermore, we must remember, that though the tabernacle was placed amongst the people of Israel, yet that we Christians are a spiritual house as well as a holy priesthood. Such a thought carries us farther than the door of the tabernacle. We do know, and thank and praise as knowing, the work of Christ as the foundation of all our blessing; but in Him we are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit, and thus by the Spirit can set forth His perfections and glory to the delight of the heart of our God and Father in our worship. It is instructive and beautiful to see that the day of atonement, when the blood was carried within, is anticipated in Exodus 30:10, and the reconciliation effected by that blood constituted the golden altar most holy to the Lord. It again shows us the intense holiness that is connected with the dealing with sin, though its effect here is to render to God the worship not only of thankful, but of adoring hearts. The worship of the first day of the week begins with the death of Christ as having brought us within, that we may there join with Him in His praises, and receive the communications which He makes to us from within, for we must note here that the position of the golden altar (Exodus 30:6) brings out the mention of the testimony in the ark, and the meeting-place where God spoke with Moses.

One other thing must be noticed, that the burning of incense was Aaron's work, and it is only as we are in the company of the great High Priest that we can enter into the sweet perfume of the incense which He offers. We worship in His company. It is important also for us to remember that the incense is for God. No one could make anything like it to smell thereto, yet as brought into the holy place we enter into what Christ is to God. The maintaining too of the light, and the giving it forth, are intimately connected with what Christ is for God. The testimony of the Spirit is given forth because of the presence of Christ Within. Hence it is said, "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit knows the deep perfections of the blessed Man who is before God, and, we may say, delights to speak of them. It is by the Spirit we are enabled to worship within, where the incense is, for it is by the Spirit that Christ's perfections are made known to us. Here everything is looked at in its perfection in Him. Aaron lights the lamps and burns the incense, but what is true in Him is also true in us. Testimony and communion go together - the word of God and prayer. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Epistle to the Colossians.

The Epistle to the Colossians.

T. H. Reynolds.

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Introduction. The epistle to the Colossians, as many are aware, occupies a position in the development of Christian doctrine between those to the Romans and Ephesians. In the former the great question of the responsibility of man to God is dealt with, whether he is regarded as a sinner without law, or as a sinner with added transgressions under law. The righteousness of God in justifying and saving those who believe in Jesus - whether Jew or Gentile - is declared, together with the bearing of Christ's death and resurrection on such, in setting them free, according to the reckoning of faith, from their sinful state in a liberty and relationship of which the Spirit of God is the power. Though the hope of glory is spoken of and rejoiced in, and the purpose of God to have the saints in that glory - conformed to the image of His Son - is touched upon, yet the doctrine of the epistle refers to man (whether guilty and lost, or believing) looked at in his individual path upon the earth. The epistle to the Ephesians opens out the counsels of God in connection with Christ in the heavenlies, where He is seated at the right hand of God. The mystery of God's will to head up every thing in heaven and earth in the Christ - the man of His own purpose and counsel is made known to the saints. They have been sealed with the Holy Ghost to have their inheritance in these counsels, of which He is the Earnest, and they have, besides being sons before the Father, a peculiar relationship to Christ as His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. Hence we do not find, as in Romans, the bearing of the death and resurrection of Christ upon the condition of the responsible man upon the earth, but the power which wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and seating Him in the heavenly places, is shown to be towards believers, as well as in them, both for the accomplishment of these counsels and for their present enjoyment of them. Christ being in the heavenly places, believers are seen as made to sit there in Him.

We may consider then a believer either looked at as upon earth justified from guilt, and in liberty from his sinful state and self before God through the death and resurrection of Christ, and set upon his path through the wilderness, but with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption, and the power for walking there with God, while looking to be conformed to the image of His Son; or we may look at him as blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, a member of the body which is united to Him - quickened, raised, and seated in the heavenly places in Him. But the epistle to the Colossians takes a middle place in bringing out the practical bearing of the truth in Romans, as to the death and resurrection of Christ on the state of the Christians, so that, while still in this world, they may enter into the effect of being associated with the Christ who has died and gone out of the world, and thus find their interest in things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, though they are actually on earth. It also brings to bear upon the Christian the truth in Ephesians, that believers are quickened together with Christ, not, as in that epistle, to bring into the place of the saints as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but to show how fully the believer

while still on earth is clear of all that in which he once lived, because Christ is his life - a life hidden indeed with Christ in God, but when Christ his life is manifested, he will be manifested with Him in glory. The bearing of this upon Christians is, that as members of the body they derive everything from the Head, so that, having received Christ, they may walk in Him according to a new order, knit together in love, and thus practically set forth Christ before appearing in glory with Him. All this we may hope more fully to enter into as the Lord may enable as we consider the epistle, together with other truths therein bearing upon the Christian state. But before proceeding with the details of the epistle, it may be well for us as Christians to pause and enquire what is the character of our own lives. There are many now, thank God, who are clear as to forgiveness and deliverance by the cross and death and resurrection of Christ. They have learnt it from Romans. They are equally clear, and would insist strongly upon the blessings which are theirs in Christ - theirs now through sovereign grace, and to be fully entered upon in glory. If it be so with us, what then is the character of our lives? Is it merely a pious, godly life amidst the circumstances of our every-day path, or has the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ so brought us to His side of death, that we realise that we have died with Him to the elements of the world, and as risen with Him are in association with things above, and seek the things that are there - our life being there because quickened together with Him?

Colossians 1:1-29. The first point we may notice is the character given to the Colossian believers by the apostle in his salutation to them - "Holy and faithful brethren in Christ." (New translation.) This at once shows that the object of the epistle is not to set those he addresses upon Christian ground - they are looked at as truly on it. He then gives a reason for his thanks and prayer to God for them - "Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints." This may seem a small thing to say. One might ask, Is this peculiar to the Colossians? Does not every saint believe in Christ, and love those that are His? We may reply by asking another question, Does it characterise every Christian? Does it characterise us? It involves this, not merely that we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, but that He is the blessed abiding object of our faith, and that the saints are the circle amongst whom love now finds its exercise.

"with Him is all our business now, And those that are His own." The Colossians were thus characterised, and we are thus led to the consideration of an important feature in the manner of the communication of truth to the saints, for the moral state of soul is of great moment. Here we see that they had received the gospel, not merely as securing their eternal interests, but it had been fruitful in producing that state of soul in which Christ and His interests had their place in faith and love. The mind of the Spirit in the apostle could take up this state of soul, and connect it with heaven, giving thanks on their behalf for the hope laid up for them there; for he saw that if they had not this before them, there would be a tendency to turn round to the things upon earth, and to be affected by them religiously, for the flesh would take up worldly principles and try to use them religiously. Therefore, while acknowledging the faith and love which the gospel had already produced, he brings before them the hope which was laid up for them in the heavens. It is not merely that we shall be there, nor is it that we have put all our interests into the hand of Christ, and that all our happiness and joy He will take care of in heaven, but Christ Himself in glory is our hope, and God has treasured up our all in Him in the heavens, and we are to enjoy it now as hope. In Colossians 1:6 we have a contrast to Israel which will further help us in apprehending the

special line of teaching in this epistle. Of old God had been seeking fruit in the vineyard wherein He had planted the vine which He brought out of Egypt. Had it been possible for man in the flesh to bring forth fruit for God, it would have been found in Israel - a vineyard guarded and tended by God. But Isaiah 5:4, Matthew 21:34-39, Luke 13:6, all teach us that it was impossible. Now, the gospel is preached in all the world. It goes out, therefore, to Gentiles, and was bringing forth fruit in them, and growing; but fruit could not now be connected with earthly hopes, as in Israel, but with heavenly; and the fruit thus borne would manifest this heavenly character, though borne down here, for fruit-bearing is upon earth. Its character would be the display of the new and heavenly Man in the saints. Now that Christ has been lifted up out of the earth and is in glory, the gospel goes out into all the world to produce this new and heavenly fruit for God from those who belong to heaven because their hope is laid up for them there. In John 15:1-27 we see this new order of fruit-bearing upon earth displacing Israel. Christ and His own are in the closest association; and fruit was henceforth to be brought to the Father by abiding in Him. And in Exodus 29:33; Exodus 29:35, the pomegranates were upon the skirts (that nearest the earth) of the robe of heavenly blue, between the golden bells. The testimony of divine righteousness comes out from the holy place, now that the High Priest has entered in, and the sound is heard there. Fruit is produced in connection with such a testimony in us; but it is seen as belonging to Christ Himself in His heavenly character. Fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ unto glory and praise of God. When He comes out Israel will blossom and bud, and fill the earth with fruit; but it will still be true, for them as for us, "From me is thy fruit found."

We shall further see that the moral state of the soul has much to do with the character of a heavenly Christ being produced in the saints, by noticing how the apostle reverts to what he had heard of these Colossians. (Colossians 1:9) He had heard of their faith and love through Epaphras, who had also declared to him their love in the Spirit. They did not know Paul after the flesh; and, therefore, towards him it was entirely affection produced by the Spirit of God. All this leads him to pray for them, and to ask that they might be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Now such a prayer shows us that believers are here for the will of God. God has laid up a hope for them in heaven - Christ is that hope, and to be with Him and like Him - but they are not yet gone to where their hope is; they are still here. What for? For God's will. That is what Christ was here for; and to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, would be to walk as He walked. But we have not now, as was once given to Israel, a book of statutes and precepts. No doubt the will of God is found in His word; but we cannot know it apart from a state of soul formed in wisdom and spiritual understanding. If we need "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1:17) to enter into all that is connected with the glorified Man in heaven, we need also spiritual understanding to enable us to see how Christ ever did the will of God, and pleased His Father, so that we may walk worthy of the Lord. It is not to do some great thing; but just what He would have us do. It may be to be quiet and patient, if that would be pleasing to the Lord in us. "In every good work bearing fruit." A good work may be the daily occupation, only let us bear fruit in it; and yet for this it needs that state of soul which understands what the will of the Lord is, and walks in it worthy of Him. "Growing by the full knowledge of God." It is in Christ that God has been fully revealed and made known; and here we see how intimately the knowledge of His will is connected with the knowledge of Himself. Surely God's will is, that Christ should be set forth in the walk of His people; and growth is promoted as we learn how He ever did those things which pleased His Father, even as He said, "I know Him; for I am from Him,

and He sent me." (John 7:29.) Colossians 1:10-19.

We have seen that growth is by the full knowledge of God, and that in Christ we have the full revelation of Him. No doubt this full knowledge is acquired by the Word - not learned therefrom in a dogmatic way so that it is mere knowledge, but the truth is recognized, acknowledged in the soul, and thus God is known; the truth becomes morally part of ourselves, and we grow thereby (compare 2 Peter 1:2-8), and are fruitful in the pathway here. For this pathway we need special strength, because it is a pathway upon earth which takes its character from the place where Christ is, where the hope is laid up for us. It consequently lies in the midst of His interests here, which are morally outside of this world, though the objects of them are in it; for in Colossians the saints are not looked at as united to Christ, and made to sit in the heavenly places in Him, but as Christ's body upon earth. Hence we need strength suited to the place in which we are viewed. In Ephesians 3:16 it is in the inner man that the saint is strengthened by the Spirit, so that he may apprehend the whole range of that glory of which Christ is the centre and the fulness; but here all power comes from the Lord, who is in the place of power and glory at the right hand of God, while we are in the place of waiting and patience until we appear with Him in glory.

Let us remark also that the being empowered with all power is not to do some great thing, but for patience and longsuffering with joyfulness while in the pathway of His will here; and also that it is according to the might of that glory where we know the Lord is already set, that we have the support, in order to enable us to skew out the character of Christ where He is not. Now the shewing out of this character flows from the place of acceptance and privilege in which the Father's love has set us, "giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." No doubt we thank Him for the many mercies which come to us day by day: even the hairs of our head are numbered, but this is for another portion - that of the saints in light. The Father's love has fitted us for it. It is not so much the portion itself as the Spirit brings it out in Ephesians 1:3-6, which is before us, though being in the light it is necessarily according to God's holy nature, but that we have been fitted for it. It is this that the apostle presses, as also the deliverance which is ours from the authority of darkness. When the inheritance is actually entered upon by the saints, all the powers of darkness will have been chased away by the glorious kingdom of Christ, and creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Redemption has taken us out from the sphere of the power of darkness. The Father's love has been manifested in this deliverance, and in translating us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Note here, again, that the apostle does not open out to the Colossians what their portion was as sons in the Father's love, but he presses upon them that they had been delivered and had been translated. No doubt it was the then heathen world which is specially looked at here as the place where the darkness of Satan's kingdom held sway; and from this power of heathen darkness they had been delivered and transported at once, not into a system of Jewish ordinances which was of this world, but into the kingdom of the Son while He is sitting upon the Father's throne. When He takes His own kingdom as Son of Man He will clear it of all that offends and does iniquity, and the righteous will then shine forth in the heavenly part of the kingdom - the kingdom of the Father. Now the Son is sitting on the Father's throne, and we know that the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hands. Hence this heavenly part of the kingdom into which the saints are translated is stamped with the character of the Father's love to the Son. It is a holy scene of love

rather than of power, though every thing is given to the Son (compare Genesis 24:36), and the Father's grace has given us our portion in it. The authority of darkness which holds men is not now that of heathendom; Satan's sway is exercised in other ways, and deliverance is needed from a Christianised world; for the kingdom of God's dear Son is as much outside the Christianised world as the heathen world. In Him we have the redemption which brings into a new and holy scene of light and love, and the past history of sins is left behind by the forgiveness of all. In that scene Christ is everything. The apostle therefore now brings out the glory of His person. He is the image of the invisible God.

There had been a creation where the first Adam, created in the image of God, was set over the works of God's hands. Satan gained the mastery over the first man, and the image was defaced by sin, and the creature subjected to vanity and corruption. The Colossians had been under the authority of the darkness by which Satan held sway in a corrupted creation; but though the rights of the Creator had been invaded, and His image defaced in His creature, all is made good in Him who, by the very glory of His person, could be and is the image of the invisible God. The Creator Himself has stepped into the ranks of creation by being born into it as a man. Consequently He takes the highest place of dignity in it, for "excellency of dignity and excellency of power" are the portion of the firstborn. (Comp. Genesis 49:3; Psalms 89:27.) It was always in the mind of God to display Himself to intelligent creatures whom He had made; but in supreme Godhead glory He dwelt in light that no creature, however exalted, could approach. An image in moral likeness to Himself was the only means of this display, and in Genesis 1:26 we have the first intimation that man was the being in whom this image was to be seen. Adam was but the figure of Him who was to come. Here is the marvellous fact that the Creator has taken His place in the creation He made. In Him the holy intelligences in the heavens see their Creator. His wonderful works they had seen in creation, and they shouted for joy as it sprang into being; but Himself they can only see in a man, in Him who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. The creation too which He made is characterised and exists in the power of His own person as creator. There are things on earth and things in the heavens, visible and invisible. In the mind of God, both in earth and heaven, thrones and dominions and principalities and powers were to have their place. Their source was in the wondrous person of the Son who became man, nor was one to exist independently of Him. All were created by Him and for Him, and all subsist in the power of His person. He made it then that He might take His place in it, and this He has done by being born into it as a man, that He might display God in the varied glories that attach to His person. What a glorious Person, and what a glorious state of things on earth and in heaven, will subsist when He who is the image of the invisible God fills it with the glory of which He is the fulness and display.

Now when He is manifested in this place of excellency and dignity, we shall be manifested with Him in glory. This gives the saints a very special place with Himself, but in order to have them with Him in the displayed glory of the second man there must be a new beginning altogether. He is the Head of the body, the assembly, the firstborn out from the dead. The beginning for the assembly was resurrection; it derives entirely from Him the origin and source in resurrection power of a heavenly company who, as His body, are to be the complement of His glory. This is a new pre-eminence acquired by passing through death that He might bring in a new glory in resurrection. As of old, He had been the fountain of creation glories. It is in this pre-eminence of resurrection glory that He fully takes the place of the image of the invisible God. All that can be

ever known of God is revealed in His person, for all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him.

Colossians 1:19-27. This truth leads to the development of another aspect of the great scheme in which the glory of Christ as the image of the invisible God is to be displayed. Not only were the things on earth and things in heaven created by Him, but sin having entered by the fall, reconciliation must be effected before the created earth and heavens can be the scene of displayed glory according to the mind of God. In Israel God had foreshadowed His purpose for the glory of Christ, in a tabernacle which was the pattern of things in the heavens, and which was anointed to be the sphere of the administration of the anointed priest in his garments of glory and beauty. The priesthood broke down on the very first day of its exercise (Leviticus 10:1-20), so that Aaron was never allowed to enter into the Holiest in his high-priestly garments. It was after this break down that the day of atonement or reconciliation was introduced. (Leviticus 16:1-34.) Nothing ever did or could stand on the ground of creature responsibility. We have seen Adam, created in the image of God, lending his ear to Satan, and instead of representing God, gone from Him and fallen. Here we see the priests failing entirely as to the holiness that became the house of God.

It is no longer, then, the question of creating a world, or forming a sphere for the display of glory, but of reconciling where sin has entered and defiled. This reconciliation has two aspects. The creation must be cleared of the defilement of sin, so that God can have rest in His own creation, and man must be brought back to God, according to the righteousness as well as the holy love of His own blessed nature. None could effect this but that One in whom the Godhead fulness was pleased to dwell. Therein lay the value of that work of expiation of which the blood of His cross was the witness. In Him, who shed that blood as Man, Godhead fulness dwelt. Hence God has been glorified perfectly in respect of sin, and peace has been made. The blood which was carried into the holiest on the day of atonement was for the eye of God, it was to satisfy the righteousness and holiness of God. When that was accomplished, then it was applied to the tabernacle and its vessels. Thus reconciliation was effected in the holiest where the priest stood as representing a people to be reconciled, and the patterns of things in the heavens were reconciled on the ground that God had been perfectly glorified. It is on the basis of this reconciliation that God will be all in all in a new heaven and new earth which will be filled by Christ with redemption glory. The millennium, when Christ will appear in glory and we appear with Him, will be the time of bringing in this power of reconciliation for the things on earth and things in heaven. But Christians do not wait for that day, they have been reconciled. You "now hath He reconciled," says the apostle, "in the body of His flesh through death." We are brought to God; not merely cleared from all charge, but according to the delight of His own holy nature. By means of the death of Christ the flesh, where sin acted, has been left behind for faith. Christ having gone through death, now lives before God in a new and glorious state where flesh has no place. Reconciliation, then, brings those, once alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, to God according to that new state in which Christ now lives to Him.

Let us note here again that the apostle does not open out to the Colossians the spiritual blessings with which the saints are blessed in Christ as he does to the Ephesians; but insists on the present reconciliation, by death, of the person of the believer, in order to his being presented holy, unblameable, and irreproachable in His sight. But here an "if" is introduced, not to cast a doubt upon the reconciliation - there is no flaw there, for all has been effected according to Godhead

fulness. Presentation in glory is now in question, and none of us have yet come to that moment. Hence there is the possibility that with some it may have been profession only, anon with joy receiving the word and having no root. It was the tendency which the apostle saw in the Colossians to be beguiled by the philosophic or religious elements of the world, which led him to warn them to abide in faith, and not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel, that is, as we have seen, Christ Himself in glory. The sense of our own nothingness, but of the fulness that there is in Christ, can alone keep us cleaving to Him with the ardent desire that He may present us in glory according to the reconciliation to the Godhead fulness which is ours in Him.

It is well to remember that a special feature in this epistle is, that Gentiles only are addressed. There are other epistles of Paul to Gentiles as that to the Romans, but in it the Jew is taken up as well as the Gentile, and it is shown that whatever distinction there might be as to outward privilege, before God there was no difference. Both were guilty before Him, and both are reckoned righteous on the principle of faith. In Ephesians also the Jew is regarded as outwardly near, and the Gentile far off, but both dead in sins, and both reconciled to God in one body by the cross. In our epistle the Gentile only is contemplated, and the gospel is shown to be worldwide - preached in the whole creation which is under heaven. The effect had been to deliver Gentiles from the darkness of heathendom, and to connect them immediately with a glorified Christ. They were not intermediately connected with a system of ordinances to regulate the flesh, for the Father had made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and they had been at once transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. It was of such a gospel that Paul became minister, and there was a danger lest the Colossians should not abide grounded and settled in the faith of it. The flesh likes to be religious, and to try and take a half-way place between the grossness of natural darkness and the full reconciliation to God in the light, which has been accomplished for the believer in the body of Christ's flesh through death. The Jew was the man in whom the true worth of religious flesh had been manifested, and the apostle leaves him out of consideration, and thus the character of the gospel of which he was minister becomes more apparent.

Side by side with the ministry of the gospel which brought such a deliverance to an outcast Gentile, and made him an heir of glory with Christ, Paul had received another ministry - that of the assembly as the body of Christ. He develops the character of this ministry in a remarkable way. He was no longer preaching the gospel as he had been, but was a prisoner in bonds. In his active service in the gospel he had known much of the sufferings of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, he details the sufferings he passed through as a minister of Christ. There were other sufferings of Christ which were left for His servant to fill up in his flesh - afflictions "for His body's sake, which is the Church." It was specially on behalf of Gentiles the apostle was suffering, therefore he says, I "now rejoice in my sufferings for you."

Let us seek to trace these afflictions of Christ which Paul was filling up in his flesh. In the active service of love, in the midst of Israel, the blessed Lord found sorrows as He felt for the misery which sin had brought upon them. And as he preached Jehovah's righteousness, and declared His faithfulness and salvation in the great congregation, not concealing His mercy and truth, He found the added sorrows of determined opposition from the people to whom He came in love. For His love they were His adversaries. Now Paul, as we have seen, had shared in his measure in these sufferings, finding in his own countrymen the bitterest opposition to the gospel of grace. But our

Lord spoke to His disciples of other sufferings: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again." (Matthew 20:18-19.) Let it be noted that these are sufferings from the hand of man, and Paul was permitted to taste these afflictions also. He had gone to Jerusalem with alms and offerings for his nation; there the Jews laid hands upon him, and he also fell into the hands of the Gentiles, the Jews urging them to put him to death. In their hands he was then in bonds, and not in the active ministry of the gospel. But further, rejected by Israel, the Lord had called His own sheep, and led them out of the Jewish fold into His own company. He then spoke of other sheep whom He must bring, that there might be one flock and one Shepherd. (John 10:1-42.) Marvellous ways of wisdom and love shine out in the finding of these Gentile sheep. As of old, Joseph, sent by his father to see after the welfare of his brethren, was sold to the Gentiles after his brethren had counseled to put him to death, and thus carried with him among the Gentiles the secret of the wisdom and power of God; so Christ, of whom Joseph was but a figure, in being delivered up to the Gentiles and by them crucified, found the door opened to Him by the determinate counsel of God, as well as by the act of His being put to death, to go among the Gentiles, and by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to find those other sheep which had been given to him of the Father.

Thus the counsels of the Father were fulfilled, that His Son in being rejected by Israel, the beloved nation, and so for the time having to give up as Messiah the people of His earthly glory and love, should have from among the Gentiles those who should be not merely part of His flock, but who should have part in the peculiar relationship to Himself of His body - and His body is the assembly. We thus see that there were peculiar sufferings through which Christ went in order to possess the church. We do not speak here of atonement, when His holy soul was made an offering for sin - that is the alone foundation for sinners to be brought into any relationship with Himself - but of giving up everything which belonged to Him as a living Messiah, on account of the hatred and rejection of His own, and tasting death in all that it was to Him as a perfect Man, crucified by Gentile dogs, in order that He might possess the church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself.

Now Paul, in a peculiar way, understood this love of Christ to the church. He was himself an Israelite, ardently loving his own nation, desiring their salvation, and willing, had it been possible, to be accursed for them. He too was suffering for his love to his nation, being, by their malice, in bonds among the Gentiles. In all this he was entering into the sufferings of Christ for the assembly, and through these afflictions he learned in a special way what a place it held in the affections of Christ as His body. He desired that the Colossians, as Gentiles, might understand this ministry, given to him for them, to complete the word of God. It is the revelation of the assembly's relation to Christ which completes the circle of glories which the Word unfolds as belonging to Him. Many of those glories had been revealed in promise and prophesy, but this had remained hidden in God, a mystery now made manifest to His saints. It will be found also that the making manifest the mystery not only completes the word in the sense of revealing all that God has counseled for the glory of Christ, but that it fills out all previous revelation, supplying to it, as the keystone to an arch, a fulness which had been hidden before - even as the church is the fulness of Him in whom all previous revelation has its fulfilment. We have only to take such a passage as Psalms 8:5-6 and

see the fulness given to it in Ephesians 1:22 - to understand this. Other passages might be adduced, as Isaiah 49:8, compared with 2 Corinthians 6:2, from which we learn that in the declaration of Christ - being heard in an accepted time, and succoured in a day of salvation (that is in resurrection), and then kept of Jehovah to be a covenant to Israel to establish the land and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages - was hidden the truth of the church being in the same acceptance and salvation as Christ Himself. Who could have known that the salvation and acceptance of Gentiles was contained in that verse until the revelation of the mystery? But what a wondrous place it gives the assembly as united to Christ, and it is the truth concerning this mystery which the Spirit here shows to be so important for the saints to know. God willed to make it known. He would make known the wealth of its glory amongst hitherto outcast Gentiles - the glory of the heavenly and exalted Man in whose Person all the fulness dwells; a glory of which the assembly is to be the vessel of display to eternal ages. As a living Messiah He would have been the glory of His people Israel upon earth (Luke 2:32), had they received Him. He will yet be so in an open manifested glory which will fill the earth, when all nations will call Him blessed, or rather, blessings; but the mystery, in its Colossian aspect, is that a heavenly and glorious Christ was among these; Gentile believers, not blessing them as men on earth, but in them - their life - a life therefore which belonged to heaven, as it was hidden there in Him. Christ was in them the hope of the glory revealed in the mystery. Nothing practically can exceed the importance of this aspect of the mystery (though it does not rise to the height of the truth concerning it unfolded in Ephesians, where the body is seen united to the Head in heaven), because the saints are here viewed as upon earth, though risen with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-22), and there was a danger of their regarding themselves as alive in the world (Ephesians 2:20). Now Paul wanted the saints to have this hope of glory before them. The fulness of the Person of Christ constituted its wealth, and this glorious Person he preached, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom," for he desired that Christ in glory might be the object of each. The wisdom with which he laboured was the result of the revelation of the purpose of God as to Christ, and the church as His body; and the end that he might present every man perfect in Christ. The mystery then is not only that the assembly is His body united to Him in heaven, the fulness of Him that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23); but conversely that His body is the assembly. (Colossians 1:24.) The body of the heavenly Christ is the assembly upon earth. These are the two sides of the mystery. The assembly derives everything from the fulness of the Head; human wisdom or religion can add nothing to it, and the toil and conflict of the apostle as the energy of Christ wrought in him was that each saint might know and arrive at this perfection in Christ.

Colossians 2:1-23. The apostle desires the Colossian believers to know how great the conflict was which he had, specially for those who, like themselves, had not seen his face in the flesh. Among these last we may take our place as those who have never had direct apostolic care. While he combated the efforts of the enemy to bring in among the saints something that was not simply Christ, he desired that their hearts might be cheered, being closely drawn together in love. Selfishness has no place in the mystery. Every saint is but an item of the whole - the body of Christ in which the new man is displayed by means of every member. This union in love would enable them to enter into all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding, into the full knowledge of the mystery of God. Whilst a babe in Christ has the unction by which he knows all things, and thus there is provision for the need of the weakest saint in the absence of direct apostolic care, yet we see here how full assurance of understanding is connected with the practical carrying out in love of

the relationship to each other in which we are set as members of the body of Christ. As items in the assembly, we lose the sense of being individuals having to walk in the path marked out for each by the will of God, and find ourselves component parts of that body which is the object of Christ's love, and for which He gave Himself. We understand the headship of Christ, to the body, and the place which the assembly has in the vast plan of God for eternal glory, of which Christ its Head is the centre. In this vast plan, the mystery of God, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It must be so if Christ is the centre, for He is the wisdom of God. In showing them that the deepest thoughts of God were hidden in the mystery, the apostle guards them from being deluded by the persuasive speech of those who would supplement Christ by elements of the world-elements which the fleshly mind would readily accept.

Let us recall here the two subjects which the apostle brings forward to prevent the Colossians, who were not really full-grown or established Christians, from being drawn aside by false teachers. First, the person of Christ in all His pre-eminence - in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell. "Whom we preach," says Paul. Secondly, the special apostolic ministry committed to him for making known the mystery as that which completed the word of God. Here then is fulness which excludes all thought of any addition to it. The fulness in the person of Christ, and the fulness of the revelation by the word of God of all His thoughts and counsels in that person. What riches are possessed by the assembly in the intelligence of the mystery - "Christ in you." Paul's conflict was that they might have the full assurance of understanding as to it. He was absent in flesh, but with these Colossians in spirit, rejoicing and beholding their order. Let us pause here. The assembly is not a mere assemblage of believers. It is the body of Christ. It is the place where Christ is reproduced in the members of His body - "Christ in you"; and here it is that we need to be established so that there should be firmness of faith in Him. In John 14:1-31 the Lord speaks to His disciples of a day when He would be to them an object of faith, but when by the Spirit's power they would see Him. In that day they would know that He was in the Father, and, He adds, "Ye in me and I in you." When He was upon earth He added to the first clause (John 14:10), "And the Father in Me." Now He is the object of faith, and no longer manifesting the Father here. Christ, who has gone to the Father, gives us to know our place in Him before the Father, and He is in us. The assembly as the body of Christ is the place where this great truth should be seen in its order.

We have spoken of the assembly as the place where the new order should be manifested. It is in all the saints that the new man is displayed. Now the Colossians were not instructed in the mystery, and hence the apostle's conflict for them; but there was this new order among them, they had received the Christ, Jesus the Lord. That is a great thing, for all else flows from it, so their walk should be in the power of what He is. It is not a walk such as might have been seen in a godly Jew, nor mere uprightness of character. Here everything is Christ; they had been rooted in Him, the building up was in Him, with assurance in the faith as they had been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Nor let us slight this admonition; the soul filled with the sense of who Christ is must necessarily give thanks. The sense of what is in the Father's heart to us calls forth the exhortation to give thanks in Colossians 1:1-29, and here it is what we have in Christ.

Thus seeking to establish them in Christ, Paul warns them against being carried off that firm ground, and against being made a prey by false teachers, who brought in the elements of that sphere where the first man's wisdom and traditions flourish. So, in later days, John warns young and unestablished Christians against seducing teachers, by urging that what they had heard from

the beginning concerning Christ, through apostolic testimony, should abide in them. It is not enough for us to say "I have believed in Christ;" we must go on to know the Christ in whom we have believed. (2 Timothy 1:12.) Man and his world are not after Christ. There is another, a glorified Man now before God, and though only known spiritually, and not after the flesh, yet a real, veritable Man; in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. What a marvellous and yet blessed truth. In eternal counsels the Son undertook to do the will of God in a body prepared for Him. That will has been accomplished on earth, and now we look up into heaven and see the blessed man there in whom all the Godhead fulness dwells. What can there be outside of Him? All the fulness is in Him, and we are filled full in Him. In Ephesians, the assembly is the fulness of Christ; but this fulness is derived from Him, for the saints are filled full in Him. That is what is taught us in this epistle, and though it is only the whole body into which the fulness of the Head could be filled, yet each individual member of that body is also complete in Him.

We have seen that the Colossian believers are not addressed as seated in the heavenly places in Christ. They were not, so to speak, at home in their souls in the sphere of God's purposed glory in Christ, those heavenly regions where Christ is already seated at God's right hand. Therefore the apostle thanks God, in Colossians 1:1-29, that there is a hope laid up for them in heaven; the Father's love, too, had made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He has been pressing upon them that they belonged to that sphere, though actually in this world. He laboured to present every man perfect in Christ. Now, though angelic beings are there, Christ is the One who fills that world of glory - the blessed Man who has reconciled us by death, so that morally we are no longer of man's world, but belong to that scene where Christ is everything. The work done to bring us there was according to the Godhead fulness which dwells in Him, and now He is there, in whom that fulness dwells. We, as men, were made a little lower than the angels, and He, in grace, took this place, but we look up and see a Man, who is the head of all angelic rule and authority. We cannot derive anything from angels, exalted beings as they are, for we are complete in Him who is their Head. We are complete in Him before God - belonging to heaven - and those in whom, as being the fulness of the glorified man, His body, He will be eternally displayed. But more, it is in Him, and in Him only, that we have that which separates us from earth and attaches us to heaven, otherwise it would be a hopeless struggle to be heavenly. Circumcision as an ordinance was but an element of the world. In its reality in Christ it is morally, and for faith, the putting off the body of the flesh, in which man lives in the scene around us called the world. As a sign, it separated a people from all others to God, as the seal of faith, and appropriated them for His promised blessing. The reality of our separation from the world of flesh to the heavenly purpose of God has been effected in the cutting off of Christ upon the cross; that is where by circumcision, made without hands, the putting off the body of the flesh, is realized. Man, according to the flesh, is set aside in the death of Christ. If we turn to the figure (Genesis 17:1-27), circumcision came in with the promise of Isaac, and Abraham fell on his face and laughed in believing joy, and then the self-same day was circumcised and all his house. Here it is the person of Christ, no longer a promise, but known in glory, in us as life, the hope of glory, and we complete in Him, which the apostle brings before us, and then shows us the putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ, so that the hindrance to our enjoying Him as a heavenly Christ is removed. Gilgal experience (Joshua 4:2-9) is not Marah (bitter) experience. (Exodus 15:23.) At Marah, the tree (that is the cross) sweetened the bitter waters, which made the flesh murmur, by being put into them. At Gilgal, we realize having done with the flesh and the world where the flesh found its

gratification - the reproach of Egypt rolled away - so that we are free to eat the food of Canaan, for us a heavenly Christ. With Abraham holy laughter and circumcision were in the self-same day. May we so know Christ and our being complete in Him, that we may have the sense that the "putting off" only sets us free to enjoy Himself.

Colossians 2:12-23.

Having shown that the Colossians had the reality, which always goes farther than the figure, of the Jewish ordinance, he turns to the Christian ordinance of baptism to show that in it they were dead, buried, and gone out of the place of subjection to ordinances. He does not, as in Romans, enter into the bearing of what was professed in it - having part in Christ's death - but goes on from that point: "Having been buried with Him in baptism." He does this in order to show what the real place of Christians is, as having "faith in the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." The Colossians are addressed as holy and faithful brethren; the outcome of baptism for such was that they had been co-raised with Him. Christ had gone into death and been raised out of it, and thus a new state for man had been made known in Him, a risen man out of death. We are not actually in this resurrection state, but as having faith in the operation of God who raised Him, we are for faith co-raised with Him. Baptism then is introduced in Colossians not merely to show the bearing of the death of Christ upon our old state, but as the door through which, by faith in God's operation, we are in association with Him who is in a new and resurrection state. In Romans it is connected with "justification from sin." Justification frees me. Here it is connected with "complete in Him," and it is administratively the way out of the old through faith into the new state which in its nature belongs to heaven. Therefore the apostle adds, "And you, being dead in offences and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him." The resurrection state had been revealed in Christ during the forty days He was seen of the disciples - a state which belonged to heaven though He was still upon earth. The whole state and status of man in the flesh had been left behind in death. Faith entered into what was revealed in Him; for death in all its overwhelming power over man had been annulled, and life and incorruptibility had been brought to light in Him who was quickened out of death. None could follow Him until He had gone through death; now by faith we can, for the enemy is as still as a stone. We are quickened together with Him. Here the real condition of the Colossians before the gospel came to them is laid bare. In their souls they were utterly dead towards God in offences, and with no outward seemliness of religion in the flesh; but God had made theirs alive with Christ; they were quickened in their souls after His order, and this involves the quickening of the body so that they might bear the image of the heavenly. But quickened together with Christ is new creation, not merely a resurrection status brought to us while on earth. It is the sovereign act of God in view of His own counsels in connection with the second Man in glory, though the Colossians only had the glory in hope. In Ephesians the mighty power of God for the accomplishment of His counsels is seen in raising Christ out of death and seating Him at His own right hand, and His work is looked at in its entirety as quickening dead sinners together with Christ, raising them, and making them sit in the heavenlies in Him. Thus "raising here is after "quickening," and is in connection with being made to sit in the heavenly places. In Colossians "raised with Him" comes before quickening is spoken of. It is the status of one upon earth entered upon (as having been buried in baptism), through faith in God's operation in raising Christ. The believer has been brought to Christ's side of death, and the God of grace has quickened him together with Christ so that he may live in the order of Him who has been raised out of death.

Consequently his living associations are where Christ is. Christ is his life, the past state of death in sins is behind, all the offences being freely forgiven.

Then the system of ordinances to which the Jews had set their hand, and being in force against them, so far from helping them, is declared to be actually hostile to them - it was but the proof of their guilt. (Romans 3:1-31.) Their obligation to it had been cancelled. God had taken it out of the way by affixing it to the cross. Christendom, by baptismal and confirmation vows, is setting its hand afresh to that which God has taken out of the way by the cross, and in which the obligation was discharged. Besides the hostility of the legal system, there were the spiritual powers of evil, for there is the opposition of these authorities of the darkness of this world. Now all this power of evil had come against Christ, not only privately, as in the temptation in the wilderness, but publicly on the cross. There the question between God and Satan was settled, and in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them. The power of the enemy, which would prevent the saints from entering into the purposes of God, has been led in triumph in the cross. It has there been rolled back as Jordan of old, so that no hostile powers are seen, and the fullest deliverance is known in association with Christ. The ascension of Christ, and the full result in the saints being seated in the heavenlies in Him, is not developed, but what has been effected in His cross, so that we are in company with Him, and not in the presence of the power of the enemy. The way into the heavenly places then has been opened, and the power of the enemy laid low. Quickened together with Christ, and cut off from the world and its elements, they belonged to an entirely new order of things. No one had a right to question them as to observances, which were only a shadow of things to come. They are called "things to come" because this new order is not actually set up, but the substance of all that was shadowed is "of Christ." It does not say that the body or substance is Christ, but "of Christ." Christ is not merely the fulfilment of a shadow, for the substance of all that was shadowed had its origin as well as fulfilment in Him; and so it is written, "Jehovah possessed me not "in," but] the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting." He is the Alpha and Omega of the ways of God. In the new order of things, both in earth and heaven, everything morally is of Him, even as He made it, and it will be filled with His fulness. Now they were filled full in this blessed Person; they too derived everything from Him. He and all that is of Him was their prize. Would they be robbed of this by any one who of his own will took lower ground in apparent humility, worshipping angels, which was really an intrusion into unseen things, when Christ Himself was the image of the invisible God. Such an one was vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh, and was not holding the Head, from whom believers derived everything, as His body. It is this truth of the body deriving from the Head which enables us to understand the only organization in the assembly which is of God; and as we individually are holding the Head, we act upon it. The life of the Head is in each member of the body; and every member is necessary, for the whole body is ministered to and united together by the various joints and bands. It receives the supply of grace from the Head through all the members. Only thus does it increase with the increase of God. We thus see that the gathering together of the assembly is on the ground of the body, and that through all the members there is the communication of the grace which flows from the Head for the increase of the body. The apostle has shown the position into which believers are brought through having Christ as their life. This being so, His having been put to death in flesh, raised by the operation of God, and now living to God after a new order, must necessarily put them morally and before God outside of all that which He is outside of the whole system of things moral and religious in which man naturally lives. It must also connect them with another system which is

according to God, and which derives everything from Christ as Head. He is Head in virtue of the glory of His person, the One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, the second Man now in a resurrection and glorified state. Believers on earth are His body, which grows with divine increase, as ministered to and nourished from the Head. He now shows, in Colossians 2:20, the inconsistency on their part of subjecting themselves to ordinances that belonged to the old system which had come to an end in the cross and death of Christ. Having Him as life, they had died with Him from the rudiments of the world. If it be so, how could they be morally alive in it so as to be prescribed to by men as to corruptible things which perished in the using? It was allowing that the life in Christ risen could be connected with things that perish. Having Him as life, they had died with Him to the system of ordinances. To submit to them might have the repute of wisdom, but it was not subjection to Him from whom all fulness of life and blessing flowed. It was a self-imposed worship of beings, into whose ranks they had no right to intrude, together with apparent humility and austerity towards the body which should receive honour as belonging to God who made it. It filled the flesh with satisfaction.

Colossians 3:1-16.

We have had the glory of the person of Christ before us (Colossians 1:15-19); the reconciliation He has effected, in virtue of which all things in heaven and earth will be brought back to the fulness which is in Him, and by which we are now brought to God through His death. (Colossians 1:20-21.) His headship of the body (Colossians 1:18), and the saints complete in Him; the blessed Man in glory, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Colossians 2:10); also their deliverance by His death and resurrection from the present system of this world. Christ too was in them, the hope of glory. This carried them in hope to the moment when everything in earth and heaven will be filled with the power and presence of Christ. This waits for His manifestation, when the saints will be manifested in glory with Him, but He is already sitting at the right hand of God. Every glory for earth or heaven is of Him, and all now is gathered up where He is. It is from thence that Christ will come forth in power to make good every purpose of God. The first act of the power which will subdue all things to Himself, will be to change our bodies of humiliation and fashion them like His body of glory. Out of heaven He comes as Saviour to fashion in resurrection glory a people for the heavens. Moreover, in order to Jehovah's name being excellent in all the earth, His glory has been set above the heavens - there Christ is sitting. The groaning creation also waits for the manifestation of the sons of God in order to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. It is from thence the Redeemer will come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Stone set at nought by the builders has become the head of the corner. He will yet be acknowledged in the place of exaltation, and as coming forth from thence it will be said, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It will be as when Moses and Aaron came forth from the tabernacle and blessed the people. (Leviticus 9:23.) But we know Him now while He is inside. He is there as having glorified God and the Father upon earth. All things are now put into His hands, and He will yet accomplish all the counsels of God from that place of power and glory. Do we then wonder at being exhorted to seek the things above where Christ is sitting? This exhortation is founded on the teaching of Colossians 2:12. For those who are risen with Christ, the "things upon earth" are the "things behind." (Php 3:13.) Dead with Him, our proper life is in that sphere where Christ lives to God. He is our life, and necessarily our life must be where He is - a hidden life of which the world knows nothing. The apostle further says, "Have your mind on things above." We are not merely to

seek them, but as associated with Christ, and He being our life, they can be the home of our mind and affections. Would to God we all knew more of this while not actually in them. How it would magnify the precious Saviour who has opened the way through death for us to make His things the objects of our desire, and the home of our thoughts and mind. It is only in this way that we become acquainted with them. If we look at the things upon earth, though created good, they are now morally characterized by what is of the first man. The things above are characterised by Him who not only created them, but has taken His place in them as Man, all the fulness dwelling in Him bodily. Once He came into the midst of the things upon earth, and there was not a consequence of sin which He did not meet even to death itself. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matthew 11:5.) It might have been as the days of heaven upon earth had they not been offended in Him. Rejected from the earth, He has died, and is now sitting at God's right hand, and there, in the place of glory and power, every blessing and honour and glory which centres in Him, whether for heaven or earth, is now gathered up awaiting the day of His manifestation.

"Ye are dead," says the apostle, for so the Spirit of God regards the believer according to the teaching of Colossians 2:1-23, "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The contrast here is between the hidden place of our life now, and the manifestation in glory when - all that is of Christ, our life, will shine forth in us, as we actually come forth with Him from the midst of the things above, which now we seek and have our mind and affections in them. It is in the power of this hidden life that we can mortify our members upon earth. There is corruption in the world through lust - corruption which will bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Once the Colossians lived in the things of this corruption, and walked in them. Now their life and affections were in another scene, and they are called upon to mortify the members upon earth. Then there is behaviour in word and work which arises from the violent passions of men. This is to be put off also, and falsehood is to have no place with those who as saints have put off the old man with his deeds. Let us note here that it is not a mere question of right and wrong which is involved. We often like to raise this question, and so retain the old man. But as associated with Christ, and having Him as our life, the old man with his deeds has been put off, and the new man has been put on. It is a new subjective state which has been brought in by the resurrection of Christ, the old man having been set aside in His death. Adam, who was made in the image of God, by reaching up to be as God, fell, and acquired the knowledge of good and evil, but not the knowledge of God, or what was suited to God. But the new man is renewed unto full knowledge, after the image of Him that created him, that is, after Christ. In Him every question of good and evil as it is before God has been solved, so that every thing can be known in a new and divine way. All is known according to Christ, He being the image after which the new man is created.

Here then all the distinctions of race, creed, or station, which obtained with the old man, are unknown, for Christ is everything. In the new man, brought in by resurrection, all is renewed according to His image. Christ, too, is in every one, as the life in a power by which all His traits are developed in the saints. Consequently the Colossians are exhorted "as the elect of God, holy and beloved." That is how Christ is spoken of. He is God's Elect (Isaiah 42:1), the Holy (Psalms 89:19) and Beloved One. (Matthew 3:17.) Such is the character of the Christian as having put on Christ,

and as such he is to put on all those traits of the new man, which are of Him - compassions, graciousness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance of one another; forgiving each other, if there be any cause of complaint, Christ being the pattern after which it is to be done: "As Christ forgave you," freely and graciously, "so also do ye." Then love is to be put on as that in which all these qualities are united together in a perfectness which flows from God's own blessed nature. These traits of Christ come out in men, for they belong to the new man; but it is the divine nature, love, which links all together in a perfection which is according to that nature. Thus we read, in 1 John 4:12, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." The peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts. No doubt it is divine, the peace of God; but as it was seen in Christ, the peace in which He ever dwelt, and in which He moved amidst every circumstance that tended to try the spirit. A very man, He ever dwelt in the repose of His Father's love. He was never "moved to haste" by the oppositions of men, nor by the want of understanding, and the unbelief of His own. At the moment of His rejection He could say, "I thank Thee, Father," and invite any weary heart to come and share the repose of His meek and lowly heart. We have been called to this peace of Christ in one body; for it is in the peaceful affections of Christ with which saints walk towards each other, that the unity to which they have been called for the manifestation of Christ in them is displayed. So far from there being elements of disturbance, we thus become those who are grateful, and full of thanksgiving in the sense of the favour of the God of peace and love. In addition the apostle adds, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It is here called the word of Christ because it is the word by which we acquire the knowledge, and are formed in the habits, tastes, and affections of the new man. The word of Christ is thus the revelation to us of what He is, for it is after His image that the new man is created; and dwelling in us richly, it produces communion in the inner life of the soul with all that is revealed of Christ in the word. "In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another." We may here refer to Colossians 1:28 for this same expression, "in all wisdom." It is how Paul admonished and taught. We know that Christ is the wisdom of God, and He is made to us wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30.) The word of Christ, revealing Him as the centre of all the counsels and glory of God, gives us the knowledge of a wisdom hidden indeed from this world, but ordained before the world for our glory. As entering into these unseen things of wisdom, we are to teach and admonish one another, that so we may help in forming each other after the image of Christ. Another effect of the word of Christ dwelling in us will be the heart expressing itself with grace to the Lord in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

Colossians 3:1-4. The seventeenth verse is a verse of liberty to us as having put on the new man where Christ is everything - liberty, if the heart is a place "Where only Christ is heard to speak, Where Jesus reigns alone." Do all things "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Not only is Christ everything, but in everyone. Thus He becomes the spring and motive of our words and actions. In John 16:23; John 16:28 the Lord seeks to carry the hearts of His disciples to the Father with whom the name of the Son is everything. It is there with the Father that we learn the power and value of that name. We learn to appreciate it as being dear to the Father. We ask of the Father in that name because it is the centre around which all the Father's glory circles. Thus we learn its value and the privilege of doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. The day is coming when every knee will have to bow to that name, but before the dawning of that day, if we understand the Father's thoughts about it, and how He delights to glorify it, it will be our joy and privilege, in some little measure, to let our actions and words tell that the

Father has taught us to appreciate it, and we shall give "thanks to God and the Father by Him." In the exhortations which follow, the apostle takes lower ground than in those addressed to the Ephesians. There, in dwelling upon the relationship of husband and wife, the conduct of each toward the other is to be the reflection of what the church is to Christ, and Christ to the church. It is well for us to remember that the great mystery of Christ and the church was ever in the counsel of God, and that the relationship of husband and wife was originally formed according to this great thought of His mind. Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, and in the formation of Eve and the bringing her to Adam we have the foreshadowing of the great mystery in the mind of God. In our epistle the conduct of the wife, as subject to the husband, is put upon the ground of what is proper and becoming in the Lord, whose name was the watchword for everything. Husbands are told to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them. This latter is in contrast to Adam. Love would shelter and take the blame for a wife rather than let a bitter spirit lay the blame upon her. "She gave me of the tree," said Adam, "and I did eat." This is the deed of the old man, the new man is renewed after the image of Christ, and He loved the church and gave Himself for it.

Children are to obey their parents in all things. The case is not supposed of a child, if need so arise, having to obey God rather than man. Here it is the principle of unhesitating submission to the authority of parents, an authority which is of God, and to be recognized as well pleasing in the Lord. In Ephesians the righteousness of the obedience is brought forward - here its moral beauty and good pleasure. Fathers are to be no hindrance to the development of this beautiful characteristic in their children by provoking or irritating them.

Again we see the principle of obedience to be exhibited by servants, or rather slaves, or bondservants. They are to obey in all things. According to the flesh they had masters, and there might be the temptation to please man outwardly; but the fear of God would lead them to recognise another Master, even the Lord. They would thus serve their earthly masters in simplicity of heart, doing everything, as we say, "with heart and soul," in the consciousness that they would receive from the Lord whom they served the reward of the inheritance.* But the wrong doer, be he who he may, would receive back again his wrong doing. Masters were therefore to be just to their slaves, as those having a Master in heaven. It will be noticed that those relationships are enlarged upon here, in which the principle of subjection and obedience is the prominent feature. The moral beauty of the new man can be shown in these relationships (even the one where man, once made in the image and likeness of God, has fallen to the position of a slave) in direct contrast to the self-will and disobedience which characterise the old man.

*With regard to slaves, it is interesting to see that both in eating the passover (Ex. 13:44), or the food that belonged to the priestly household (Leviticus 22:11), while no foreigner or hired servant might eat of either, the servant bought with money, 1:e. a slave, might eat of both. He shared in the portion of the household. We are now bought with a price, and are, though once foreigners, of the household of God. The apostle does not speak to them of the conflict with the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places, and exhort them to take the whole armour of God. They were not consciously on the ground which has to be maintained in such a conflict, but he exhorts them to perseverance in prayer, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving. This last admonition shows that it is to be the habit of the soul, not occasional - a habit which brings our souls to have to do with God continually. It is an immense thing to be conscious that we have the privilege of going to Him about everything, and more especially about the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ and those

that are His. This is a privilege to be enjoyed by all. Some may not be able to teach or preach. Some of us too. may not be consciously on the ground where we need to take the whole armour of God so as to stand on the battle-field as the Lord's host; but the apostle's desire for the prayers of the Colossians, that a door of utterance might be opened to him for making manifest the mystery of the gospel, shews us that they could use this privilege of persevering prayer on behalf of one who was in the forefront of a conflict where human energy had no place. Prayer would bring in the power of God, and as the extent of the privilege is known, so will it be in thanksgiving. May the Lord give us to persevere in prayer and watchfulness.

Besides this inner circle of the interest of Christ, there are those without. They were to walk in wisdom towards them. This was to be their general bearing, but they were to seize any opportunity (which is the true sense of "redeeming the time") which might be given them, through circumstances or otherwise, in order to use it on Christ's behalf towards those still characterized as "without"; but always the speech is to be with grace, yet not grace in laxity, but seasoned with an inward preserving power (for we are to have salt in ourselves, Mark 9:50) which will keep us from being affected by the evil around, and enable us by an inward consciousness to answer every man graciously and holily.

Though the apostle was personally unknown to the Colossians, yet he counts upon their love to him, and their interest in his welfare, so that they would desire to know as to it. Tychicus would declare it to them, and at the same time he would learn about their estate, and encourage their hearts. It is sweet to trace this love in the Spirit between the apostle and those he had never yet seen, and the intimate affections which flow from a common identification with the interests of Christ. Some whom the apostle mentions were probably unknown as yet to the Colossians, but they were fellow-workers with the apostle unto the kingdom of God.

Epaphras on the contrary was one of them, and knowing them well, laboured fervently for them in prayer - a blessed service - that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. If we look back to Colossians 1:9 we see how these prayers of Epaphras accord with the apostle's own desire for them; and these passages indicate to us how deeply both these servants of Christ desired that the saints might both know and stand complete in the knowledge of the full range of the will and pleasure of God, in which the mystery has such a wonderful and pre-eminent place.

We now come to the interesting connection of this assembly with that of Laodicea, and the bearing of the truth of this epistle on those who at that time were apparently gathered together there in the house of Nymphas. The desire of the apostle, that when this epistle had been read among the saints at Colosse, they should cause it to be read also in the assembly at Laodicea, shows us that this inspired charge was a provision of the Spirit of God to meet the need of both assemblies. Later on (Revelation 3:14-22) the Spirit records Christ's judgment of the state of the Laodicean assembly. It was heartless as to Christ, self-satisfied, while it derived nothing from Him, for He was outside of it. Such was the rapid development of evil. The truth brought out in this epistle as to the fulness of the Head, and the saints complete in Him, together with the knowledge of that side of the mystery which constitutes the wealth of its glory among the Gentiles, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is that which the Spirit has given to preserve the saints from falling into the Laodicean state. This state is rapidly advancing. On all hands the glory of man is sought, the name of Christ is not given up in actual apostasy, but it is only used with many to advance the selfishness and

pride of the first man. No glory can there be for the saints but that of which Christ is the hope. Christ in us as life, and thus all derived from Him, will alone keep us in touch with that hope. The truth of this epistle is that the saints are complete in Christ, the old man put off, not embellished and glorified, and that Christ is everything. The gospel began with the memorial of a woman's appreciation of a Saviour who died out of this world. The story of this appreciation was to go out with the glad tidings of Christ. (Matthew 26:13.) It is the last phase of a fallen church, that, without giving up His name, there is complete indifference to Himself, and to the fulness that is in Him. The Colossians were also to read an epistle to be passed on to them from Laodicea. What this epistle was we are not told. As it does not say an epistle to the Laodiceans, but one they would receive from Laodicea, it might have been one of Paul's epistles which we have, though the name is not given, sent to the Laodiceans to read, and then to be passed on to the Colossians. If it were one which has not been preserved to us, then we know it was one written specially for that time, but not given by the Spirit for the church generally in all ages. In closing these remarks the writer would earnestly press on every reader the necessity at the present moment of being grounded in the truth of this epistle, in order to be preserved from the snares both of ritualism and rationalism - a system of ordinances on the one hand, and of philosophy and vain deceit on the other. We have been cut off from everything of the flesh by the death of Christ. He is our life; no glory for us here; for we look to appear with Him in glory. Meanwhile the new man has been put on, that the saints collectively may express Christ according to the full knowledge into which they have been renewed. T. H. R.

S. The Epistle to the Galatians.

The Epistle to the Galatians.

T. H. Reynolds.

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Galatians 1:1-24. The first great point which the Spirit of God establishes in this epistle is, that the gospel of Christ as preached by the apostle Paul had neither been received by him from man, nor is it in its character according to man. The law was addressed to man in the state and condition in which he had been set as a creature responsible to God in this world. Had it been possible for him to keep it, it would have established him in his present status as alive in this earth. The gospel proposes something totally different; it comes to us to take us out of this present evil world by associating us in resurrection with the blessed Saviour who gave Himself for our sins. The gospel (not being after man) proposes no amelioration or bettering of our present sinful condition. This is always a difficulty until we understand the grace of God; because the very sense of our own sinfulness, and that righteousness and holiness befit the presence of God, tend to produce in us the effort (and the more honest we are and sensitive as to the claims of God on us, the greater the effort) to try and be what we think we ought to be for Him. Hence Judaism, or the Jew's religion, as it is here called, in which Paul once excelled, always commends itself to man, because he seeks thereby to improve his present condition, and the more he becomes a proficient in it, as Paul did, the more it ties him to that condition in the pride which pleases self, but in which he cannot find the satisfaction he seeks.

Now God has brought in a wholly new state for man, outside of this present evil world, by raising the precious Saviour who died for our sins out of that death which is also the judgment of God on the old and sinful state, and the end of it before Him. Paul's apostleship was connected with this new condition into which the gospel entrusted to him introduces the believer. He is careful to establish his apostleship. He was not merely a servant of the Lord teaching certain doctrines which he had learnt from others, however true they might be; but what he preached he had received by revelation, and the gospel was entrusted to him by divine commission. He had not been sent out by the other apostles to preach truths communicated to them, or of which they were witnesses as having companied with the Lord on earth, but his commission was from Jesus Christ Himself after He had been received up into the glory of God. Hence his apostolic office was immediately connected with that glory where man in Him now had a place. He had received it from Christ in glory, but also from God the Father, who in raising Him from the dead had thereby established His own glory and righteousness in connection with man.

It is this direct commission which enabled the apostle to use such strong language as this: "If any preach unto you another gospel . . . let him be accursed." To preach another would not be mere disagreement with Paul, but setting aside what had been divinely committed to him by the glorified Man, and by God the Father who raised Him from the dead. We need not wonder that the apostle

marvels that the Galatians had so soon removed from Him that called them in the grace of Christ, and were accepting Judaising teachers who perverted Christ's gospel. These teachers were seeking to please men, but were troublers of the saints. But Paul did not use persuasion which would adapt itself to man so as to conciliate or please him. Had he done so he would not have been the servant of that Christ whom man had put to death and rejected, and whom God had glorified. It was God, whose gospel it was, that he desired to satisfy in the service entrusted to him, so that the pure, fresh stream of the truth of the gospel might not fail in his hands, nor its rich and precious grace be frustrated.

It is interesting to note the kind of person to whom the revelation of this gospel was made, and also what is the subject of it. Paul was a proficient in Judaism, and in whatever measure it had profited him according to the flesh, just so much had it set him in direct opposition to God, and to that which God was now forming outside of Judaism and the religion of the flesh - His assembly. He had persecuted the church of God beyond measure and wasted it. Thus Paul was in his own person the exemplification of man's hostility to that gospel which substituted another Man - the once crucified but now glorified Saviour - for the man who had profited most by Judaism. He was convicted of being the greatest opposer of Christ. Such an one it seemed good to God to call. From the earliest moment of his history he had been marked off by God as an elect vessel in whom He would put the revelation of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. At the moment when called by grace the vessel was filled with the pride and self-esteem of one who was striving to be blameless in character, but hating Christ. Then and there the light of the glorified Man, the Son of God, shone in and filled the vessel; and in that light Paul saw that he, the chief of legalists, was the chief of sinners. The greater the legalism the more intense the opposition to Jesus, but the light which shone in revealed in him the peerless person of Jesus, the Son of God.

"Oh Man! God's Man! Thou peerless Man!

Jesus my Lord! God's Son!

Perfection's perfect in its height, But found in Thee alone."

Mark here, it is not merely revelation to a person, however blessed that might be; such had been given to Peter. The Lord distinctly announced, in Matthew 16:17, that the Father had revealed to Peter the person of Jesus as the Son of the living God, but with Paul it went farther; it was a light that shone in and displaced the man whose status was flesh and blood, and brought into Paul the revelation of another Man who was not after flesh and blood at all - a glorified Man - the Christ who henceforth lived in him. The revelation to Peter was of the same character, in that it was not of flesh and blood, but of the Father. But as only made to him it had no displacing power; and immediately after Peter had made such a beautiful confession, the Lord had to say to him, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." We know that this fuller revelation in a man could not be made until the ground for it had been established by the passing away morally in the cross of the first and sinful man under the judgment of death, so that another Man might take his place, and the believer be characterised by such a revelation.

Hence the gospel which Paul was divinely commissioned to preach was not merely the announcement of certain truths; it was concerning the person who had been revealed in him. The Jesus who had appeared to him in heavenly glory he preached as the Son of God; and the gospel

came to the Gentiles in the power of the revelation made to him, so that they might be brought into the light of the glory of God, where flesh is seen to be utterly bad and condemned, but in which there is for man life, righteousness, and glory. Paul having received such a revelation, had not dimmed it by conferring with flesh and blood. Flesh and blood could not have any part either in revealing it or helping it. The second Man is the heavenly Man, and now in glory is outside the domain of flesh and blood, and hence we are to bear the image of the heavenly One in a kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit. The gospel which has brought us the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, has brought also the revelation of the Son of God in us, and thus places us in connection already with another kingdom; for "as is the heavenly One, such also are the heavenly ones"; while it takes us morally out of the world, for "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" For more than 1800 years the Holy Ghost has been down here as the witness of the glory of Christ, and in opposition to His testimony has been the working of Satan to turn the eyes of the saints, as of old with the Galatians, back to Judaism in some form. It is still the danger of today, because the old "I" is reinstated thereby, instead of being reckoned as crucified with Christ, and the new and heavenly Man whose image we are to bear becoming the Object before us.

"And is it so; I shall be like Thy Son? Is this the grace which He for me has won?"

Father of glory (thought beyond all thought!) In glory to His own blest likeness brought."

It only remains to notice that it was three years after the revelation that the apostle went up to Jerusalem and made the acquaintance of Peter and James. What had passed between the Lord and himself qualified him without any reference to the other apostles to preach the faith which once he destroyed. In the wisdom of the ways of God the gospel preached by Paul went forth from Antioch to the Gentiles, linking them with no other centre than the heavenly glory where Christ is.

Galatians 2:1-21. In this chapter Paul speaks of his second visit to Jerusalem. The occasion of his going there is given in Acts 15:1-41. Judaizing teachers were saying that unless the Gentiles were circumcised according to the custom of Moses they could not be saved. This produced a commotion among the brethren, and no small discussion on the part of Barnabas and Paul, with those who were thus troubling the saints. Finally it was arranged that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders there about this question. It was the wisdom of God that these Judaizing teachers should be silenced in the very centre and stronghold of Judaism. But if we see from the record of this visit in the Acts the necessity of this question being gone into and settled at Jerusalem, from the chapter before us we learn how fully Paul was supported by God in maintaining the truth of the gospel committed to him. He had received it by revelation, and by revelation he went up to Jerusalem and put before those who were there the gospel which he preached (privately to those of reputation), while they communicated nothing to him; and the three pillars of the assembly at Jerusalem acknowledged the special grace given to him by giving to himself and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Two points were established by this visit: First, that the Gentiles were not to be brought under the yoke of bondage; so that, secondly, the truth of the gospel as Paul preached it might abide with them, that they might be free in the liberty wherewith Christ had freed them.

It is remarkable that the three apostles who speak of being born again are the three pillars of the Jewish assembly here mentioned. The Jews were a people already in relationship with God, being

the children of the covenant made with the fathers. To them specially the Spirit of God speaks of an entirely new beginning in man; even a Jew must be born again. (John 3:7.) Now the Gentiles were afar off, strangers to the covenants of promise and without God in the world. There was no question of their alienation and distance: even Christ, according to the flesh, did not come to them. He could only be presented to them in death as the propitiation for their sins, and when lifted up out of the earth to draw all men to Him. Reconciliation to God was by the death of Christ, but the Christ who died to sin once, being raised from the dead, now lives to God in a new condition of life for man, and Paul therefore can speak of the believer as alive to God in a wholly new way - as a man "out of dead alive." (Note to New Translation, Romans 6:13.) No doubt new birth, though not directly spoken of, is included in this doctrine of Paul's, but the truth of being alive in Christ Jesus goes further than a new beginning by God in the soul. Indeed, Paul's gospel carries us beyond the truth of a man morally alive out of death, blessed as that is, for the millennial saints will be brought into the experience of such a state, as Psalms 116:1-19 and other scriptures show; but now there is also an altogether new man, the result of Jew and Gentile being quickened together with Christ out of death, and formed in Himself into one new man. We cannot underrate the importance of a new and holy nature capable of divine affections being communicated to the soul; but in order to the freedom of that nature which, as it loves Him that begat, loves also him that is begotten of Him, it was necessary that the middle wall of partition should be taken away, and thus all enmity be done away between Jew and Gentile. This was effected in the death of Christ, and now in Christ there is a new man before God, and holy and blessed affections can have their play - bowels of mercies, graciousness, humbleness, meekness, etc.; for there is neither Jew nor Gentile, no distinction of race or nation, no conflicting interests to hinder, but Christ is all, and in all. The revelation of the Son of God in Paul had discovered to him, strict Jew as he was, that Judaism was ended in the cross, and in his own soul a new man, the risen and glorified Saviour - the Son of God, was now known. That One Paul preached in the blessed and glorious liberty in which every one in whom the grace of God works is associated with Himself. At Jerusalem then Paul maintained the truth of the gospel entrusted to him, which presented a Saviour in glory. In that light Jerusalem and Judaism were nothing; while by it Jew and Gentile were shown to be brought into the fulness of blessing in Christ Jesus. Afterwards, at Antioch, he had to withstand Peter to the face because he walked not according to the truth of the gospel, by reviving the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and so practically going back to the ground of what man is in the flesh. On that ground he and Peter were "Jews by nature," and the believers at Antioch "sinners of the Gentiles." But both Peter and Paul had given up legalism to be justified by the faith of Christ. Law could not justify the flesh; it could only condemn it. They had abandoned law for Christ; for justification has been established in Christ now that He is risen from the dead, not in law. The apostle is not speaking here of the work which justifies, but contends that justification does not, could not, belong to the state of things connected with law, but to that which has been established in Christ. Now if Peter was right in reviving Judaism, he had been wrong in using the liberty which was in Christ to eat with Gentiles, and Christ was the minister of sin. That could not be, and Paul's boldness in withstanding Peter was necessary. He now shows how mightily the truth of the gospel he preached affected himself. Peter, in withdrawing himself from the Gentiles through fear of man, had not been dominated by the truth, and was building again the things he had destroyed, for, in order to be justified, he had given up Judaism for Christ, and yet was reviving it again. "I," says Paul emphatically, "through law have died to law, that I may live to God." The law had been death

to him, for it discovered in him the sin which, taking occasion by the commandment, slew him. He had hoped for life by it, and found death; but being thus dead through the law, he had, as having believed in Christ, died to it. By death he had passed out of the state connected with law, that he might live to God.

Let us not be mistaken as to the force of this last expression. It does not mean a man still in that old and sinful state to which the law was addressed, trying to live for God, but that just as Christ, who once came under law, had died out of that condition among men into which He had entered by grace, and in which He was on the cross made sin, and now lives to God in a life which has nothing to say to law or sin (for "in that He liveth, He liveth unto God"), so it is the privilege of the believer to reckon himself as dead to sin and law, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. What words can unfold the deep blessedness expressed in the words, "He liveth unto God." In the energy and power of that life "to God" Paul knew his freedom from law.

It is sometimes helpful to see the dawning of the elements of a truth in the Old Testament. For thirteen years Hagar and Ishmael had been in Abram's house. Ishmael was the fruit of the flesh struggling to obtain the promise of God, a figure of man under law - and during that period Abram had to live with Hagar and Ishmael. Then (Genesis 17:1-27) in the sovereignty of love and grace the Lord appeared to him, and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God; walk BEFORE ME." Here He was not undertaking or promising to do anything for Abram, but putting him before Himself, revealed as the all-sufficient One; for the word almighty carries with it not only the idea of omnipotence but of sufficiency. God suffices, we may reverently say, for Himself. No creature can. He alone does. What a full and eternal fountain of blessing in Himself was contained in the revelation of His name! And what sovereignty of grace in putting Abram before Himself, to walk there with an undistracted heart! Abram's path from henceforth lay in a new region into which he had been introduced - the all-sufficiency of the almighty God. But in our epistle we have more than the elements of such a wonderful place. We have the development of the truth, by which we see a man like Paul empowered to enter into and enjoy it. He was alive in the nature proper to such a place. As to law, by which he formerly sought to regulate his life in the flesh, through it he had died that he might live to God, but how could he, having sinful flesh, live in this blessed life? Not only had the law been the means of death to him, but upon the cross Christ had suffered the judgment of God upon the sin in the flesh which law found out and condemned. Paul accepted this judgment fully - the judgment of himself in the cross. "I am crucified with Christ," he says; but then in the power of life, Christ having been raised out of all the death and judgment, "He liveth unto God," and therefore Paul adds, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It was by Christ living in him that he lived to God. The old "I" was not reckoned to be alive, it had been crucified with Christ, and the new "I" was Christ, who lived in him in the power of a life which belongs to the state where Christ liveth to God. Other passages show in what a full and blessed way Paul through grace knew the effect of Christ living in him. "If I be beside myself" (or rather outside myself), he says, "it is to God." Again, "The love of Christ constraineth [has hold of] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Thus we see the character of this life. He further adds, "But in that I now live in flesh" - for in a certain sense living to God had nothing to do with flesh at all - "I live by faith." Perhaps the time when he most realised what it is to live to God was the moment when, as a man in Christ, he had

been caught up into Paradise, and could not tell whether he was in the body or not, but actually he still lived in flesh, and therefore he had to live as in flesh by faith. He had to walk in the path of daily service as appointed by the Lord, whether preaching the Gospel or making tents, but the motives were not found in the circumstances of his daily path; his springs of action in them were outside that which is seen - he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. Thus in the ordinary details of his life here he walked in faith; no doubt the revelation of the Son of God in him greatly strengthened that faith, still it was faith in the blessed Person who was both its source and object - the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

"I do not frustrate," says Paul, "the grace of God." There is nothing we are so afraid of as grace. We are such poor little creatures that we are afraid to trust its immensity. Then we are afraid of its claims, for it must necessarily appropriate us to itself according to its immensity for its own eternal purposes. Righteousness has been established in the very glory of God as an answer to the death of Christ. If righteousness could come by law then Christ had died in vain or for nothing. But His death was according to divine purpose, and in the deepest grace to sinful man. The grace which gave Him to die for us has given to us in Him life, righteousness, and glory.

Galatians 3:1-29.

Two subjects are specially before us in this chapter. First, that in contrast to law and flesh these Galatians had received the Spirit of God; for as law characterised Judaism, so does the Holy Spirit characterise Christianity. Secondly, that every blessing came to them according to grace on the principle of faith, and is known and enjoyed by the power of the Spirit.

Christ had been plainly set before the eyes of the Galatians - crucified. It was not the Saviour on earth preaching glad tidings and going about doing good; as such He had been rejected and slain. It was Christ crucified - such a truth spoke plainly of the sin of man under the law, for the Jews used the law to kill the Holy and Just One. They said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die." How then go back to Judaism? But if it spoke plainly of the sin of man having been fully consummated, it told also of the love of Him who had been crucified, in giving Himself for our sins. It told also of the believer once under death and condemnation being set free, in that Christ had gone into death and borne the judgment and condemnation. Moreover justification, life, promise, adoption, the inheritance, were all connected with the gospel, which portrayed before the eyes of the Galatians Christ crucified. How senseless to go back to that religion of the flesh which had crucified Him! Let us mark this well, that we can never turn back to the old "I" in any way without turning back to the flesh which crucified Christ. The Galatians had received the Spirit of God. On what ground? Had He been given as the seal of a state attained by works of law, or because they believed the gospel which witnessed to them of Christ? Assuredly the latter. The apostle shows how intimately this great characteristic of Christianity, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is connected with the principle of faith. The Spirit of God has come, now that the Christ, who was crucified to bear the judgment which lay upon man, has been raised from the dead and glorified on high. It is there that He is the Object of faith, as He said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1.) The Holy Ghost testifies that there is another Man before God, and is the power by which we enter into and enjoy what is ours in that precious Christ in whom we believe. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit. Were they going to be made perfect in the flesh? Christ

crucified is the answer to any expectation from self and flesh. Perfection is alone in the glorified Man, whom the flesh refused and hated. The apostle cannot unfold this glorious theme to the Galatians, senseless as they were, for the ministry they needed was rather rebuking by the Spirit the flesh, to which they were turning back for perfection; but he shows that the ministry of the Spirit among them, in a power too that wrought miraculously above the effects of sin, was carried on in connection with the report of the gospel which they had received by faith. He then carries them back to a time before the law, when God had given to Abraham the first intimation of the blessing which should come to the Gentiles - "In thee shall all nations be blessed." It was to Abraham that God took the revealed place of a God of blessing when men universally had departed from Him into idolatry. "I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing"; and in the God who called him to inherit a blessing Abraham believed. Thus the ground of blessing by sovereign grace is established on the principle of faith, and on the same principle the one believing is accounted righteous, the effort of the flesh to attain to righteousness being worse than useless. Before the law Abraham had been accounted righteous when he believed in God, and the gospel before announced to him the blessing to come to the Gentiles. Believing Abraham and all who are of the like principle of faith are blessed together. Believers are the true sons of Abraham. The apostle now contrasts law and faith, showing that, instead of blessing, curse came by law; life and justification by faith. This indeed was according to Scripture, for it stated that "the just shall live by faith." With regard to law it propounded a different principle "The man that doeth them shall live in them." Moreover Scripture pronounced a curse on every one who did not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. The law thus left those who were of it under the curse, for it gave no power to fulfil its demands. But Christ had been hung upon the tree and redemption accomplished. Two results flowed from this redemption - the curse had been borne for those who were under it, and the way had been opened for the blessing of Abraham to come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, the precious Saviour who had been crucified for both Jew and Gentile, so that through faith both might receive the peculiar blessing of Christianity, the promise of the Spirit.

Let us for a moment consider this peculiar Christian blessing in connection with that which follows in the chapter, viz., the contrast between law and promise. The apostle shows that the promise of blessing made to Abraham - of which he was the depositary, but which in its extent went out to all the families of the earth - had been unconditionally made by God. Now all God's dealings with Israel had proved that man according to the flesh was unable either to enter into, or hold, or enjoy, the promises of God. He must be born again either to perceive or enter into the kingdom of God. A Jew should have learned the necessity of this from Deuteronomy 29:2-4. The signs and wonders wrought by Moses of old brought with them no spiritual perception; and when Christ was presented to Israel as the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, He was among them as the Light of life, which the darkness of the natural heart could not comprehend. His own received Him not, and forfeited, by rejecting Him, all claim to the promises. The Yea and Amen of every promise is in Christ alone: man can neither receive nor hold them. Further, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God; hence in order to the knowledge and enjoyment of the things of God - and all these come to us in the way of sovereign grace and promise - it was necessary that believers, and such are the true sons of Abraham, should receive the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things which have been freely given us of God. When the Lord told Abraham to lift up his eyes and survey the extent of the inheritance which He then gave to him (Genesis 13:14), He added, "Arise and walk through the

land in the length of it and the breadth of it." We are not told that Abraham ever made this intimate acquaintance with the possessions given him, but the Spirit is now given to so strengthen us in the inner man that we may be able to know and comprehend the vast extent of the glory which centres in Christ, and the love of Christ which is ours, though it passes knowledge. It is by the Spirit alone we know the things which are given to us of God and our relationship to the Giver. How great the blessing of Christians in having received the promise of the Spirit! The Galatians were slighting the gift; and we may say His power and presence are but little known by Christians now. But if the promises of God could only be known by the Spirit, we have also seen that man after the flesh was not in the state or condition in which they could be established. They are Yea and Amen in Christ, the Son of God, declared to be so in power by the resurrection from the dead. In Him, the risen One, they are established for the glory of God by us. Hence God's original covenant of blessing according to the promise made to Abraham (Genesis 12:18) He confirmed to Isaac (Genesis 22:18) after he had been taken from off the altar; that is, "received in a figure from the dead." (Hebrews 11:1-40.) Isaac was a type of Christ, as it says in our chapter (Galatians 3:16), "And to thy seed, which is Christ." It is characteristic of faith that it not only sets its Amen to the word and promises of God, but bows in the intelligence which belongs alone to faith to God's way of bringing them about.

We cannot read carefully the history of Abraham's journey to mount Moriah to offer up Isaac without seeing that he went there in company with the mind of God. Deep and painful as was the trial during those three days, we may surely say that Abraham was conscious that God was working out His own great plan of blessing. If God was about to take his beloved Isaac from him in the flesh, he would be given back to him in resurrection. Abraham took the journey in the company of the God of resurrection. He accounted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. Hence, when on the third day he saw the place there is no trembling, but the calm certainty of faith. "Abide," he says to his young men, "ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham and Isaac would both return to them in the power of the God of resurrection. Another utterance shows yet again that Abraham entered in some measure into the secret of God's wonderful plan. "My son," he replied to Isaac, "God will provide Himself a lamb." In order to the carrying out of His own purpose in redemption, God must have a Lamb for Himself. No doubt we need a sacrifice; but there was also the need of His own glory in accomplishing the promises confirmed in Christ, the risen Saviour, the one seed of Abraham.

"Wherefore then the law?" now asks the apostle; and note we have here a divine reason for its being brought in. It was not against the previous promises, nor was it introduced to give life, otherwise righteousness would have been by the law. It was brought in provisionally until the seed came to whom God had made the promise; that is, Christ, now raised from the dead, in order that the character of sin might be shown by actual transgressions of the law. The manner in which it was ordained was quite different from the giving of the promise. This depended on God alone, both as to gift and performance. The law given through angels could only go on between a sinful people and God by means of mediation. Not only was it first given into the hands of Moses for them, but, in answer to his mediation when it was broken, Jehovah took the ground of longsuffering mercy to a people still kept under its obligation, yet with the assurance that, however great His longsuffering, He would by no means clear the guilty. The law then served to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin by offences abounding under it; and Scripture, by proof after proof, has

shown that all are under sin. But so far from being against the promises of God, the law guarded the Jews who were under it - shut them up from other nations, kept them in tutelage up to Christ in order to their being then justified on the principle of faith. But the moment the principle of faith has come in, not only is the promise given to all who believe, but the office of the law as a schoolmaster is over - those under it were so no longer (compare Galatians 4:2-5), and Gentiles, by faith in Christ Jesus, were God's sons. Hence, to go back to Judaism was to leave the acknowledged place of sonship, and to take the place of minors under a schoolmaster. But that could not be. The Galatians had been baptized unto Christ; and the apostle here shows the bearing of the ordinance, that in it they had put on Christ; and that was giving up all distinction of the flesh, for in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, for all are one in Christ Jesus. If they were then of Christ, they were Abraham's seed, the true seed of faith - not of flesh and law, as mere Jews were - and heirs according to the promise which had been made to him and confirmed in the seed, Christ raised from the dead.

We have to note here for our own instruction that the apostle, having to maintain the foundation truths of Christianity, and to establish the Galatians in them, goes back to the introductory ordinance, to show that in it the door was opened into Christianity, whether for Jew or Gentile, and Christ put on; for the question is not whether it was real with them or not - that was the ground they had taken; and owing to their state, he has to insist with them on the very elements of this new place, rather than lead them on into the fulness of their portion.

Galatians 4:1-31.

We have seen that the Galatian believers, having been baptised to Christ, are regarded as in the place of sons and in possession of the privileges of Christianity. They had put on Christ; and, as another has said, He is "the only measure of their relationship with God." There had been a former relationship for the Jews under law, and this made a difference between them and the Gentiles; but Christ had died, and was now risen and glorified, and Christianity takes its start from the fact that God has been glorified in Christ, and hence that Christ is in the glory of God. He is the Object of faith. It is worse than useless to go back to that which attempts at best to tutor and keep in order the old man, when already there is another Man glorified in God. Christ then has entered as man into a new place for man, but He has reached it through death; and as baptised to His death, the believer reaches Christ through death; but it is Christ in resurrection, out of the death where our old man was crucified with Christ. But having reached Christ, there is altogether another relationship for the believer - Christ's relationship as Son with the Father; hence in Christianity the believer is admitted to and enjoys the acknowledged place of sonship.

Now, however much a believing Jew, before Christ had come, might have looked forward to His coming, and to inherit the promises through Him, he was as to his position like a minor, one not yet of full age, under guardians and stewards, and thus in bondage under the principles of the world. It is important to note how the Spirit of God designates Judaism now that the substance, of which its ordinances were but the shadows, had come; for in truth the observances under the law were enjoined on man in his present fallen condition. They could no longer point to Christ when Christ was come, nor could righteousness be found in them, for that is found in the One who had gone to the Father. Whether raising the question of righteousness, or pointing to Christ, these ordinances of a fleshly religion had been supplanted, and they remained a mere shell, which a natural fallen

man could gratify his self-importance by observing, but they were but the elements of this present world wherein man is departed from God. They had been ordained of God for a time, and during that time for a purpose, as we read elsewhere, "Imposed until the time of setting things right" (Hebrews 9:10, New Trans.) Then God sent forth His Son. Into the scene of death and ruin, wherein man universally was, God sent His Son - He came of a woman. To those that were under law, held in bondage there, even if as believers they had brighter hopes, God sent His Son, for He came under law. "We know," said the Jews, "that God spake to Moses," and they would use the divine commission of Moses to refuse the Son of God. But here is the great fact, that when the fulness of the time was come GOD SENT FORTH His SON. And why? Because He would have believers as sons before Him. Sonship could not be known until the Son of God came; but now that He has come, He has redeemed those who were under law in the state of tutelage and childhood, that they might henceforth be in the place of sons. Into this place they never entered, nor into the knowledge of the Father's counsels of glory concerning His own dear Son, while they still differed nothing from servants under law; nor can a believer now enjoy the relationship of a son if in the history of his soul he is still on Jewish ground. What a momentous change in the position of saints was made by God sending forth His Son! But this great fact had its bearing upon Gentiles who heretofore were in nowise in relationship with God. They too received sonship; for it is the gift of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. It was entirely of the grace of God to give these alienated Gentiles faith in Christ, and so bring them as sons to Himself; and now, because they were sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, as well as into the hearts of those redeemed from under law, crying, Abba, Father. Let us well consider that it was in the mind of God to have sons before Him and not servants. He sent forth His Son in order that He might have sons; but then it is not a mere name or position, for He has also sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, that we might know and enjoy the relationship. The Holy Spirit cries in the heart of the believer the very same words used by "His Son," when upon earth - "Abba, Father." (Mark 14:36.) What marvellous grace, and yet what a blessed reality that the Holy Spirit, by whom the body prepared for Jesus was formed "that holy thing" - and by whom He was anointed, so that John could bear witness that He was the Son of God, thus cries in the believer's heart! It is God who has sent forth the Spirit of His Son. It is God who has made us both sons and heirs.

Sonship then is liberty, whether for Jew or Gentile. The latter had been in bondage "to them which by nature are no gods," and to turn to Judaism, though it might appear better than the grossness of idolatry, was to renew their bondage to weak and beggarly elements, for so the apostle calls the observances of Judaism. They had known God - God acting in grace to them by His own Son; but more, they were known of God - known as sons and heirs. How then turn back to what was but another form of this world's religion, for such was Judaism since the cross. Paul had put before them these wonderful actings of God in His own grace, but surely his labour was in vain if they turned back to these dim shadows from the glorious light of the gospel of His Son. "Be as I am," he says. Once he had been a proficient in the Jewish religion, now he was free from it. Christ had made him free. "I am as ye are." The once proud Jew was on the same footing of grace as a Gentile Galatian. Grace had made them one in Christ. Paul would not allow that it was an injury for a Gentile to claim him as on the same ground. Peter had winced under it, and would not be as a Gentile when certain came from James. How hard it is for poor flesh to be nothing in the presence of grace!

Then follows a tenderness of pleading, as to his ministry in weakness among them, such as only a heart filled with the constraining power of the love of Christ could use; for there were others who were desirous to exclude the Galatians from Paul, whose ministry had once brought such blessedness to them, and thus to acquire influence over them in order to bring them again under law. Surely it did not need the wisdom of Solomon, which detected the deep interest of a mother in her child, for these Galatians to discern what a place they held in the ardent affections of Christ's apostle, as he says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The other Judaizing teachers zealously affected them, not well, for they were leading them back to the weak and poor elements of the world, while the ministry of the Spirit by the apostle was to form Christ in them. There is no power in the law to form the Christian state; that is done by the Spirit's writing Christ upon the fleshy tables of the heart. The apostle desired to be present with them, but how should he then speak to them, for he stood in doubt of them? Could he speak to them as on Christian ground? or must he alter his manner of address to them as those needing to be brought there? It is not every converted soul that is in faith in the true Christian position, that is, "of Christ" (Galatians 3:29), nor can such a position be enjoyed apart from the corresponding state. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9.) It does not say he is not converted - he may be, and still in bondage under law, but while in that state, he is not "of Christ." The true Christian state is Christ formed in us by the Spirit of God, who is therefore called the Spirit of Christ. This is not the renovating, or correcting by law of the old man, but the bringing in of another. The Christian position is, that I am no longer of Adam but of Christ, for our old man has been crucified with Christ. The Christian state is, that Christ is formed in me by the Spirit of God. The old "I" is displaced by Christ. This great truth had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Abraham had two sons. The one, Ishmael, born of Hagar according to the flesh; the other, Isaac, through promise. Hagar was a figure of the covenant from Sinai, that is, of the effort of the flesh by works of law to obtain the promise of God. Jerusalem, the then centre of Jewish religion, and her children still in bondage under the first covenant, were represented by Hagar and Ishmael. But Jerusalem on earth had been set aside by God (see Hosea 2:2, and Matthew 23:38), and the city of God now is Jerusalem above. All Christians were children of the heavenly city. Galatians 4:27 only shows that when it will be again said to Jerusalem on earth, "Thy Maker is thy husband," and when she will rejoice in millennial days, she will then count Christians who have come in during the days of her desolation as her children; for from her, after all, came forth all the blessings of the gospel, even as Christ according to the flesh came of Israel. But during the days when she has no husband and is desolate, to go back to her is to go back to that which God has for the time rejected and set aside. If Isaac, the child of promise, is brought into the house, Ishmael must go out. The child of holy laughter - the laughter of faith - must displace the child of bondage and flesh, and this is Christianity. There Christ is everything. The Lord intimated early in His ministry that the new wine which He brought could not be put into the old bottle of Judaism, and in John's gospel it is apparent that He supersedes in His own person everything in which a Jew could boast.

One of the great efforts of the enemy is to lend *éclat* to the elements of this world by the name of Christ, but the one must displace the other. Isaac must displace Ishmael, and taking the Galatians on the ground of Christianity the apostle insists that they were not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. It will be noticed that he does not speak to them of the truth of the assembly as a new creation in Christ, nor of its special relationship to him, for they needed to have Christ formed in

them, and to know their liberty in Christ.

"Christ has set us free in freedom." (New Trans.) This is not the liberty of the flesh, for Christ has done it. The freedom which the Christian enjoys is His freedom. The believer has not to attain it, but to stand fast in it. To be entangled in a yoke of bondage is to give up Christ's liberty. To circumcise the flesh is to admit that one is in the flesh and not in Christ, for we cannot mingle the two. To be circumcised was to bring upon themselves the whole claim of the law, and to be deprived of profit from Christ, for they were then seeking for justification by law. It was giving up grace. It is well to be clear as to this, for nothing is more specious than the doctrine that we are indeed pardoned through the work of Christ, but that the flesh is to be kept in order by legal effort. This is only to give a place to the flesh, and to gratify it by being occupied with it, but by the same sacrifice of Christ wherein atonement for our guilt was made, God condemned sin in the flesh, and now justification and liberty are in Christ raised from the dead. "Christ has set us free in freedom."

Galatians 5:5-26, Galatians 6:1-18. In Galatians 5:5 we see how the Spirit of God and faith are linked together as characterising the Christian. "For we," says the apostle, speaking for Christians, "through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." The believer is not waiting for righteousness, for the ministry of the gospel in which he has believed is a ministry of righteousness from the glory where Christ is. In Him God has been perfectly glorified in respect of sin, so that He who was made sin for us is now in the glory of God in righteousness, and the Spirit of God has come from that glory into which Christ has entered, to reveal to us His present position in righteousness before God; and consequently that "of God He is made unto us . . . righteousness." Hence the Christian is not waiting for righteousness, for Christ in glory - the righteousness of God (for God has been glorified in Him) is the object of his faith. Christ then is his righteousness; and the Spirit, who is the seal of faith in Christ, is the earnest of that glory which is the hope of righteousness. We are to be with Christ and like Him, and the Spirit has come to unfold to us the glory where Christ is, and to make us know that we belong to it as being in Him the righteousness of God. Therefore by the Spirit on the principle of faith, for we are not yet there, the believer waits in hope to be conformed to Christ in glory. Circumcision was but a mark in the flesh distinguishing a Jew from a Gentile; hence a Jew could boast in it as connecting him with the promises of God in a fleshly way (though there might be a deeper signification spiritually) according to the word, "My covenant shall, be in your flesh." (Genesis 17:13.) In Christ Jesus it had no force at all; there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision there. The true power is faith, which carries the soul into the new circle of the interests of Christ, and operates there in the power of love. Instead of the energising power of love, circumcision only brought in separation between saints. No wonder that the apostle was deeply affected by the state of the Galatians. In Galatians 5:7 he leaves his subject, as it were, to speak personally to them of how they had been hindered in their obedience to the truth. They had been running well, and their turning aside through the persuasion of false teachers was not of Him that called them. We may be sure that insubjection of soul to the truth lies at the root when saints are hindered from going on with the truth. The call of God carries the soul along in the faith of it. And here we learn the mischievous effects of indifference to the truth. Insubjection to the truth leads to indifference. It might seem a small matter to allow a doctrine which gave the flesh a place under the pretext of keeping it in order, but "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." We have only to look at the state of Christendom to see how the leaven then working among the Galatians has well-nigh leavened the whole lump by the

revival of the first man and the denial of the cross as God's judgment upon him. Faith alone knows that, the first man has been rejected, and looks for everything in Christ as the accepted Man in the glory of God. But the apostle turns to the Lord with confidence of heart about them. As in Psalms 116:10-11, he might have said with the Psalmist, "I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste" (that is, distress of spirit), "all men are liars." Among men no one is to be trusted, but the Lord is the source of confidence when even the saints are turned aside, and to the Lord he looks that these Galatians would be none "otherwise minded" (Comp. Php 3:15), for to run well we must have the hope of righteousness, Christ in glory, before us, while those who troubled them should bear their judgment, whoever they were. What a difference there is between a troubler of the saints and one who, like Paul, suffered persecution on their behalf, so that the truth of the gospel might be theirs! If Paul had preached circumcision, and so given man a place, both the preacher and the preaching would have been tolerated, and the offence of the cross would have ceased. There is nothing at which the natural man stumbles like the doctrine of the cross, which judges and sets aside man in his best estate, and for this Paul was persecuted. Then, with a covert allusion to circumcision, he adds, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." In resuming the subject of the liberty unto which they had been called, he has to warn them that the flesh would take occasion by it. Liberty is not license for the flesh, but freedom from the law of sin in it. It is freedom to serve one another in love. Thus and thus only the law, if they turned to law, was fulfilled, not by putting themselves under it, but by the love which was the effect of the presence of the Spirit of God; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love." They had, by turning back to Judaism and circumcision, given a place to the flesh; what wonder then if it had come out in biting and devouring one another as to questions about which the flesh could strive? The flesh in us is proud, vain-glorious, and self-sufficient, easily finding fault with each other; while love serves in the desire that every saint may be in the power of that grace which makes no demand upon us, but ministers everything to us. The remedy then for the working of the flesh is not in seeking to regulate it by law, but in freedom from it by walking in the Spirit. Deliverance from sin and from law is found in the death of Christ; while liberty is known by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus setting us free from the law of sin and death. And here we see that the state of the Galatians leads the apostle to speak of an action of the Spirit in us which is not, so to speak, His proper work and testimony. He came to testify of and to glorify the Lord Jesus, and as the anointing and seal by which we know our part in and enjoy all that He testifies to. But here he is spoken of as lusting against the flesh, so that we should not do the things which otherwise we would. We learn too that the flesh in us is so bad that it lusts against the Spirit. Mark here, that the Spirit does not help the flesh; nay, Spirit and flesh are contrary to each other. The flesh, indeed, is in the Christian; but he is not a debtor to it, but to walk in the Spirit, and so the desires of the flesh are not fulfilled. We need not dwell on the works of the flesh, they are well known; but the fruits of the Spirit we may well recount: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. What are these graces but the fruit of the Spirit forming Christ in the believer? Against them there is no law. What need of repression when the character of Christ is brought out in the Christian by the Spirit of God? But more, they that are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and desires. It does not say they ought to crucify it, but they have done so. We could not be of Christ save on the ground of the judgment of the first man in His cross. There sin in the flesh has been condemned; and as of Christ, by whom all the judgment was borne, the believer has accepted this condemnation, so that he has thus in faith crucified the flesh, and has not got to do it by effort. The believer then lives in the Spirit. There is no life in the flesh

morally before God or for faith, though actually we still live in flesh. But the Spirit of God could not be the power of life, and the law the rule of walk. The ordering of the Christian's conduct must be in conformity to Christ in the power of the Spirit by which he lives. The last verse of this chapter shows us that elements of discord were among them; notwithstanding their attempt after perfection in the flesh by means of law.

How very different from vain-glory is true spirituality (Galatians 6:1) in a saint! The spiritual man, conscious of his own liability to be tempted, in meekness seeks the restoration of one who has been overtaken in a fault. Another has said that hard words against evil are no sign of our own spirituality. Proud Pharisaism would bind legal burdens on others; while the fruit of the Spirit is seen in bearing them, and thus letting Christ's law be fulfilled. Did He not take the weight of all our responsibilities and sorrows upon Himself? These practical exhortations of the apostle show how the Judaism to which they were turning had given a place to the working of the flesh to the exclusion of true spirituality. A man thinking himself to be something when he is nothing is self-deception. The testing time for each one's work will surely come; therefore the spiritual man, according to the exhortation to Timothy, would seek to present himself approved to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. In love we may carry one another's burden, but in respect of the approval of work and service we are alone; each must carry his own burden. Still, the one ministered to has the privilege of fellowship with the one who ministers the word, in all good things.

We have seen that these Galatians in their desire for law were not getting on so very well after all, and that the flesh so far from being subjected by law was working in them. We need not wonder then at the exhortation of the apostle: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Let us remember that they that are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. To go back to law is to revive that which has been crucified. It is allowed to be alive, and consequently is there to sow to; and so surely as this is done, so surely will corruption be reaped. It is a solemn word - "God is not mocked." Sooner or later God will have it out with us if we have been sowing to our own flesh. Many a barque as it nears the haven, instead of having an abundant entrance ministered to it, is seen shattered and dismantled, as it learns under the hand of God the corruption which belongs to the allowed workings of the flesh. Faith carries us from self to Christ; but allowance of the flesh would tale us back to self and self-indulgence. The promises of God were sovereignly connected with Jacob; yet, knowing this, Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his venison. Isaac sowed to his own flesh, and would actually have blessed a profane man had he not been prevented by God, who allowed him to be deceived. "But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Not only hereafter will all that is heavenly be entered upon in that bright and blessed scene where all is pervaded by the Spirit, but by the Spirit's power "the heavenly door" is opened, so that we should have present enjoyment of the place where Christ is now. There is the sowing time and the reaping time; each has its own season, and the reaping time will surely come. Let us not faint then, for now is the season or opportunity for well-doing towards all men, but specially to those who are dear to Christ, the special circle of his interest, here called "the household of faith." Israel once had been the household of God, and the Galatians were in danger of going back to that circle; but the true children of Abraham were all who were "of faith," and so were blessed with believing Abraham. That the apostle should have

written so large an epistle with his own hand shows the intense importance of the subject, and his care that what was written to them should thus have in their eyes all the weight of apostolic authority. He then points out the real object of those who were urging the necessity of circumcision. They wished to make a fair appearance in the flesh. The cross of Christ is the judgment by God of man in the flesh. These Judaizing teachers endeavoured to make that prepossessing which God has condemned. No one knew better than Paul that the robe of a circumcised Pharisee, however seemly to men, and they would glory in it, could not cover the true character of the flesh - the cross alone can meet that - but to bring that to bear upon the seemliness of the flesh as well as on its vileness only entailed persecution. This Paul also well knew. As a blameless Pharisee he had been the bitterest opposer of Christ and persecutor of the saints, and now that he walked in the light of the glorified Christ who had been revealed in him, he experienced the same determined opposition from those who gloried in the flesh. But mark how Paul now gloried in the cross. He does not say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am saved" - no Christian but will do that; but can we say with Paul, "Through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"? A man upon a cross is a shameful thing to the world, and Christ had been there. It was the world's estimate of Christ to put Him there, and Paul accepted such an estimate for himself by the world - it was crucified to him, and he to it. He was outside the system of this world by the cross of Christ, while circumcision sought to make a fair appearance for man in it. In Christ Jesus it is new creation; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision can have place there, they are distinctions between man and his fellow in the flesh, but in Christ old things have passed away, and the new have come. We are not actually in them, but there is an ordering of ourselves in walk and ways according to this rule. It is bringing into our conduct here the standard or rule of what is new in Christ. To such, peace and mercy, and on the Israel of God - not Israel according to the flesh, but that Israel which He could own. As to anything further, the persecutions which the apostle had endured spewed plainly for whom he suffered and to whom he belonged. No one would move him from his allegiance to the One whose brands he bore. But there was no comfort for him in these sorrows which he has as to the Galatians, there is a reserve towards them, and he sends them no salutations, but concludes with the desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with their spirit. May the Lord keep our spirits in the sense of His grace, so that we may not be conscious of any reserve towards us because we are removed from Him that called us in the grace of Christ. T. H. R.

S. The Former and the Latter Rain.

The Former and the Latter Rain.

It is a true saying, "There is no royal road to learning," though some who learn may be more apt scholars than others. Thus is it in the things of God; there is no jumping into the position of a father in Christ, or of a full-grown spiritual man, save as each saint has been disciplined in the school of God, long or short as the period of discipline may be. Every believer is indeed complete in Christ. In Him he has a perfect standing as well as acceptance; "as He is so are we in this world," but we have to make acquaintance practically with the things which are ours, to increase in the knowledge of God, to grow up into Christ in all things, and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In order to this there must be diligence in "adding" (2 Peter 1:5), so that we should be neither barren nor unfruitful in this knowledge, and thus have an abundant entrance ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here we find that the experience and discipline of saints varies much. Very different is the experience of one "whose eyes look right on" from that of the man "whose eyes are in the ends of the earth." The one is going right on his way, and his experience will be the record of what he has found in the way of the Lord's choice, and the supplies of mercy and truth from Him who has made his soul to "lodge in goodness" (Psalms 25:13, margin) while walking in His paths.

Such an one will have an abundant entrance. The experience of the other will, much of it, tell of wanderings and mistakes in and through which he has had to learn himself and his own folly, as also the barrenness he has found for his own soul in the devious paths which have invited his footsteps. It will not be the record so much of attainment as of the fact that he has spent his labour for that which satisfieth not. It is the experience of a Lot, or of those who wandered in the wilderness forty years, rather than of an Abraham, a Caleb, or a Paul. In Lot we see no sense of the calling of God; he was a righteous man, but his faith scarcely rose above himself, and what in his own estimation was for his own benefit; he never laid hold of the gifts and calling of God. In the wanderers in the wilderness we find that, though the calling was known, there was no energy of faith in them to make the calling and election sure. Lot is delivered out of Sodom, and at last the people get into the land, after forty years have been spent in bringing the flesh to nothing. It is an immense thing when the soul really sees what God has taken it up for, when in the sense of what grace has given it lays hold of it, and pursues it as an object, not in any strength of its own, but in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost. There is a countervailing power, but "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." If one has not a clear sense of the calling, one cannot pursue it, and if our object is not in accordance with it, it must be something lower than that which God has put before us. Old habits of thought are often a hindrance to our perception. This was the difficulty with the disciples in those last moments of their company with the Lord on earth. He is unfolding to them the place to which He, as the earth-rejected One, was going, and their part with Him there, as well as the desires of His own heart, and His Father's as to them. Peter does not understand the fitness which the Lord's washing by the Word alone could give, nor Thomas that He alone was the way thither; and as to the unfoldings of the Father's thoughts, He has to say to them, at the

close of His discourse with them, "Do ye now believe?" and then tell them that they would be scattered each to his own, and leave Him alone, so little did they understand that their part was with Him. Peter would indeed have taken part with Jesus in his own way and strength, little knowing that to have this part according to the Lord's thoughts the energy of man must tumble down, and "another Comforter" enable him to enter into it.

Without going more into detail, I would only notice that in John 14:1-31 the promised Comforter is to be the power during the Lord's absence of knowing the divine Persons - the Father and the Son - and of oneness and living association with them. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." And again, to the one who keeps His commandments, "I will love him and will manifest myself to him," and "my Father will love him, and we will come to him." He would enable them also to know the things which were theirs. "He shall teach you all things," and in John 16:1-33, "He will guide you into all truth." And the things were, what Christ had said to them on earth - "my things" as the glorified One, and "things to come." He would demonstrate also the true condition of things as to the world which had refused Christ.

It becomes thus of immense importance, that the soul should have distinctly before it what the thoughts of the Father and the Son are about us, as now told out by the Holy Ghost sent down, and of equal importance, that we should know the power of the same Spirit, so that in faith we should make good the steps which we take in the hope of the calling. In the Old Testament the purposes of Jehovah about a people for the earth are recorded by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Christ, speaking in prophecy; but the rejection of the Lord from the earth has brought out the eternal counsels of God before the world was. When the Lord was here, He came as "the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers," and accordingly in Luke 4:1-44 He presents Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as personally anointed with the Holy Ghost, according to Isaiah 61:1-11, to bring in Israel's blessings, only to be at once thrust out of the city, and led out to the brow of the hill to be cast down headlong. Yet He manifested the power of the Holy Ghost in casting out demons, and healing every kind of sickness, so that it might have been as the days of heaven upon earth, had the heart of man been capable of receiving the blessing thus come in the person of the lowly Saviour. But, alas! there was the rejection of the power of the Holy Ghost with which He was anointed thus to bless, and of Himself also, until all culminated in the cross, where, according to the determinate counsel of God, He was crucified for Israel's guilt, and also that He might become the propitiation for the whole world.

Ascended up on high, He received the Holy Ghost to give down here in a twofold manner, as the former and the latter rain upon the earth. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost as the promise of the Father, and as the power of blessing for Israel and the earth, attested by Peter quoting the prophecy of Joel, which speaks not of the indwelling Spirit, but of its being poured out on all flesh in connection with those coining days of blessing. In Acts 3:1-26 the offer of the return of Jesus Christ, and consequently of these times of refreshing, was distinctly made by Peter to the rulers, and refused; and finally, the Holy Ghost, in that character, was definitely rejected by the stoning of Stephen. There remained His abiding presence as the promise of the Father, unfolding heavenly things (how blessedly to Stephen at that moment!) to a people who must be dissociated now from the earth, and associated with the heavens, which must still retain the rejected One. The earth is now left as it is, and Satan's energy in fallen and rebellious man possesses the scene. It has had the witness of the blessings in store for it, by the presence of Him who was anointed by

the Holy Ghost, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost Himself. It will have to await now the judgment which will sweep the power of Satan from it, "the day of vengeance of our God," ere "the Spirit can be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field . . . then righteousness will remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:1-20) Then will be the days of heaven upon earth, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Till then it is the wilderness still, nor can it be aught else; but we do not wait only for these times of refreshing, but for the summons to meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him in the Father's house in heavenly glory ere He comes, and we with Him, to bring them in. The effects of the cross of Christ will then be made good, both in the resurrection bodies of the saints in glory, and in millennial blessings on the earth; meanwhile the Holy Ghost is unfolding to us all the value of the cross, resurrection, and present place in glory of the Lord Jesus, as well as His coming again; and as dwelling in us He is our power of present enjoyment of all.

Thus the wilderness becomes the place where the energy of the Spirit of God ought to be known in the present enjoyment of the revelation of the Father and the Son, and as the power of worship and service, and entrance into heavenly things. Alas! it is often the place where the flesh in us is discovered, and through the exercise and discipline of the way practically annulled. Still, how blessed to have such a Comforter, faithful to Christ, abiding with us for ever, and dwelling in us. It is the former rain we possess, not the latter; the power of the Spirit of God is not yet turning the wilderness into a fruitful field, but filling our hearts with heavenly springs while we are there. If the flesh is allowed, instead of enjoying the heavenly springs, we shall be murmuring because it is a wilderness, and our own blessed portion in grace will be forgotten. If the grace is tasted, there will be joy in tribulations also, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. The tribulations of the wilderness will be the opportunity for the display of the sufficiency of grace; but if the difficulties and privations to the flesh which we find there govern us, then it will be the place which God will use to chasten and judge the flesh, in order to our learning practically what His sentence upon the flesh is.

Every truth connected with the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ must be applied to us by the Holy Ghost. How can I reckon myself to be dead, save as the death of Christ is applied to me by Him? The water of separation (Numbers 19:1-22) is the application of the judgment of sin, which took place nearly 2000 years ago on Calvary, in present power to the soul by the Holy Ghost through the Word. To talk about being dead with Christ is otherwise a mere doctrine. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the true character of the world and its prince, and unfolds to us what the position is into which the Lord by death and resurrection has led those who believe on Him. How else can I enter into it? The present position of the saints is characterized by His indwelling; nor is there a single blessing, which through grace is ours, that can be known and enjoyed apart from Him, while we are still down here in bodies of sin and death.

It is blessed, as we think of how oft the flesh in us grieves and hinders the Spirit, to see His power so working in an earthen vessel like Paul, that he could be "out of himself to God" (2 Corinthians 5:13), while if he were sober, it was to come down to the actual state of the saints at Corinth; but in the energy of the Spirit he so looked at everything as it was before God, by the death and

resurrection of Christ - flesh gone - and in Him new creation, that he knew nothing else. And while it is as true for us as for him, that in Christ it is new creation, and nothing else, how have we to speak of the actual condition of ourselves as saints, and the wilderness as the place where we are learning to estimate the flesh aright; and as we learn so to do, to find out what is our own true and blessed portion.

We have the former rain - "the first-fruits of the Spirit." (Romans 8:23.) We cannot too much press this on one another. In Laodicea, the apostle's grief - those "who mind earthly things" - is fully developed. No wilderness is recognized there, nor association by the Holy Ghost with heavenly things. In Philadelphia there is present association with Christ and what is of Him. How can it be but by the Holy Ghost? for "if we live after the flesh we are about to die; but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body we shall live." Mortifying is by the Spirit, enabling us practically to apply to the deeds of the body the fact that we are dead, that the old man has been crucified with Christ. The slavery of sin in the flesh has been broken, and we are free to live in the Spirit, and thus to enjoy our own true position of sons as being led of Him by whom the cry of Abba, Father, is produced in us. What a moment will it be, when the creation will be delivered from the slavery of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God; that will be the moment of the latter rain. Then we who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ will have, not only glory ourselves with Christ, but also the joy of administering with Him in grace to the now groaning creation the liberty of that glory.

He'll bid the whole creation smile, And hush its groan. And we are to be engaged in hushing groans with Him! What then is now our place as indwelt by the Spirit? Suffering with Him, and in patience waiting for what we hope for, and have the earnest of, in the first-fruits of the Spirit - that blessed time when we shall have the redemption of the body, and our place of sonship manifested, and when our groans and those of creation will be hushed for ever. Then "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle tree;" till then, we are in the place where thorns are, and where our Lord wore them when He tasted the effects of sin in the suffering which had come in through it. Man, who was set in dominion in the earth, had let the usurper rule it, and till the bright morning of his overthrow, it is the place where those who are going to reign suffer with Him. But while groaning in sympathy with that which groans, it is ours, as having the first fruits of the Spirit, and enjoying the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and those bright anticipations of the moment when the Lord Jesus will take the place of dispenser of blessing in the power of the Holy Ghost on earth and in heaven, if only our poor hearts can hold ever such a trickling of the living water, to let that little rill go out to the need of this poor world. And if we think of our own failure as saints, but know that nothing has failed on God's side, that with Him there is no straitening, may He enable each one of us that can put his trust in the living God to answer to the cry of the prophetic watchman, "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." (Isaiah 57:14.) The stumbling-blocks we encounter are the results of the Church's, of our failure; it is not a hostile world but a corrupted Christianity that entangles our way; they are not so much the thorns of persecution as the many sorrows of worldly lusts that pierce us through. The steps of the saints drag in the desert, but the heavenly things are untouched. Christ is the same. What is founded on His death and resurrection abides. He is coming to make it good, and, blessed be His name, the Holy Spirit abides. He may have to be occupied in showing us how little we have answered to our calling, but it is of grace that it is so;

for never did He awaken in a heart the desire to lay hold on what grace has given but that it might be satisfied. May that blessed Spirit who abides with us awaken in the heart of each saint a present answer to the thoughts and desires of the Lord Jesus about us. It is a strange mystery of love, that we who by nature are the very opposites of all that He was and is, should be taken up by Him in grace, and separated by the power of His death and resurrection from all that we were - sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and the measure of our sanctification is His place in glory. But more, that in passing through the wilderness, where our hearts are put to the test, we should learn how that love stoops to wash our feet, so that there should be no hindrance to our having part with Him. There too (in the wilderness) the Spirit unfolds to us; aye, and can fill our hearts with what we shall so soon possess. If the heart of any is thus moved to lay hold by faith of what it will be to be with Him and like Him, will it not produce a corresponding answer in the walk down here, and an echo to the voice of the Spirit and the Bride as they invite the Bright and Morning Star to come? T. H. Reynolds.

Whenever it is necessary to clothe the truth in attractive forms to secure attention, it is a sign that the saints are becoming weary of the bread of God - which is Christ. (Numbers 21:5.)

S. The Holy Vessels

The Holy Vessels.

Exodus 25:1-40.

Before considering the details of the holy vessels contained in this chapter I would revert for a moment to the offerings which the children of Israel were to bring. They were to offer willingly such materials as were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle and its vessels. These materials were used in showing forth the varied moral glories and characters which by faith we can now see in our Lord Jesus Christ. They are here looked at in detail, but were about to be formed into a completed whole. Gold represents the righteousness which takes its character from the very nature and glory of God - that which could be in His presence in the holiest - hence, as often said, divine righteousness. Silver perhaps is more difficult to understand, but I believe it will be found to represent the grace of God according to His own truth and faithfulness. It is thus connected with His righteous ways (there was no silver in the construction of the temple), as also with a present standing in His favour. The word of God is compared to silver refined (Psalms 12:6), and the trumpets which announced the testimony and mind of God were of silver also. In Christ, the Yea and Amen, grace secures every promise of God according to His own truth and faithfulness. Brass is righteousness according to the claims of God upon men, maintained in the first instance by the discriminating judgment of good and evil. Evil judged and condemned, and good accepted in Him who loved righteousness and hated iniquity; this was by fire on the brazen altar, and secondly, by the searching power of the Word in the laver. Of the other materials I will say little until we come to the way they are used. Blue, it is generally admitted, denotes what is heavenly in character; purple, kingdom glory; scarlet, earthly glory. I think it will be found that as silver is placed in moral order between the gold and brass, so is purple placed between the blue and the scarlet - the kingdom will have a heavenly and an earthly glory. Fine linen denotes the perfect purity of human nature in Christ - that which was pure and perfect inwardly, while the goat's hair represents that which is more outward - a holy, separate life, such as could be seen by men. Rams' skins - consecration to God; this again, is inward. Badgers' skins - outward; the watchful, guarded walk of one so consecrated. Oil - the power of the Holy Spirit; and precious stones - the perfections of Christ, in which His people are set.

Here, then, we have the materials to be embodied in that which is to be the sanctuary of the Lord, where all speaks of His manifesting Himself in man and to man, but not yet fully in glory, for the tabernacle is set up in the wilderness, and hence the silver comes in.

We now come to the description of the vessels. God begins with the ark. We do not learn the precious truths which are here figured in the order in which they are presented. We necessarily begin at the door of the tabernacle, where was the brazen altar. God begins in the very holiest, where His own glory dwells. This shows us the place which the ark has - it being the fullest type of Christ - in the details of the tabernacle. There Jehovah dwelt between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat. Though made of shittim-wood it was covered with gold within and without. It

represented that which was human, but seen only in the perfection of divine righteousness. It would seem, from Deuteronomy 10:1-5, that Moses made a preliminary ark of wood only (no gold is mentioned), in which to put the second tables of the law after the first were broken - a gracious provision, but not the full embodiment of the mind of God here presented. The ark was not only the depository of the testimony of God, such as could only be in Him who said "Thy law is within my heart." This was the perfection of man's righteousness for God; but the shittim-wood covered with gold speaks of One in whom God's holy nature and character were perfectly glorified, as He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." All was suited to the holiest, to the very glory of God who dwelt there, and whose presence must judge everything according to what He is Himself. Above the testimony was a mercy-seat or propitiatory of pure gold. There Jehovah dwelt. There the blood of the bullock for Aaron and his sons, and the blood of the goat - the Lord's lot - was sprinkled on the day of atonement. In the holiest it was more than the question of meeting the responsibility of man; there the character of God Himself, in respect of sin, was vindicated by the blood on the mercy-seat. Hence, not only does God justify the sinner who believes in Jesus, but Christ (in whom all the glory of God centres and is declared, and who is in that glory in the excellency of His own person) having glorified God about sin, the believer looked at as in Christ becomes the righteousness of God in Him. We must remember that the type could not set this forth fully, it was only shadowed at best; but we have in Christ and His work that which has been fully estimated in the holiest of all, according to the glory of Him who dwells there.

Then of one piece with the mercy-seat two cherubim were made, at either end. They are symbolical of judicial action by God in righteousness. In Genesis 3:24 they are thus seen in connection with the responsibility of man. In Ezekiel they form part of the chariot-throne on which the glory of Jehovah sat when He came to judge the city of Jerusalem; so, in Psalms 18:10, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly" when He executed judgments on behalf of His anointed. Here too we see the responsibility of man in the tables of stone that were in the ark. It is maintained according to the judicial estimate of God's righteousness in the holiest. We can say it has been perfectly met in Christ - the mercy-seat on which the glory of God now rests. The cherubim looked down on this mercy-seat of pure gold. They were of it. Every question of good and evil has been eternally solved in Him, and God has been glorified. In the cherubim we have the judicial estimate of this according to the attributes of the divine glory. Their faces are toward the mercy-seat, the throne of God in divine righteousness, but the place of the sprinkled blood.

Further we see (Exodus 25:22) that it was the place where Jehovah met with Moses to commune with him, and there he received the divine communications for the children of Israel. Aaron, after the breakdown and death of his two sons, was debarred access into the holiest, save on the day of atonement once in the year. There was no such prohibition given to Moses. He is thus the Apostle of Israel permitted to have direct communication with the mind of Him who dwelt within the veil. (Compare Numbers 7:89; Numbers 12:8.) We have thus a foreshadowing of those blessed communications which are not merely connected with the people's need, but also with the glory of God in His own sanctuary. In Christ we have more than could be shadowed here. He was the sent One of the Father speaking the words of God. This He ever did, not, as Moses, going in to receive the communications. He was ever, so to speak, in the holiest, and yet Himself the holiest, the dwelling-place of God. Yet more, He was always the Son in the bosom of the Father, ever speaking as from thence. "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself."

We must not think that this direction as to Moses' place at the mercy-seat comes in here accidentally. Its very place shows us its importance. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with God speaking in the Son, and then we have the unfolding of the whole system of things connected with the heavenly calling of which Christ is the Apostle, and which is brought in consequently on His taking His place within, at the right hand of God. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the counsels of God in Christ are made known, we see the important place of apostleship. The apostles and prophets are the foundations, as communicating these counsels according to the hidden wisdom of God, on which the saints are being built up, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building is being fitly framed together; and in chapter 3 the apostle speaks of the administration of the mystery in grace committed to him, to the intent that the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The unsearchable riches of the Christ were, so to speak, the treasure-house of this manifold wisdom.

We see then what an important place apostolic communication holds, and how fitly the peculiar privilege accorded to Moses, of Jehovah communing with him from the mercy-seat, introduces the details of the other parts of the tabernacle. But while considering the full and blessed revelation of God in Christ, we must remember that no figures can portray the fulness. By the death of Christ, the veil has been rent, behind which the ark stood. God has come out in grace, where before He sat in judicial character upon a golden seat, and a new and living way has been opened for man to go in. The holy place is now filled with the glory of redemption, and Christ Himself appears in the presence of God for us. We can be before God - blessed place! - in virtue of the blood of Christ and according to His perfections. It is true humility to accept our place within the holiest, because we enter through the veil where nothing of self can have a place, for all is filled with Christ. Besides our place, it will be possible for Israel to have a place according to the new covenant to be made with them God has been glorified in respect of sin for them as for us. The law which they had violated, and which was then deposited in the ark, will be written in their hearts. They will learn how it was magnified and made honourable in their Messiah, the true Ark of the Covenant, by whose Spirit they will be instructed in it.

We come now to the table of showbread and the golden candlestick - sustenance and light - the one characterised by the number 12, the latter by 7. If we take the various ways in which twelve is used in Scripture, it will be found to be connected with the order of God's administration by or in man. This is seen in there being 12 tribes of Israel, and in the use of this number in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Lord also appointed 12 apostles to be with Him and to preach. On the table of showbread 12 loaves, representing the 12 tribes, were set in order before the Lord. The candlestick had 7 branches. It is the well known number of spiritual perfection and completeness. This is seen to be the case even in a bad sense in Matthew 12:45, as well as in a good one. (Revelation 1:4.) In these two vessels, then, we have the witness of divine order and sustainment, and that which makes manifest - light in the completeness of its diverse beauty. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Knowledge of His Will and Fruit-bearing.

The Knowledge of His Will and Fruit-bearing.

Notes of an address on Colossians 1:13.

I desire to speak a little about the knowledge of His will (Colossians 1:9) as connected with fruit-bearing. The apostle had never seen these Colossians to whom he writes, but he had heard that they were specially characterised by two things; viz., faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the saints. The same thing is said of the Ephesians. (Ephesians 1:15.) We get them also joined together in 1 John 3:23. "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." John putting both as commandments of the blessed Lord. Believing here does not refer to the soul's salvation. He is not writing to sinners, but to saints, and as such the commandment comes to us. You have believing spoken of in the same manner in John 14:1-31, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," which is evidently not believing for salvation. The great thing before Him was, that He was going out of the world, and would no longer be here for them to see; but in heaven He would be the object of their faith. I may believe that Jesus died for me; but the question is, Have I got Him as the object for my faith outside this world? In the end of John 13:1-38 the Lord says to His disciples, in view of His going away from them, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Why new? Because the teaching was quite new to them. As Jews they loved their neighbour, and hated their enemies, and rightly so, because their enemies were the enemies of God. But now, instead of finding the circle for their love in Israel, they were introduced into a circle entirely outside this world, and they were to love one another, as in that new circle of affections; or, according to Paul, they loved the saints as belonging to a glorified Christ. Can we start here? and do I find my affections and interests outside this world with those who belong to Christ? The truth we get in Colossians all goes on this line. They had received the gospel, which bore the blessed fruit of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints, but they were deficient in the apprehension of the hope, and the apostle stirs them up about it. If Christ in heaven is faith's object, then the hope must be there also. It is thus described (Colossians 1:5): "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." The gospel was bringing forth fruit in them since the day they heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. The apostle could thank God for this; besides Epaphras also had declared unto him their love in the Spirit. Here their love to the saints unfolds and develops; they did not know Paul in the flesh, it could only be in the Spirit they loved him. I might know a brother, and be drawn to him because of something attractive in the flesh, but love in the Spirit is because he belongs to Christ. Now love in the Spirit takes in "all saints," as we have it in Colossians 1:4. It is a blessed thing when the heart gets linked up in some way with what is of Christ. It is real fruit-bearing, and it is from this point that the apostle desires to lead them on. You know the apostle had a double ministry; to him was committed the ministry of the gospel for the wide world, and of the church to unfold the mystery. He wants their souls connected with the chief interests of Christ now that He is glorified. Therefore he takes hold of the point they had reached - faith in Christ and love to the saints - and seeks to

lead them on as the Spirit of God would certainly do with us today, and first he would establish them in the hope of the gospel. In the epistle to the Philippians Paul says, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." He was the mighty champion for the truth. But this man is now in bonds, the devil having succeeded in getting the great champion into prison. Satan gained no real advantage; "for," says the apostle, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He is like a man going into conflict assured beforehand of victory. He is in touch with Christ as to all the circumstances and sufferings in his path. He was set for the defence of the gospel, and he thanks God and prays with joy for these dear Philippians, because of their fellowship in the gospel. Now they had sent him a little money, which he speaks of as fruit acceptable, and well-pleasing to God, because given to him in the interest of Christ's gospel. So he says to them, "Ye have me in your hearts." "Ye are all participators in my grace." It was a great thing to say of them - they shared in his grace - as the one set for the gospel, through sending help to him. They might not be able to understand all the apostle's teaching, many of them did not (Php 3:15-16), but their fellowship in sending some money to him enabled the apostle to connect them with the grace which wrought in him for the furtherance of Christ's interests on earth.

Some here may not understand all the precious truth we have had before us, but the Spirit of God can take up the measure of the grace of Christ in each in order to lead us into the sense of being connected with the whole circle of His interests. What an encouragement when the grace of God gives us to know something of this, and we can each say, "I want to know more of it." The apostle saw what was defective in the Colossians, which if not corrected would carry them back to human wisdom and ordinances. And I would say to young Christians, Remember, you have been brought into connection with Christ, and all that is of Christ; you may only be able to pray for the saints, or send a little money, but the Lord will enlarge the interests of Christ in your heart. (Colossians 1:9) "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Paul had heard of their faith and love, and this leads him to desire that they may go on to the full knowledge of the will of God. In connection with this I would refer to Ephesians 1:17 : "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." I do not think the Colossians had got as far as the Ephesians in the knowledge of God. If I want to know God's will about me, I must begin where He does, and that is with Himself, I must know Him. This puts us on God's side of things. Paul says to the Corinthians, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world." Thus when we speak of the full knowledge of His will, we find ourselves in a region where all is connected with God, and into which man as man, no matter how wise he may be in other matters, cannot enter. You find a person converted, and his first thought is, "Now I must serve the Lord." A very right desire if properly directed. Look at Christendom and the various systems in it. All serving the Lord, as they call it; but how much of their so-called service is after the will of man and there is little or no thought as to their doing it according to the word and will of God. To get into God's circle of service I must understand His will. Now Christ is the wisdom of God, and from Him and in Him we get all the hidden wisdom of God, and knowledge of God's will, which can never be attained by human intellect. In Christ I learn my position, my standing, my wealth, my hope, and much more. Taking my place at the feet of Jesus (like Mary of old) as being nothing, and of myself knowing nothing, then He unfolds the full knowledge of God to my heart, because His word reveals to me what He Himself is.

Again we see the same effects produced in Paul; all he had and was he counted but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. What do such effects show? That there must be surpassing power and excellency in Jesus. Paul found in Christ the opening out of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He had been brought as a dead man to His feet, and when once Paul's eye rested on a glorified Christ he could say, "That I may know Him." That is knowledge indeed. Now the will of God is in connection with the Christ whom He has glorified. As to fruit, I am to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit." It is not merely that I am not to disgrace the gospel, but to walk worthy of the Lord, the One who is the wisdom of God, and who, when down here, always did the Father's will. He said, "I do always those things which please Him"; and, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and finish His work." The will of God is necessarily connected with Him who came to do it, and in proportion as you get into the knowledge of it will you walk worthy of the Lord, and bring forth fruit in the most ordinary details of life. We are to walk as He walked. No matter where the Lord has set us, or what our circumstances may be, it is our blessed privilege in all the details of our everyday life to bring forth fruit. You see this illustrated in Joseph. He was in prison, but the wisdom of God was with him there, so that when the chief baker and the chief butler dreamed dreams, he could interpret them, and became, so to speak, to the one the saviour of life, and to the other of death; and yet Joseph was faithful in prison as before when a slave in Potiphar's house; in both he bore fruit, and had the secret of God with him. Do not think that serving the Lord is by doing some great thing, but as those in wisdom's secret seek to be faithful in little things, then the Lord will give the increase. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," and, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's" (1:e., what God has committed to you to be used for Him), "who will give you that which is your own?" It is in our ordinary occupations that we prove ourselves to be either faithful or unfaithful. When we speak of service or fruit-bearing, the heart naturally turns to John 15:1-27, where the Lord says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Apart from me ye can do nothing." The blessed Lord was just going out of the world, and He says, as it were, to His own, whom He leaves in it: I want the Father to be glorified in you. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," but in order that it may be so ye must abide in me, which gives us the thought of the disciples being in present communion with the mind of Christ. Thus we see that fruit-bearing now is not merely connected with the gospel which saves me (the gospel had produced fruit in the Colossians 5:6), but with the Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone out of the world, and with the wisdom and spiritual understanding by which the walk is reproduced in us of Him who is now in the glory of God.

There is another figure of this fruit-bearing in the priestly robe, which was all of blue, and had round about upon the hem of it a golden bell, and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate. This, was to be upon Aaron to minister, that his sound should be heard when he goeth into the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out. Thus we get fruit and testimony connected with the presence of Aaron in the holy place. When the Lord Jesus Christ took His place at God's right hand, having accomplished eternal redemption, the Holy Ghost came out in testimony. The testimony of divine righteousness being in the presence of God, the Holy Ghost can be here on the ground of that righteousness; and fruit is produced by the Holy Ghost in us which God can accept, and which delights His heart, fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. But remember the bell and the pomegranate went together, and were never detached from the hem of the priestly robe. "Apart from me ye can do nothing."

Fruit is not only for God, but from God by Jesus Christ. As He said to Israel, "From me is thy fruit found." Now that divine righteousness is established in the Holiest, the fruits of righteousness are to flow out in the saints. If you know your place in the Holiest as having divine righteousness in the presence of God, you learn that all fruit-bearing flows from your having been brought into that place, and thus it will be after a new order. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Mind of Christ

The Mind of Christ

Php 2:1-30. The occasion of this epistle was the gift sent to the apostle through Epaphroditus, and Paul takes hold of this exhibition of grace on their part to give it its value as done to him in the interests of Christ. It is a great point that any grace given to us should come out into activity, then the Lord can give us more. There may be a great deal of work with us, but very little bringing grace into activity. God delights to see Christ reproduced in us, and as the grace of Christ is in activity He gives more. "To him that hath shall be given." But the moment there is the setting forth of Christ, there is sure to be opposition. The apostle speaks in the end of Php 1:1-30 being in the same conflict which they had seen in him. Satan tried to stop the testimony to the Lord Jesus by leading the rulers of this world to put the apostle into bonds, and he was trying to mar the testimony of the Philippians by want of unity. He will do all he can to stop any expression of Christ in the saints. The moment there was testimony for Christ in the world in Abel's sacrifice, Satan tried to blot it out, and Cain killed his brother; but it was futile, "he being dead yet speaketh." So in Paul, Christ would be magnified in his body whether by life or by death, through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Now turning to the Philippians, all desired to serve Christ and had ministered to the apostle, but Satan was seeking to bring in diversity of thought and mind among them. To correct it the apostle says, If there be any encouragement in Christ, comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies. He directs their eyes to Christ, and away from one another. Fellowship is in the Spirit, there is no bond of union for us in the flesh. Nothing would tend to disunion more than looking at each other according to the flesh; we should be greatly discouraged in doing this, but there is encouragement in Christ. If I look at myself and see how little I am for Christ, and see, too, it is because the flesh is allowed, and if I look at my fellow-saints and see how feeble their steps are - what discouragement: but that will not do, we must have our eyes turned away to Christ, there is encouragement in Him, for there is such comfort of love in Him, such tenderness and compassion. There is always encouragement in looking to Christ. Then we can get near each other. The flesh in us is all unlovely and we cannot trust it. The springs of life are in Christ, and we have received of His Spirit; thus we can regard one another as Christ looks at us - in love. The Spirit of God by the apostle always seeks to keep us up to our privileges; he would have us in the reality of God's thoughts as to us, and not let us, through the flesh in some form, sink below our privilege. See how he insists with the Galatians on the privilege of sonship, and of being children of Jerusalem above; he will not let them turn back to Judaism and Jerusalem on earth. The Spirit of God must enforce in our souls God's own grace towards us, and as we drink in of the Spirit of Christ we understand what fellowship in the Spirit is, and there are bowels and mercies instead of fault-finding and disunion.

"Fulfil ye my joy," says the apostle. It is as if he had said: "You have cheered me by the grace manifested in you through your fellowship with me in the gospel, and you will fill up my joy if Christ so gets His place in your hearts, that you are all of one accord, of one mind." But he wants this to be brought about by the mind of Christ being in them. Look for a moment at Php 2:13, where we

have the willing and the doing of God's good pleasure. In a certain way the Philippians had clone, they had communicated with him; but along with this he had evidently heard that there was not one mind, "the willing" was consequently defective. The mind here is not the thinking faculty, but how I think. The mind of Christ in us is that we learn to think according to Christ's thoughts. Now Christ's thoughts and deeds were in perfect harmony according to God's will and pleasure. We get two actions of Christ here; one was, that when subsisting in the form of God, He emptied Himself, or made Himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant; but was it not Christ's mind thus to do God's pleasure? It was His great thought in eternal counsel. He came to do; it was so written in the volume of the book of eternal counsel; but His mind, the thought of His heart, was thus declared, He came to do God's will. There are many things we might feel it right to do, and we do them, but perhaps we do not think according to what we do. The great thing with us is the renewing of our mind, so that we are brought to think as Christ thinks. It is not only to do the right thing, but to do it like Christ would have us do it, as those who think according to His pleasure. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The spring of our actions is in Him. In Psalms 32:1-11 the Lord says, "I will instruct thee. . . . I will counsel thee, Mine eye upon thee." (Margin.) Man has mind and intelligence; a horse or mule may be made to go in a certain line, but they have no intelligence as to their master's mind; but God has given man a mind to obey intelligently, and in the Christian the mind is renewed and brought under the constraining power of love. So we have in Romans 12:1-21, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," and all this is "intelligent service." The mind of Christ was to be here for God's pleasure: "I come to do Thy will." God's will is His pleasure, as we read, "the good pleasure of His will." What He commands us is the delight of His own blessed holy nature. The time is coming when God's will will be done on earth as in heaven; all will be filled by Christ, and all will be according to God's pleasure. The second great action of Christ which comes before us in this chapter is that when He was found here in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In every step which the Lord Jesus took down to the cross, He was the Object of God's pleasure. In life He could say, "I do always those things which please Him," and in death, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life." At the beginning of His ministry, heaven opened to Him, and the Father's voice said, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased"; and at the close of His service in Israel on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." The Spirit of God has recorded this good pleasure of God in Christ that we might have the true sense of God's pleasure, that our souls might be brought under the obligation of love, and so have our thoughts in accord with the thought of Christ. The apostle wanted the Philippians to give up their own thoughts and mind, and to have only one mind, and that the mind of Christ. When Christ stepped down into the world He had created He took the place of a servant. We might have thought that He would take the highest place in His own creation, but He took the form of a servant, and became in the likeness of men; He did not come in Godhead glory, but as a man. And He did not take an exalted place among men, but being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death. There was the mind of Christ. Are we in the mind of Christ?

We have a reference to this obedience of Christ in Php 2:13, "as ye have always obeyed." Subjection to Christ is an immense point, because we come under the constraining power of love. Then the apostle exhorts them on that ground to work out their own salvation. When we know

Christ as Lord we can do this. We cannot be under two masters, and Satan cannot lord it over us by means of the flesh and the world if the Lord has His place in our hearts. Salvation is realized as we are in the hand of Christ. Perhaps we were being overwhelmed by the things of the flesh and the world, and our cry was, "Lord, save me." It was not that we doubted the efficacy of His work, but we did not know His hand yet, that His outstretched hand draws to Himself. Thus we have in John 10:1-42, "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Can I be overwhelmed in the company of Christ? Then we realize the power of His hand. "Working out your own salvation" is bringing it into effect; that is, that being drawn to Christ out from the influence of the world, we are for God's pleasure. When near to Christ we have His mind, as those who are in association with Him. We are in a new circle where the rule of love constrains, and God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus, too, we bear the characteristics of the children of God, and Christ is expressed in us. It has been often said, it is not how much we do, but the quality of the service, and that can only be right as the mind of Christ is in us. It is far more that we should express Christ in what we do, than be attempting to serve much apart from being in His mind. May the Lord keep us in the blessed circle of the divine constraint of love. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Path of Faith

The Path of Faith Hebrews 11:1-10.

We have here the characteristics of faith as set forth in the saints of old. Sin having entered into the world, wherever there was faith the man of faith perceived that the present state of things was not suited to God, and consequently by faith he looked outside of the existing world to God. He could not perceive heavenly things as we understand them, for Christ had not appeared, nor had He been rejected and raised from the dead.

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." (Hebrews 11:3) This is not a mere belief that this present universe was created by God - of course, we believe that - but it is said, "by the word of God." The word is the expression of the mind and thoughts of God, and by faith we understand, not merely believe the fact, that the worlds were made by the word of God - that the thoughts and purpose of a divine Person were expressed in creation, and not merely that all was the effect of divine power. Thus we read in Genesis 1:1-31 again and again, "And God said." We find ourselves, so to speak, in the presence of God, and the soul realises that the living God was there speaking; "He spake, and it was done." We cannot separate the word of God from what He is; His word is the expression of His mind, and we understand by faith that the worlds were framed according to the plan and purpose of the divine thoughts. Chapter 1 of this epistle shows us that all were created by the Son, and that He is the appointed Heir of all things. This gives us the unfolding of the divine mind, that God had in view a sphere in which He was going to display His glory in Christ the anointed Man, and the Church is to be associated with Him in it. But when we look at the world as it is morally, what do we see? A system which has gradually grown up, and is in opposition to God and His Word. All the moral elements of this present world came in by the fall. But is God's purpose going to be frustrated? Never. We get the answer to this in Psalms 33:1-22. Psalms 32:1-11 had already described the blessedness of a forgiven man, and now in Psalms 33:1-22 we get for the first time "the new song." "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery. ... Sing unto Him a new song." The "new song" involves that there is to be an entirely new state of things established upon earth; it celebrates the fact that "the earth is filled with the goodness of the Lord." Now all this hangs on the word of the Lord. "For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth." His own character is to be made good in it. "He loveth righteousness and judgment." Now it is the same word as that by which the heavens were made - the word of the Lord - the earth stood fast by it. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Then we have in Psalms 33:11, "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." He does not give up His purpose as to the world which He has made. His creation, and His counsel as to it, depend upon His word. If we look at the state of things in this world, the moral elements are the same as in the Psalmist's day, though the development of those elements may be different; but we read, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." He does this that His own counsel may stand. Faith understands this.

Thus far it is what we understand by faith. Then the line of faith begins with Abel; he wanted to reach the blessed God, and he approached Him in a way that recognised that God was morally apart from the existing state of things. Not so Cain: his thought was that man as he is, and the world as it is, both would do for God; and he is rejected. Abel recognised that death lay upon man as the judgment of God, and he came to God by death. There was in Cain insensibility to the fact that man was no longer in paradise, where, so to speak, the river of God watered the garden, but in the place of the curse, with death upon him, and having to eat bread by the sweat of his brow. The devil had got between the heart of man and God; and in Cain we have the proof that there was no return of heart to God. Further, the murderous character of Satan comes out in slaying Abel by Cain's hand. We can well understand how Satan, having tempted man away from God, endeavoured to hush the voice which spoke of a way back to God by sacrifice and death, that God had accepted Abel with his offering; but "he being dead yet speaketh." He passed out of this world, but the testimony abides that faith had found the path into God's favour. In Enoch we have the faith which perceived the pleasure of God in having man with Him. Enoch could not have approached God except as one conscious of the testimony borne to Abel, and of the ground on which God can have man in His presence. Death severs us from all here, and yet it is death that brings us to God in the excellency and savour of Christ's offering. Then, in walking with God, he passed by faith into the scene where death is not. By faith he was translated that he should not see death. It is a great thing to look at these saints of old and see that faith walked in a path which led them outside of present things. It was a power in the soul, which led them to take the place of strangers and pilgrims in this one. Enoch walked with God; and to walk with God is to please Him. He was already in spirit outside of this world when God took him. We know what a dreadful thing death is in this world when it rolls in upon us, but Enoch did not see it. In Jordan we see how death has been turned into gain for us. When Israel came to it they found not one drop of water. Death is that which comes upon all things that are here. Israel left behind all the lustings of the wilderness in passing through Jordan, but they reached Canaan, God's side of things. We need to enter into this; but this is not faith, but experience. Enoch's faith was very simple; by it he chose God's side of things; he walked with God. Enoch did not see death; he was actually translated - a type of the rapture of the heavenly saints. But the faith which characterised Enoch should characterise us, and thus our souls be carried above this present world. As we survey it we must be conscious that it is not according to God. The great endeavour which man makes by legislation and otherwise to make it bearable to live in, only proves what it is. Faith looks outside of it to the right hand of God where Christ is, and has the sense of the good pleasure of God in man; and that it is God's pleasure that we should be in association with Christ, and seek the things where Christ is at His right hand. Ephesians shows us, so to speak, our present translation to the place where Christ is.

Noah's faith recognised that the world was a judged scene. Here we return to our being actually down here, where we need to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his house. We have not to prepare an ark, but we have to accept the shelter of the death of Christ and the end of all flesh before God, and so find how we are borne through a judged scene in the power of God's salvation.

These first three witnesses in the line of faith belonged to the world that was before the flood, "the world that then was," as Peter speaks. Abraham is the first witness in the world "that now is," and in which we find ourselves today. It was out of this world that the God of glory called Abram. Man

in this world blesses himself, but God's word to Abraham was, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." By faith he went out, not knowing whither he went. The point with Abraham was, that he was to receive an inheritance from God. Hence "he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"; there were many cities of man's building, but the man of faith only sojourned where the Canaanite was, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. 'We, too, are strangers where we are heirs; we shall inherit all with Christ, but we do not take it now. All will be blessing upon earth when the holy city Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God. It is the city Abraham looked for, the city to which we belong. There is nothing of man there; it has the glory of God.

What I seek to impress upon you is that faith carries us along in the path where the light of God's thought and purpose shines. It brings us to a scene where everything is of God. It is a wonderful thing to have the light of God's glory in Christ, and to be able to shape our course according to it; it carries us outside of things here, but inside with the blessed God, who has given us to know His pleasure. It is a great comfort to know that the whole universe will be filled with His glory, and that the heavenly city is the vessel of it. Meanwhile we have to move on in faith, with our eye upon Him who is the author and finisher of faith. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Plains of Moab.

The Plains of Moab.

Numbers 22:1-41.

T. H. Reynolds.

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It is a blessed thing to begin with God. He ever acts from what He is, not from what we are, and the final result of this will be that man will be blessed through eternal ages according to the outgoings of the heart of God. In carrying out this purpose He has disclosed the mystery of His will that every thing in heaven and earth is to be headed up in Christ as man. Alan is the being in whom the blessing is to flow out through the creation of God. He is blessed in order to be a blessing, and the highest form of it is seen in a Man being now in the glory of God, and the Church united to Him there as His body. On earth Israel are the people, having their own special links with Christ as Son of Abraham and Son of David, in whom the blessing of all the nations of the earth is secured. They were a family, a nation chosen of God out of the system of nations which compose the world, to be Jehovah's witnesses and the vessel of His blessing to all the families of the earth. The head of this family was separated by divine call from country, kindred, and father's house. The nation of Israel were separated from the world by divine call also (Hosea 11:1), made good in the power of redemption. The world out of which they were taken is morally a system of which Satan is the god and prince. Of Israel God has said, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." (Isaiah 43:21.) No wonder that such a people were the objects of the deadly hostility of Satan. In order to bless the world God must first take a people out of the world and connect them with Himself. Hence He said to Abraham, when He called him out, "I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing." It is ever so. The Lord speaks of those whom He has chosen out of the world thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and then He adds His purpose as to them: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Israel then was a nation in whom the rights and title of God, in the blessing and government of the world, were to be made good against the power of Satan exercised amongst the Gentiles. This power was specially maintained by idolatry, which was in reality the worship of demons. We can now understand that Satan's hostility to God, and his opposition to the purpose of God in blessing, would be manifested in antagonism against the people thus separated from other nations to be the special objects of His dealings. His first effort was to hold them captive. When that is unavailing, his opposition is directed against them to weaken and spoil them, and, if possible, intervene between them and the Lord who had chosen them. Two questions are thus brought before us; first, the state of the people themselves - sinful and powerless; secondly, the sovereignty of God in goodness and power, whereby He effectuates His own purpose and call.

We have said that Israel was called out of Egypt where they were in captivity under the power of Pharaoh. Egypt represents to us the world in its state by nature, enjoying indeed the providential goodness of God, but alienated from Him. He is not acknowledged as the source of their prosperity, but the providential supply is claimed as their own. "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." (Ezekiel 29:3.) It is there the people of God's inheritance are held captive by its prince, serving divers lusts and pleasures. In accomplishing their deliverance from such a bondage God had to meet the sinful state of the people, and also to annul the power of the enemy. When Pharaoh refused to let them go in obedience to the demand of Jehovah, their deliverance must be accomplished by judgment; but if God acts in judgment He is no respecter of persons, for He is righteous. Consequently He must judge sin wherever He finds it, whether in an Israelite or an Egyptian. In grace He provided a shelter for Israel by the blood of the paschal lamb being sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of their houses. Thus were they secure in that night when God executed judgment against Egypt by slaying their firstborn. Their deliverance thus was according to righteousness, but it must be fully accomplished by freeing them from the place of their captivity as well as from the power that held them. Through the waters of judgment which overwhelmed the enemy, Israel passed into liberty - free now to be Jehovah's people and to go on to their inheritance with Him. This now is the theme of their song: "Jehovah hath triumphed gloriously." All is of Himself. He who sheltered them has now delivered them. He is manifestly their God. "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Thus they sing. They anticipate too the full accomplishment of His purpose concerning them. He who led forth a redeemed people would bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. The power already manifested on the banks of the Red Sea was a pledge of the overthrow of the enemy in whatever way he might assail.

Israel are now in the wilderness - delivered indeed, but in themselves a feeble folk. Under grace our wants and weakness are but the occasion for the blessed God who has redeemed us to shew how sufficient that grace is for us. So we sing - "On to Canaan's rest still wending, E'en thy wants and woes shall bring Suited grace, from high descending, Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring." But Satan knows that the flesh is weak, and, though no longer able to hold captive, he will use his power in the world to persecute and harass the redeemed people. Hence the attack of Amalek. (Exodus 17:8.) We are told that Amalek met them in the way, "and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God." (Deuteronomy 25:18.) Our weakness may become the occasion for the enemy's attack. The wilderness is a place of sore trial for the flesh, and if the flesh distrusts, as it always does, the power and goodness of God, it soon becomes the point of attack. But to attack the feeble saint is really to attack God. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:8.) The unbelief and murmuring of the flesh had shown itself at Meribah. They were faint and weary, and wanted water, and, notwithstanding their failure, God had supplied them from the smitten rock - the type of the heavenly springs which refresh us in the desert. Our weakness lays us open to attack. Satan in some way would take advantage of it; but the Spirit is given to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts, and in His power the enemy now is resisted. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:9.) We have, moreover, the intercession on high of Him who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The hands of Moses are lifted up and in them the rod of God's power which led forth the people, and smote the sea and the rock. It is the Lord's battle, and victory is

secured by those uplifted hands. Amalek was touching the rights of the Lord in His people, his hand was on the throne of the Lord, therefore it is perpetual warfare until the name of Amalek is blotted out from under heaven. Weak indeed we are, but not captives; the Lord's people, and hence ever the objects of Satan's attack, but more than conquerors through Him that loved us. A totally different character of opposition now demands our notice, and it is a very terrible one, for the agents of the enemy are the world's power represented by Balak, and a corrupted religious element, having the knowledge of God and using His name, but seeking power from enchantments. Such was Balaam. The victories gained over the world, represented by Sihon and Og, had made Moab sore afraid. We may notice the character of these further on. There are moments when the world is forced to own that the power of God is with His people. The question now raised is, whether there is any power that can frustrate the purpose of God, or intervene between Him and His people? There is none. There is no divination or enchantment against Israel; nor is there angel, principality, or power which can separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If God has taken up a people for blessing, and to make them a blessing, He will accomplish in power what He has purposed in love. According to that purpose, Israel is yet to blossom and bud and fill the earth with fruit. The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as a dew from the Lord. The whole creation is now groaning as it waits to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. Moab was frustrating their own blessing, not the purpose of God, in hiring Balaam. On account of it they lost the privilege of entering into the congregation of the Lord. "Even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." (Deuteronomy 23:3-4.) The history of Balaam is most solemn. While it serves to bring out the sovereign grace of God, it reveals also the elements of religious corruption which prevail in the last days. Satan, powerless to prevail against the saints of God by open hostility, will corrupt. In Balaam we have the character of that which corrupts. There was a knowledge of God - he had this, he even says "Jehovah my God." (Numbers 22:18.) He called Israel's God his God, but his heart was exercised with covetous practices, he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." This is the character also given to Judas by Peter. (Acts 1:18.) Thirty pieces of silver were "the reward of iniquity" given to the man who said to Jesus, "Hail, Master!" Both these men describe a feature of religious apostasy which at last perishes in its own corruption.

There is nothing more awful than when that which bears the name of God is associated with the power of Satanic evil. Possessed by a covetous desire, Judas becomes Satan's instrument in betraying the One whom he called Master into the hands of His enemies. Balaam too will seek to curse the people whom the One he called "Jehovah, my God" had blessed.

God takes up the cause of His people. They knew not what was taking place between the messengers of Balak and Balaam, but "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." All was known to the Lord. "Lodge ye here this night," said Balaam to the men who brought the reward of divination in their hand. To entertain those who sought to curse the people of the Lord showed the wicked inclination of his heart. He is only hindered by the positive intervention of God. We mark here the working of Satan with him. "I will bring you word again," said he to the elders of Moab, "as the Lord shall speak unto me." Satan can present himself before the Lord (Job 1:6), and be used of God in afflicting His servant. Nor is there a more terribly fiery dart than the taunt of Satan to a failing saint. "There is no help for him in God." (Psalms 4:3.) "Thou shalt not go with

them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed" is God's answer to this wicked waiting upon Him. Such a reply might well have hindered Balaam from again asking the servants of Balak to tarry another night, when they bring a second invitation to him to come and curse the people. Conscious that he cannot (for he would) go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more, he again seeks to know what the Lord would say unto him more. Though the very thought of his going was opposed to the mind of God, yet, if the men came to call him, he was to go and speak the word which God should say unto him. The haste of Balaam anticipates this, and manifests how perverse his way was before the Lord. God uses the dumb ass speaking with man's voice to forbid the madness of the prophet. Balaam now must go, and not only to Balak, but, by means of his prophecy, declare to all generations the settled purpose of God as to Israel. In contrast to this we have spiritual wickedness, which, owning the name of the Lord, acquires its power by falling into the hands of Satan.

It is remarkable that in Leviticus 24:1-23 there is the same contrast. The lamps are ordered before the Lord from the evening to the morning continually by Aaron alone; that is, by Christ. The light in the sanctuary is maintained by Him during Israel's night. Again, the twelve loaves of shewbread, representing the twelve tribes, are put upon the pure table before the Lord with the added frankincense. "He shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant." It is at the time when this memorial of Israel being ever before the Lord is ordained, that we have the account of the man who blasphemed the name of Jehovah. His mother was an Israelitish woman, his father an Egyptian. The offspring of this mixture of the people of God and the world curses his God. Let the reader weigh this well. It is in the heart, of God to bless man. Man's heart can so fall under the power of Satan that he will curse God and curse His people. What would man be but for the sovereign grace of God? Well may we use Balaam's words "God is not man."

Numbers 23:1-30.

How blessed to meditate on what God is in Himself; He acts in the supremacy of grace according to His own holy nature. The evil which is in man does not affect that. We have seen the perverse prophet who would for reward help on the enmity of the world against the people of God, while at the same time that very people had been rebellious against the Lord from the day of their departure from Egypt. (Deuteronomy 9:7) Neither the way of Balaam nor the stiff-neckedness of the people can alter what He is. He will rebuke the madness of the prophet by his own ass; and He will chasten His people as often as they need it; but He is God.

Having shown Balaam the perversity of his way, it is now God's will that he should go with the princes of Moab, and speak the word only which God compelled him to utter. He meets Balak thus, "Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." The high places of Baal, to which Balak conducts him on the morrow, witness the impotency of the power of evil. Balak and Balaam offer sacrifices, but to whom is not said. Perfect in number, but in character spiritual wickedness. This done, Balaam bids Balak stand by his burnt-offering, while he goes alone to the meeting of a superior power, with a "peradventure" that it might be the Lord. "And God met Balaam;" and in reply to his recounting the sacrifices he had offered, Jehovah put a word into his mouth. He returns to Balak, and took up his parable. Brought out of Aram from the mountains of the east to curse Jacob and defy Israel, he

has to own his inability to curse those whom God hath not cursed, or to defy those whom Jehovah hath not defied. But more, he is obliged to survey the people from the height of God's purpose. "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him." He looks at them, not according to their actual state as in the valley below, but from above. From Pisgah's top (compare Numbers 23:14) Moses was permitted to view the promised land; and from an exceeding high mountain John was shown the holy city - new Jerusalem. Ezekiel also, from the same vantage-ground, saw the city whose name was to be, "The Lord is there." To the same point, an exceeding high mountain, the devil took the blessed Lord, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them - all was made to pass before Him in a moment of time. From such a point Balaam views the people in the visions of God, and from thence he has to declare God's thoughts as to them. "So the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." In the mind of God they are a separate people.

We have seen that Abraham, by the call of God, had been separated from the midst of the idolatrous nations to know Him, and to walk before Him as the Almighty God. To his seed according to the flesh the name of Jehovah was made known; and by His mighty arm they were redeemed to Himself out of Egypt, that they might be His people. The revelation of His name put them into relationship with Himself as so revealed. They could not belong to God and to the world also. Further, to be God's people necessitated that they should dwell alone. The fact of His dwelling among them, that He went with them, was the principle on which they were, and the cause of their being, separated from all people on the face of the earth. (Exodus 33:16.) It is ever so. There is the broad road of the world, and the narrow and separated path which leads to life. We cannot walk in the two at once. Conversion to God is to quit the highway of the world, and to enter the strait and narrow gate. Instance after instance may be given in confirmation of this separated path, and passage after passage from God's word to show that it is God's mind for His people. "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again," was the chief injunction of Abraham to his servant. Isaac must not return to the country whence his father had been called out. Consequently we find him, at his father's death, dwelling by the well Lahai-roi (Genesis 25:11) - the well of Him that liveth and seeth me, the secret of the presence of God. This well had been made known to Hagar; but Ishmael, her son, and his descendants, dwelt from Havilah to Shur, the great highway of the world between Egypt and Assyria. In the New Testament this separation received its force from the death of Jesus. His cross is the boundary line between the Christian and the world. He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world. (Galatians 1:4.) Its character is unaltered; therefore the apostle John thus writes, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John 5:19.) The mind of God then as to His people is that they dwell alone. They are His, and this He will give the enemy to know.

Let us further survey them in the mind of God. Balaam proceeds with his parable: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" One solitary man had been called out from the midst of the nations. "I called Abraham alone, and blessed him, and increased him." (Isaiah 51:2.) A childless man, alone, he was bidden of God to look toward heaven and tell the stars, if he were able to number them. So was his seed to be. In the same plains of Moab, where Balaam's prophetic utterance, "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" was spoken of Israel, Moses said of them, "Ye were the fewest of all people." (Deuteronomy 7:7.) A separated people, dwelling alone, may apparently be for the time "a little flock;" yet when the purpose of God is fully

accomplished, what countless multitudes will fill both the heavens and the earth. "Look now towards the heavens." Do they not declare the glory of God? Those redeemed from every nation. by the blood of Christ are there - an innumerable throng of heavenly saints, each one in the likeness of Christ. On earth they spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses, the witnesses of Jehovah and of His redemption. They are the children of the separated Joseph - the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh. (Deuteronomy 33:16-17.) Besides, there is a countless multitude for the earth (Revelation 7:9) of Gentiles, who find their place in God's holy temple. (Comp. Isaiah 56:7-8.) But whether on earth or in heaven, Jesus will see in these countless multitudes of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. They are witnesses of redemption power and glory. Who then shall count them?

Well may Balaam conclude his parable, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It is the "last end" which is important, whether for Israel or an individual. Death is the "last end" for man here. Death, vanquished in the power of resurrection, is now the beginning according to God. The way of the Lord is prepared by proclaiming that all flesh is grass. That flesh is grass is fully brought out in the parable and dark saying of Psalms 49:1-20, and yet the inward thought of man is to continue here. This their way is their folly. Each will admit it is folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings, and hence each, while he lives, will bless himself. Nevertheless death shall feed upon them. Balaam would curse Israel to bless himself. His way is his folly. Under the power of the word of Jehovah, which he was compelled to speak, he desires the end of the righteous, but in heart approves the present way of the world. The righteous - the saints of old - died according to faith. They rested on the promise and embraced it, though to them it was a parable - a dark saying. Such was the utterance of the psalmist: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave." Life and incorruptibility are now brought to light by the gospel. Death, the last end of man, opens out into the light of resurrection and heavenly glory. It is no longer a parable. Israel too, as a nation, will eventually awake from the dust of the earth, when they have been brought to know that all flesh is grass. Of old, God led their through the wilderness "that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." Their entrance into Canaan under Joshua was not the fulfilment of that word, it was but preliminary to their deliverance from a wilderness condition, in which they will be found in the last days, into the fulness of their blessing. They will pass through the time of Jacob's trouble, and be saved out of it, having been brought up as from the grave. (Ezekiel 37:12.) What an awakening it will be! Balaam, in wishing for himself the last end of the righteous, anticipates in his parable what that end will be. We have yet to see how such a people can be reckoned righteous. This parable of Balaam is rightly interpreted by Balak as a blessing. The Lord had indeed chosen them to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth - who then should bring accusation against them? Looked at as the people of God they were blessed - shielded by the power of Jehovah. Would it be possible to curse part of them? "Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them," says Balak, "and shalt not see them all." The "utmost part" is a place exposed to danger; it was there the fire of the Lord burnt at Taberah. (Numbers 11:1.) Nearness is always a safe place; while to be at a distance leaves us open to attack. Could the power of the enemy prevail there?

Again sacrifice is offered, and again Balaam went to meet a mysterious power "yonder." But Jehovah met Balaam. At first, when the separation of the people was declared, God met Balaam.

Now it is manifestly Israel's God - Jehovah - who put a word into his mouth. He returns to Balak; but he no longer merely confesses his inability to curse. There is a commanding power in his utterance as he replies to Balak's question, "What hath the Lord spoken?" "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man." The word Balaam uses here - "El" - is the expression of absolute Deity. Man is thus vividly brought into contrast with God in His essential Being. Blessing - our blessing through grace - is thus connected with what He is. This title of God is used several times in this prophecy. (See Numbers 23:8; Numbers 23:19; Numbers 23:22-23; Numbers 24:4; Numbers 24:8; Numbers 24:16; Numbers 24:23.) It is put into Balaam's lips, and bespeaks the absolute character of the blessings pronounced. "Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Consequently there is a further title used (Numbers 24:4), "Almighty" - the Accomplisher of all that He has spoken. He is too in relationship with those He blesses - "Jehovah his Elohim is with him;" and when the rising of the Star out of Jacob is predicted, then the title "Most High" is brought in (Numbers 24:16); for the Sceptre of universal dominion arises out of Israel, and Jehovah their God is then Most High over all the earth. It is His millennial title. How blessed to be in the secret of these titles! (Compare Psalms 90:1-2.) Soon will they be celebrated in heaven thus, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Almighty reigneth." But He who is thus celebrated we call in the Spirit of adoption, Abba, Father!

Numbers 23:1-30; Numbers 24:1-25.

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." This Balaam now declares. God will not alter the thing that is gone out of His lips, and what He has said that will He do. Balak may conduct Balaam from place to place in order to survey the people, but there is only one point of view from which the prophet is permitted to speak - what they are in the eyes of God. We must remember that God is answering the enemy. That which is taking place on the high places of Moab is a controversy between Himself and the futile power of Satan. He has His own way of speaking to His people, and He has His way of speaking of them in the face of the enemy. It is a sweet and precious privilege that they are permitted to know how He speaks of them. "I have received," says Balaam, "commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Such is our God. Our blessing depends upon what He is. Had we to consider the state of the people, or the state of any poor sinner whom God takes up to justify, words such as Isaiah spoke to the sinful nation are applicable: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (Isaiah 1:5-6.) What they were, what they would be, was fully known to Him who was their Justifier. "I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." (Isaiah 48:8.) It is of such a people that Balaam is compelled to say: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." How He can be just, and yet a Justifier, is now brought to light by the shedding of the blood of Jesus. God's righteousness is therein declared for the remission of sins that are past. This way of justifying was present to the mind of God when He answered for His people to Balak and Balaam. What an overwhelming sense of the mercy and goodness in God fills the soul of the once guilty sinner, as he hears his justification pronounced in the face of the enemy! Sin in me, mercy in God, that all my salvation should be of Him! "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Again we say, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Hence, later on in their history, He thus pleads with Israel: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions far Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." What can be done by all the power of Satan against a

people who have such a God? "Jehovah his God is with him." He is their Sun and Shield, Giver of grace and glory. And Jesus was this Jehovah. He who blessed and justified on the heights of Moab became a Man" Emmanuel . . . God with us." He bore their sorrows and carried their griefs, even as He did ours; the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they are healed. Oh, how irreversible, sovereign, and eternal is the justification pronounced by such a God, and that God was with them!

"The shout of a King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn." He is indeed a King against whom there is no rising up. Moab has yet to learn to their cost what the shout of a King will bring to them. "Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of a trumpet" (Amos 2:2.) "Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" Royal and victorious power is for Israel, and against their enemies. So the Spirit of Christ writes for them by the pen of Asaph, "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength." (Psalms 74:12-13.) In the power and might of His own right arm He brought them out of Egypt, the pledge of their passing over by the same strength into the mountain of His inheritance. Jehovah, their God, shall reign for ever and ever. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" "Surely," then, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?"

Here let us mark well that it is neither what Israel say, nor what Israel had wrought. It is said of Israel, "What hath God wrought?" Having taken the blessing of such a people into His own hands, all is wrought out by Himself. There had been forty years of provocation in the wilderness on their part. How oft did they grieve Him in the desert! And now at the close it is said - mark, it was not then wrought, but it was said at that time - "What hath God wrought?" In Egypt, the question between God in judgment and His people had been settled under the shelter of the bloodstained lintel. Their deliverance had been effected at the Red Sea. There God wrought, while Israel stood still and saw His salvation. On the other side of the sea they sang of what He had done. Then came the wilderness journey, with its trial and testing, and at its end they are confessedly proved to be rebellious and stiff-necked. What shall be said of them now? Nothing shall be said of what they had wrought, but of them it shall be said by the mouth of the man hired to curse them, but commanded of God to bless, "What hath God wrought?"

Thus does this prophecy typically bring out the absolute justification of the believer by God. His working has accomplished it in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What God has wrought for us must not in any way be mixed with his working in us, necessary as that is. The experimental history of our souls has nothing to do with the work wrought for us, unless it be to show how much we needed it. This foundation deepens and widens in the experience of the soul, as we prove who and what we are for whom God has wrought in such marvellous grace, and the heart is filled with joy in God Himself.

Now follows the declaration, that in royal might the people will rise up for the putting down of all hostile power. That is reserved for Israel, as the people in whom the royalty of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is to be known in the execution of judgment on the power of evil. It is celebrated in Psalms 149:6-9, and the result will be universal praise to Israel's God. Ours is a different vocation. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. The groaning creation waits to be

delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. That will be when they are manifested. The peculiar portion of the Church will be the administration to the earth of heavenly blessings. The coming forth of the Rider on the white horse with the armies of heaven, or His making Judah his goodly horse in the battle on earth, is for the clearing away of all opposition, that the heavenly city, in which is gathered up the full administration of heavenly glory and blessing, may descend out of heaven from God. Then will be the rest of creation. The Rod out of the stem of Jesse will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked, so that the knowledge of the Lord may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

"Neither bless them at all, nor curse them at all" is now the language of Balak, and yet he would fain conduct Balaam to another spot, as if a fresh survey of the people from thence could alter the purpose of God. From three points of view does Balaam look at them, if so be that from either it were possible to curse them. They give occasion for God to declare, first, their separation; secondly, their justification; thirdly, their order and beauty in His eyes, as well as His planting them by His own springs of blessing. No longer does Balaam leave Balak by his burnt-offering while he went to meet with enchantments, for he saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, but he set his face towards the wilderness. There he saw Israel - abiding according to their tribes. As he thus beheld them, could he see in themselves any comeliness to draw forth the pleasure of the Lord? We know there was none. Comely indeed they were in His eyes, but it was with the comeliness which He had put upon them. The order of their tribes in which they were abiding was the beautiful order of His own arrangement. Mark well the holy city, new Jerusalem, and note if there is one detail of its glory and beauty which is not descriptive of the Christ in whose light she shines. "The city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Thus is figured the righteousness and true holiness in which, after God, the new man is created, and the truth in Jesus is, our having put off the old man and put on the new. There is no perfection, but in conformity to Christ in glory. It is in glory the Church knows Him. Therefore if any man be in Christ it is new creation, old things have passed away, the new have come. As the comely order of the earthly people, abiding in their tents in the wilderness, breaks upon the wicked prophet's view, he becomes the instrument of the Spirit of God, and now he not only hears the words of God, but the vision of the Almighty fills his eyes. A vision it is, and he falls down under it; but it is no passing dream or mere ecstatic utterance, for his eyes are open, and he declares what the people whom he was called to curse were in the vision of the Almighty. They still dwelt in tents and tabernacles, but how goodly in His eyes. He saw them spread forth as the valleys, as gardens by the river-side. They dwelt by the fresh springs of life which He caused to flow for them in the desert. As trees of fragrance and beauty, planted by the Lord Himself, beside the waters whence all their nourishment was derived. The Spirit of Jehovah was with Israel. By it He led them with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them to make Himself an everlasting name. By it He led them as a horse in the wilderness, and the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest. (Isaiah 63:11; Isaiah 63:14.) Thus Balaam saw them, the cloud of Jehovah's presence resting upon the many thousands of Israel. The Church is now the dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. Its beauty and order flow from His energy in it. Apart from that all is disorder and confusion. In the vision of the Almighty, He looks at it according to His own mind in the fulness of the blessing in which He has set it. This makes it the channel of His grace to all around. Hence we further read, "He shall pour the water out of His buckets, and His seed shall be in many waters." As we dwell by the rivers of waters, we know what it is to be satisfied with favour

and full of the blessing of the Lord. Thirsty we were, but we come to Jesus and drink. The first effect is that the inflow of living water rises up to its own source, and there the communion and enjoyment it produces are known, then it flows out. God's covenant with Israel is that His Spirit which is upon them, and the words He has put in their mouth, shall not depart out of their mouth from henceforth and for ever. (Isaiah 59:21.) With them will be the outflow of testimony, and in the "many waters" of the Gentile world will fruit yet be found from the seed of Israel. Well then may the exaltation of the kingdom established in such a people be spoken of. But first it will be a kingdom that will break in pieced and consume all other kingdoms (Daniel 2:44), in order that the King who is higher than Agag (the tall one) may reign in righteousness. Then, with the Spirit poured out from on high, the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

Hence it is again repeated that in resistless power God brought them forth out of Egypt. In the previous chapter (5: 22), it showed that no other power could prevail against the strength which led them out and wrought for them. Here it is said in connection with the power that would subdue every enemy, and then rest as a couching lion in the conscious might of universal sway. The blessing of all nations, as we have seen, is bound up with the blessing of Israel because they are Jehovah's people. Balaam therefore concludes his parable with the words of God to Abraham. "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." The fulfilment of this is given in Matthew 25:1-46. There the Son of man, sitting upon the throne of His glory, separates the nations one from another according to their treatment of one of the least of His brethren, the children of Israel. They are His brethren according to the flesh, but He will own those among them as such in that day, who have done the will of His Father in heaven. To them He will stretch out His hand. (Matthew 12:49-50.) Such are the company, in Revelation 7:1-17, whom the angel from the sun-rising seals on their foreheads with the seal of the living God. He calls them the servants of our God. Whatever they may be thought of by others, they are owned by Christ. The blessed among the nations who go into life eternal are those who have succoured and cared for these Jewish brethren of Christ, while the cursed who go away into everlasting fire are those who refused Him by neglecting them. How fully are the interests of His people bound up with Himself!

Numbers 24:1-25; Numbers 25:1-18. The blessings pronounced by an unchangeable God through Balaam's mouth, which we have hitherto considered, sound the death-knell of the world in its opposition to God and His people. Balak smote his hands together - the purposed curse had been turned into a threefold blessing, and he who would fain have secured the wages of unrighteousness and the honour of this world, unhappy Balaam, receives the withering taunt of Balak as he bids him flee to his place: "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour." But Balaam is still on the heights of Moab, and, covetous as he was, he was there controlled by the power of the prophetic Spirit which had come upon him. Were it a house full of silver and gold he can neither speak good nor bad of his own mind. "What the Lord saith, that will I speak," and thus he continues: "And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." Again he takes up his parable, adding to his former utterance that he knew the knowledge of the Most High. It is Jehovah's title of universal supremacy. Psalms 83:18.) He takes it as possessor of heaven and earth. (Genesis 14:19.) Abraham learned the secret place of the Most High when Melchizedek blessed him. In that secret he dwelt, and refused the world; hence it was further revealed to him that the shadow of the

Almighty was his abode. (Genesis 17:1.) It is in this way that the saints learn this title; for He - who is Himself the Most High, and yet in grace was born into this world, and called the Son of the Highest - is the Teacher of the saints as to this hiding-place of faith. This is His utterance, "I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." (Psalms 91:2.) Hence in Numbers 24:9, He is thus addressed by the spirit of prophecy in Israel: "Because Thou hast made Jehovah, which is my (Israel's) refuge, even the Most High, Thy habitation. there shall no evil befall Thee," etc. But the Gentile world will learn it differently. In Nebuchadnezzar we see the first proud head of Gentile power. The supremacy taken from Israel was given of God to him. Apart from the acknowledgment of Him to whom power belongs, the most exalted of men descends to the level of a beast. Driven from among men, with his dwelling among the beasts, according to the decree of the Watcher and Holy One, Nebuchadnezzar learned by judgment that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and having learnt it, he blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever. Secondly, there are nations who, in the last days when God is about to make good His purposes as to Israel, and to re-establish them in His land, will come against them. Hence they are looked at as God's enemies. (Psalms 83:2.) They hate Him. Their first thought is to cut off Israel from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. Then they desire to take to themselves the houses of God in possession. Moab is one of these nations. It is this rising up against God which brings the call for judgment, not merely that Israel may be delivered, but that men may know that Jehovah, Israel's God, is Most High over all the earth. It is in this title that the blessing of God to the whole earth is secured; yet to acknowledge it the beast's heart must be changed to the heart of a man, and judgment must remove what opposes, in order that God may take the place of blessing. It is of this Balaam now speaks. If Israel eats up the nations His enemies, it is not mere revenge; it is in order that the millennial kingdom of the Most High may be established in the hands of Christ and His people. Hence Balaam at once speaks of the coming of the Star of Jacob, and of a Sceptre rising out of Israel that shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth (or tumult). The rule and government of Him who was born King of the Jews (compare Matthew 2:2) is here foreshadowed. Balaam in prophetic vision sees, in the far distance of the latter days, the dominion that will be exercised by Christ in the midst of Israel. But, unlike Daniel, whose visions were also for the time of the end, and yet when the end came would stand in his lot, he has neither part nor lot in the matter. Balaam's sad words, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh," not only point to the distant future, but proclaim that, Judas-like, the beams from the coming Star shone not for his covetous heart. The enemies which he takes up in succession seem to give us a moral picture of the forms of Gentile power over which in the latter day the triumph of Israel is assured. We have seen in Numbers 24:17 that Moab is identified with the tumultuous rising of the nations that will seek to overflow Israel in the last days. (Psalms 83:6.) Edom, who hated them with perpetual hatred, and in the day of their calamity took vengeance, and sought to possess the two countries of Israel and Judah (Ezekiel 35:5; Ezekiel 35:10), becomes the possession of Israel. The strength and rule are with them, and the remnant out of the city - the centralization of this world - is destroyed by Him who wields the dominion in their midst. In Amalek is represented the Gentile world in its foremost place of power and hostility, and in the Kenite the vain security in which the man of the earth confides. Neither the pride of power, nor the strong dwelling-place, can prevent the one perishing for ever, and the other being wasted in captivity; for Balaam's parable does not here speak of Israel accomplishing these things, but, "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?"

Then in a few words the three families of Noah are finally brought upon the scene. Kittim was a descendant of Japheth, Asshur of Ham, and Eber of Shem. All will be engaged in the final conflicts of the last days. God will use one to afflict another, but utter destruction awaits the final rising up of Gentile power.

We now enter on the last stage of Israel's history connected with Balaam. Hitherto we have considered his attempt to curse, and the way in which God turned it all into blessing. We have been in company with the Lord in His unchangeable purpose, as Balaam was forced to express it on the heights of Moab. Of what Israel actually were in the plains below, and of their conduct, no question has been raised. We now descend to them. "And Israel abode in Shittim." (Numbers 25:1.) Their history is thus resumed from the end of Numbers 21:1-35. There we see them victorious over Sihon and Og, and free to pitch on this side Jordan in the plains of Moab by Jericho. Let us consider their position. They had really left the wilderness. The thirty-eight years of wandering there was over, and the journey proper had been resumed. It was not now turning back into Egypt; but when they crossed the brook Zered, the wilderness testing was over, and they were really bound for Canaan. Figuratively the judgment of sinful flesh in the brazen serpent, and the power of life in the springing well, enabled them to be companions of the heavenly calling. They want simply to pass through the enemy's country in peace; for they are going to Canaan. They want nothing of theirs, only to be permitted to pass on. So for us, if our hearts are true to the heavenly calling, we want not anything of the world save to pass on in peace; for we are going to heaven. But to journey on as a heavenly people the enemy will not suffer, and he uses the proud, overbearing spirit of the world to resist. But we must pass on, and hence the world draws down upon itself the conflict and contention. The saint has a title by redemption to use this present scene, not to dwell there while Christ is absent. He uses it as belonging to Christ, for we shall yet possess it with Him. Satan, as the prince of this world, is a usurper, holding that which belongs to Christ and the saints. Heaven indeed is our inheritance, but the world to come is also to be subject to Him who is Heir of all things, and we shall reign with Him. The territory given to Abraham included all the country taken from Sihon and Og even to Euphrates (Genesis 15:18), as well as that within Jordan. The hostility of the world, as possessing that which rightfully belongs to Christ and the saints, but through which they now only want to pass, leads to its downfall. The blood of the martyrs, in days of old, was the seed of the Church. The attempt to exterminate the Christians, and to prevent a heavenly people having a lodging-place on earth, only brought out the right and title of Christ as having all power in heaven and earth to give His saints the victory over it, and to maintain them in their onward journey.

We see such a moment, after the outbreak of persecution about Stephen, in Acts 9:31 : "Then had the churches rest . . . and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." So doing, all is well; but unless we pass on, the very victory is danger. Israel possessed the land both of Sihon and of Og, and though it is not mentioned in Numbers until Numbers 32:1-42, yet we may gather from Deuteronomy 3:12 that the giving of this territory to the two and a half tribes, at their request, was very closely connected with the acquisition of it by conquest. The mention of Beth-peor (Deuteronomy 3:29) and Baal-peor (Deuteronomy 4:3) occurs after the request to possess it. There was the desire to settle down where they should have been passers through. Consequently the words, "And Israel abode in Shittim," are the prelude to the dreadful history of this chapter. It is from the New Testament we

learn that it was Balaam who taught Balak to cast a snare before the children of Israel. He leaves the high places where he had seen them in the vision of the Almighty dwelling in beauty and order, and now, away from the power which had overruled him, he instructs Balak in this diabolical method of bringing the chastening hand of God upon His people. We do well to lay to heart, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." The enmity; of the world only brings in the power of God on our behalf. What a change when His jealousy is roused, by Satan having caught us by that which is in the world, and brought us into a position of antagonism against God! T. H. R.

Numbers 25:1-18. The counterpart of Israel dwelling in Shittim is recorded by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, in Revelation 2:1-29. To the church at Pergamos the message is sent through John, "I know . . . where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." In the days of the Church's history, represented by Smyrna, she had suffered tribulation, the direct work of the devil. Some he had cast into prison. There had too been martyrdom, the result of faithfulness where Satan dwelt. The true portion of the Church lay outside the territory where he had his throne. Suffering lay in the pathway through it, but the saints were sustained by the promise of the crown of life from the hands of Him who had gone through death, and opened up the way of life. How marked the contrast between the blasphemy and persecution of Satan, and the promise of Jesus, the First and the Last "I will give thee a crown of life"! One of old, in the very thick of increasing trials, had said, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." So was it with Jesus Himself on the troubled waters of the Sea of Galilee. The awaking might be in resurrection, or it might be deliverance from so great a death, but the sustaining power of the Lord was known. The victories over Sihon and Og should have been the earnest to Israel that every power of man, used as Satan's instrument to prevent them reaching and possessing their inheritance, would be swept away. (Compare Deuteronomy 2:24-25; Joshua 2:9-10; see also Psalms 135:1-21; Psalms 136:1-26.) It is interesting to see how Paul (2 Corinthians 1:8-10) connects present deliverance from death, when pressed out of measure beyond strength in Asia, with the God of resurrection. But then Paul had the sentence of death in himself that he should not trust in himself, and this, not only with regard to the pressure around, but also as to the self within, which he reckoned as crucified with Christ. Fighting enemies without is not renouncing self. The sense of deliverance from outward foes is not always accompanied by the sense of deliverance from self. Nay, the rest and ease which follow a victory over the enemy may lead to the indulgence of self, and Satan is not slow to avail himself of such a position, and to bring the allurements of the world to bear on such a state. Israel abiding in Shittim were open to the seductions of Moab. The next thing to dwelling where Satan's throne is, is to be at ease there. And then what may not follow? With regard to Israel, first, they are led into unholy and abominable dalliance with the world; and, secondly, at the invitation of the same world, now friendly in appearance, they forsake the God who had answered for them on the heights above, to eat the sacrifices of idols, and to bow down to the gods of Moab.

While contrasting the effect which the friendship of the world produced upon Israel in the plains of Moab, with the mischief wrought in the Church by the same means, we must remember that Israel had not yet crossed the Jordan; while the place of the Church is sitting in heavenly places in Christ, according to the power which wrought in Him when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him there. In Christ it is new creation; and, though here as to the body, the saint is to walk according to this rule. The Church was set as the vessel of heavenly light to the world. Her sustainment is from heaven. Heavenly bread, and not the sacrifices of idols, her portion. Christ

more precious to her than all the world could offer, and suffering accepted for His sake. So it was in the days of her first love. To be in the place where the doctrine of Balaam affected the saints, necessitated that she should have forgotten her place as united to Christ in the heavenlies, and become a dweller where she was only a stranger. The virgins who went out in the energy of first love to meet the Bridegroom, found a place of ease, and slept; and the saints who suffered in Smyrna from the world, were dwelling there in the days of Pergamos. Consequently those who held the doctrine of Balaam were allowed. When the Church forgot her position and calling to be a dweller upon earth, then the individual saint is exhorted to overcome; but we must remember there is the state of things to overcome. The jealousy of the Lord is aroused. Where is the people whom He had brought out of Egypt, separated to Himself, wrought for, justified, set in order and blessing with Himself? Corrupting themselves, and bowing down to idols. Could He be ought but jealous? His jealousy showed itself in the judicial action which swept away twenty-four thousand men. Moses too calls on the judges of Israel to slay every one his men that were joined to Baal-peor. In Pergamos the Lord who comforted with sure promise the tried of Smyrna, would fight in this jealousy with the sword of His mouth against the unrepentant. A people lately victorious are a weeping people, and, alas! when the strength is given to strangers, a powerless people. Let it be remembered here that though the New Testament makes us know that they were suffering from the counsel of Balaam, yet Balaam himself is not seen in the history here recorded. The Spirit of God brings before us the condition of Israel. "Israel abode in Shittim." "Israel joined himself to Baal-peor." God had met Balaam, and frustrated the purpose of Balak; hence the history concludes with, "Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place." What is before us here is not Balaam but Israel. It was their state which laid them open to the seductions of Moab. Balaam, whatever he counselled, had no place in Israel, he returned to his place. He is found again, as it were, in those who held his doctrine in the midst of the Church. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam," is the Lord's word to the mystic representative of the church in Pergamos. Balaam was outside, of Israel, affecting them from without, but allowed in the Church. Sad and solemn progress of evil paving the way for the full-blown apostasy. The doctrine of Balaam allowed in Pergamos has borne its fruits in Thyatira. Alliance with the world is systematic there. There is a corrupt public body which is given over to its corruption, and its offspring killed with death. In Jude 1:11, the corruption taught by Balaam precedes the gainsaying of Core, wherein they finally perish. Cain, Balaam, Core - the genealogy of the dwellers upon earth - who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and deny the claims of the Lord.

Here is sorrow indeed. A people weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and Christ fighting with the sword of His mouth against the evildoers. But then, as another has said, "there cannot be any trouble among the saints that does not bring out the faithfulness of Him who waits to bless the overcomer, and thus bring the soul into communion with Christ in a way that nothing else could. For nothing gives the blessed consciousness of Christ's approbation, as between the soul and Himself, like faithfulness when evil begins to corrupt." We see in Phinehas the faithfulness which overcomes. He judges the evil on God's behalf. "He was zealous for my sake." His zeal turned away the Lord's wrath from the children of Israel. Such was the effect of being "zealous for his God." Paul too in later days showed the holy jealousy which would not tolerate evil in the Church. "I . . . have judged already," he writes, "concerning him that hath done this deed . . . to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 5:3-5.) And wherefore such jealousy? It was of

God. He writes again to them. "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2.) The relation of Israel to Jehovah brought out the zeal of Phinehas when he executed judgment, and the sense of what the Church is to Christ creates in the faithful the earnest desire that she should answer to His mind, and be unspotted from the world. Faithfulness calls for the judgment of evil, as another has written: "We are called upon to judge evil in the Church, for God cannot accept Balaam and Jezebel if we can. Therefore may the Lord give us to remember that failure within the Church is to be judged." Faithfulness brings with it the approval of the Lord. Of Phinehas it is said, "I give unto him my covenant of peace." It was a wonderful thing for him to get such a word. None indeed but One could so come between the jealousy of God and the corrupted people, that the covenant of peace should be for ever undisturbed. The act of Phinehas so far made atonement for the children of Israel by caring for the glory of God, that what will be fully established in Him who perfectly glorified God was given to him on behalf of Israel - the covenant of peace, together with the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. This latter carried with it many things, but among them the place of special nearness and intimacy. (Ezekiel 44:15.) Nearness gives the sense of what is due to God, and turning away from iniquity themselves enabled the priestly family to walk with God in peace and equity, and turn many away from iniquity also. (Malachi 2:6.) The priest too feeds on the choicest food of the sanctuary. The white stone given to the overcomer in Pergamos marks the approbation of Christ given to the one who receives it. The new name written in it betokens that the overcomer is individually known of Him. Precious knowledge! The Lord give us more to desire it as the result of refusing all fellowship with the doctrine of Balaam. The hidden manna was "God's treasured store." In eating it the soul enters into the delight which God had in the lowly, humbled pathway of Jesus in this world, but rejected by it down to the suffering of death. When the saints listen to Balaam's doctrine, and get into unholy association with the world, the one who refuses the evil on God's behalf gets special communion with God's thoughts of Jesus. The fulness of this communion will be in heaven, but the promise becomes true as we overcome the snare of association with the world. There is also a special and individual sense of what it is to belong to Christ, the known sweetness of the words, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." The intimacy is tasted now, but it belongs to another scene, where the golden pot of manna has been laid up in the presence of God. Then there is not only the individual joy with which no stranger intermeddles; but to judge the evil, and be jealous over the saints with a jealousy of God, is that their hearts may be diverted from the allurements of the world, so that Christ may possess their affections. He does value the love of His own. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The Lord give us to learn the lessons He would teach us from the history of Israel in the plains of Moab.

T. H. Reynolds.

* * * In bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them, because death was working in Paul.

S. The Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle. substance of lectures on Exodus - revised.

Exodus 24:1-18; Exodus 25:1-9.

Introductory.

We have seen in the former part of this book the actings of God on behalf of a people who were in bondage in what is to us the Egypt of this world. He acts from Himself, but, nevertheless, according to their wretched condition. "I have heard their groanings, and am come down to deliver them." In order to effect this deliverance in righteousness - for they were sinners equally with the Egyptians - He sheltered them by the blood of the Passover lamb from the judgment which fell upon the firstborn. The tenth plague differed from the others in that it was no longer by the rod of Moses that the Lord smote the Egyptians, but, as it were, God was Judge Himself. "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn." Having sheltered them as sinners by blood from His own righteous judgment, He can now be their Deliverer, and as such He opened a way through the Red Sea, thus delivering them from Egypt that He might bring them to Himself in the power that redeemed and delivered them. This was fully effected when they encamped at the mount of God, and we have seen that up to this point all had been grace in the actings of God on their behalf. The history is entirely a record of this grace. Their wants and murmurings only brought out what He was for them. The question of what they were, who were recipients of such favour, had not yet been raised.

Then we have considered the giving of the law, which not only raised this question, proving what they were, and that man had no righteousness for God; but also, could man have received it, there was contained in it the communication of the will of God for a people whom He had brought to Himself. There was thus an intimation of what was in the mind of God - to have a redeemed people for Himself to whom He could communicate by His word that which was of Himself. (Psalms 147:19-20.) Thus they would have been formed for Himself to show forth His praise, had there been in them such a heart that they would fear Him and keep His commandments. It will be so when the law is put into their inward parts, and written in their hearts.

Let us dwell a little on this intimation of the purpose of God for His people in communicating to them His revealed will; because we shall see that besides raising the question of responsibility, He wanted, in bringing them to Himself, to form them by His word according to His own will. Till the question of responsibility is settled, a sinful people never could enter upon this great privilege. In the cross it has been settled. Nor can the word of God as to the privileges of Israel fail. (Romans 9:6.) When they turn to the Lord they will know how their unrighteousness has been met; and the law, magnified and made honourable by Christ, and presented to them in Him, will be written upon their hearts. But in order for this thought of God in forming a people for Himself to be fully accomplished, so that they should be to the praise of His glory, Christ is formed in those who, now believing in Him, have the forgiveness of sins and acceptance in the Beloved. Christ is written on

the fleshy table of the heart by the Spirit of God. It is by the word on the principle of love, "If ye love me keep my commandments." God is known in love that has been manifested in Christ, and not in the way of requirement. Hence it is said, "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

Exodus 24:1-18 brings us to the climax of the first part of Exodus. The representatives of the people who have been brought to God by redemption, and to whom His will has been communicated, go up into the mount of God. The covenant had been ratified by blood. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered, but no sin-offering. No provision had been made for transgression, for it is not contemplated. The people undertook to keep the law, not to break it. Wholehearted devotedness to the will of God, and consequent communion with Him, are figured in the sacrifices offered, whereupon Moses and the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, and ate and drank in His presence. We see how this thought of being with God in communion, figured by eating and drinking before Him, completes the circle of truth connected with the actings of God to bring a redeemed people to Himself. I do not speak here of the breakdown, but of what was in the mind of God as intimated to us in these chapters.

All is so far complete, and we are prepared now for the details of the tabernacle. In it we shall find that a primary thought is the manifestation of God, not in Godhead glory which is unapproachable, but in such a way - really in Christ - that the creatures He had made might know Him in the manifestation. He takes His place, as it were, figuratively in His own creation, and the manifestation is in man. He was going to dwell in a tabernacle with men on earth. Hence we are no longer engaged with the work of God for His people, blessed as that is, but with that people called to enter into His interests; for the tabernacle was His house where every part and vessel spoke of what He is, the manifestation of Himself in man. There is nothing so great and wonderful as the only-begotten Son unfolding to us what is of God. "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us," therefore it is at once added, "We contemplated His glory." We are not here engaged with our deliverance, but with His glory. We must be redeemed to enter into what the apostles contemplated, and this redemption we have had before us in figure in the early chapters of Exodus. The last verses of Exodus 24:1-18 are important, as leading to the subject of the tabernacle. The cloud of the Lord's glory covered the mount. In the sight of Israel it was like devouring fire; for though redeemed out of Egypt, they stood on the ground of responsibility as to the flesh. Whatever was in the mind of God as to bringing a people into communion with Himself, His glory was as consuming fire. To us it now shines in the face of Him who in the fire of judgment has perfectly glorified God in respect of sin. Moses was not only called up into the mount, but he went into the midst of the cloud. He was called up to receive the tables of the law, but in the midst of the cloud he was shown the figurative representation of things in the heavens, and received instructions for the making of the tabernacle. The very place where he was instructed in the details of God's dwelling-place amongst men (comp. Luke 9:34-35) suggests to us the character of what is unfolded in the tabernacle - God displaying Himself in His own creation, and a place of nearness and intimacy, though as yet the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. It was ever in His mind to be known by His creatures, and to have His glories and excellencies displayed to them, even to the most exalted intelligences. Into the inaccessible light where He dwells it is impossible for the creature to enter. If then Divine Persons were to be known, it must be by the manifestation of what is divine in the ranks of creation. God has been manifested in flesh. He who created all

things came as the Firstborn into the ranks of creation. The Son of God has brought what was divine into manhood; He has also brought Sonship into manhood; but into this I do not enter here.

Bearing in mind what has been said, we learn, from Hebrews 3:4, that the tabernacle was a figure of the universe as builded by God, to be the sphere of the manifestation of Himself in Christ. All things in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him, and He is the appointed Heir of all things. Thus we may further seek in it for figures of Him in whom the manifestation is made, and consequently of Israel and the church; the one being the earthly, and the other the heavenly people, through whom the glories of Christ will shine out. The congregation of Israel were in one sense God's house, as identified with the tabernacle where God dwelt. It was the place where they gathered together - the appointed tent of meeting. Now it is said (Hebrews 3:6) of Christians, "Whose house are we"; and again (Ephesians 2:22), "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." The bearing of this will become apparent as we examine the details of these chapters.

I have alluded to the making of the tabernacle as being engaged with the interests of the God who redeemed them, and it is a blessed thing. The people were to bring an offering to the Lord. "Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering." When the heart is set free with God, in the sense that His grace has provided for all my need, then it can go out willingly in regard to the details of His house as He makes them known. I do not think we could carefully read Exodus 25:1-40 without being struck with the immense privilege of being the recipients of such communications, of knowing these unfoldings of Himself. The more so for us, because we belong to the inside place, where we can apprehend the fullest revelation of Himself as taught by His Spirit, and from whence we are able to survey as strengthened by the same Spirit the whole range of His purposed glory in Christ. The business of Israel was now with the sanctuary. We too are sanctuary people - "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." First, they are occupied with the construction of its parts and vessels; then, they either kept the charge of the Lord when the cloud rested on it (Numbers 9:19), or they carried it as the testimony of God through the wilderness. It was a happy moment for them when engaged with making a sanctuary for the Lord, a response given of the Lord to their song, sung at the moment of their deliverance, under the leading of the prophetic spirit in Moses, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation."

There is only one more remark which I make now, that all was to be according to the pattern showed to Moses. How otherwise could it have represented what was in the mind of God, who ever had Christ before Him? He was the great original in the mind of God. All that was given to Israel was but a shadow of the things to come, but the body (or substance) is of Christ. Any departure from the pattern showed to Moses would have falsified the representation of the ordered scene where God was pleased to dwell and manifest Himself. It would have been as building in wood, hay, and stubble, where only gold and precious stones should have a place. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Table of Showbread, the Candlestick, etc.

The Table of Showbread, the Candlestick, etc.

Exodus 25:1-40. In the last lecture we touched upon the table of showbread and the candlestick. In tracing out the details connected with them we must refer to other scriptures. In this chapter we have only the description of the holy vessels, and the intimation of God's first and great thought in their construction; when we come to the ordering of them we learn many instructive details. As to the table, it was of the same materials as the ark - shittim-wood and gold; another representation to us of the person of Christ. It had to support, as we have seen, twelve loaves. This was for God's eye, for the table was before the Lord. (Leviticus 24:6.) They were consequently at first set in perfect order by Moses, the mediator, and afterwards were to be ordered by Aaron, the priest, continually. Pure frankincense was put upon them, and this was burnt as a sweet savour to the Lord. It represents that perfection in Christ which none but God could delight in and appreciate, but it was put upon the loaves - His people - for a memorial. In the eye of God they are ever seen as in those perfections. The word "showbread" means bread of manifestation, or setting forth. Israel is the people in whom the Lord will display Himself in government upon the earth. They may have completely broken down and be "scattered and peeled," but before the Lord they are ever maintained in the order of the pure table, according to God's design in its construction and use, by the great Priest. They are thus seen by the Lord with the memorial upon them of the perfection of Christ. Faith thus reckons as in Acts 26:7; James 1:1. All was ordered upon the Sabbath-day, and was thus connected with rest for man upon this earth, because all was according to the mind of God in perfect order, seen in the perfections of Christ and secured by Him as Priest. The principle of this is true for the Church in its responsible character, though it has failed in this. It is the vessel of heavenly administration, in which the principalities and powers in heavenly places learn the manifold wisdom of God. The holy city Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God shows us that whatever may have been the breakdown, God's design in the assembly will in no wise fail, and that in and from it shall be manifested the fulness of heavenly blessing and glory. There were twelve loaves to represent Israel, but the unity of the assembly is represented by the one loaf in which Christians participate. Whatever the broken state of things may be, the whole assembly of the saints is for faith contemplated in the one loaf, though all are not actually in the fellowship of that one loaf. Faith sees that all is secured in the Head on high.

There is a second idea in the showbread. Aaron and his sons ate it in the holy place. The food of God's table belongs to the whole priestly family. All Christians are priests, and partakers of the Lord's table, but we have no figure of the broken loaf in the showbread. It would be rather Christ as the bread come down from heaven. Only we have to remember now that we must feed upon Him in death in order to have any part in the living bread. The side of the table of showbread manward is that it was the vessel of the administration of God's bounty through Israel for the earth. In John 6:1-71 we see how Christ's ministry in feeding the multitude by means of the twelve apostles is connected with the truth of the Bread come down from heaven to give life to the world. The Church feeds on Christ, and it is only as we feed upon Christ that we can minister Christ. We cannot really

communicate to others unless we have appropriated Christ ourselves. The heavenly city will be the vessel of the ministry of a heavenly Christ, but in it is the Tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits. The saints of the assembly are formed in what is of Christ through feeding upon Him. Israel will be the vessel of ministry upon the earth, but they will have a lesson-book in the heavenly saints, by which they also will learn Christ. Thus the earth will be ministered to from heaven, the heavenly saints then occupying the place of Aaron and his sons, the priestly family, who have fed upon Christ. The candlestick was entirely of gold; signifying what was wholly divine - the divine nature, for God is necessarily light. Light is not exactly display or manifestation, but it is what makes manifest. (Ephesians 5:13.) It represents to us what in itself is spiritually perfect, there is no human element here. We are speaking of what light is in itself, its intrinsic character. Israel should have reflected this light, as having the presence of Jehovah among them, and His word and Spirit with them; but when the true Light came into the world, it only shone in a darkness which comprehended it not; yet Israel will arise and shine for God in the earth, when the veil is taken away from their heart, and the glory of the Lord arises upon them. Now it is said of believers, Ye are "light in the Lord," not merely that ye have light, but ye are light. No doubt it manifests the true character of the unfruitful works of darkness, but it has its own fruit in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Hence, when the lighting of the lamps is spoken of (Numbers 8:1; Numbers 8:4) nothing is said of its making anything manifest. It is to shine in its own intrinsic beauty, and immediately the beautiful work of the candlestick, from which the light shone, is set forth - of beaten gold, with its flowers and knops - the vessel for the shining forth of the light in its spiritual perfection by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is what is true in Christ and in us. The new Jerusalem is a vessel of light. It has the glory of God, and her shining is like to a stone most precious as a jasper and a sardine stone. The glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. Nothing of natural light is needed there, neither sun nor moon, nor was there in the tabernacle any other light than this candlestick of pure gold. We have seen that believers are light in the Lord, and that the character of the light is divine, hence it must shine in the characteristics of the divine nature, and God is love as well as light. Grace and truth came in Jesus Christ, and the love of God is perfected in one who keeps His word, because the word is the revelation of what Christ is to the soul. The Church was set to be the vessel of this light (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22.), but the light waned when it left its first love, and the removal of the candlestick is at once threatened. It is beautiful to see, in Revelation 22:17, how the love is revived. It is by a renewed apprehension of the person of Christ. She arises, as it were (Ephesians 5:14), from among the dead, and Christ shines upon her.

We have so far been looking at what was in the tabernacle, and this is important for us, because God puts it first. We have seen that it is connected with the purpose of God to manifest Himself in and by man. Christ is the centre of this purpose. All is to be sustained and ordered by Him in the dispensation of the fulness of times, but others, redeemed men, are associated with Him in it. Hence, when He began His public ministry, He called the twelve to be with Him in it. Everything also will shine in the light of God Himself - God as light and love - and this by the power of the Spirit. We now come to the tabernacle itself. It is, as we have said, a figure of the universe, and it is to be a universe of bliss, because it will be filled with the fulness of God, and Christ is that fulness. When we look at the failure of everything that has been entrusted to the hands of men, it would be difficult for us to understand how all that is shadowed in these figures is to be accomplished, did we not see that in Christ is the Yea and Amen of every promise of God, and for

glory to God through us. The first thought in the tabernacle is that it is the dwelling-place of God; secondly, it is the place of approach for men. Both these aspects are verified in Christ.

There were four coverings to the tabernacle, but divided into two and two. Two formed the tabernacle itself, the other two were simply coverings. The inner one of the first two was composed of ten curtains of fine-twined linen, and worked into these were blue, purple, scarlet, and cherubim. This is called in our translation (Exodus 26:1) "the tabernacle," but the Hebrew word means "the dwelling-place" or "habitation." It is a cognate word to "the shekinah," the name given to the cloud in which Jehovah dwelt. These linen curtains figured pre-eminently the dwelling-place of God. They represent to us the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus ("The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us"); but in connection with the heavenly, the royal, and the earthly glories which attach to Him. Besides these, the judicial authority of the throne of God centres in Him for making good these glories. All judgment is committed to the Son, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The veil afterwards described, was of the same material as these curtains, and it is stated (Hebrews 10:20) that it is His flesh. These curtains could not be seen outside. It was the privilege of the priestly family to go inside and behold these glories. God has been manifested in flesh, but justified in Spirit. If we had lived when Jesus was upon earth we should not have justified, that is, rightly judged about, the manifestation of God in that lowly Man; we should not have known Him as out of heaven, or that He was a King, much less that God was there, save by spiritual discernment (John 1:33); and though in these figures we have no shadowing forth of what He was with the Father, yet it was in this manner alone that the apostles could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

Over these linen curtains were eleven curtains of goat's hair. These are called "the tent." (Exodus 26:7) Our translation says "covering," but it is more accurately "a tent upon the habitation." (See Exodus 26:12, and Exodus 40:19) It is the outer aspect of the dwelling-place of God, as the tabernacle was the inner. These curtains gave to the tabernacle the designation of "the tabernacle of the congregation," or, more correctly, "the tent of appointed meeting." Its aspect therefore is towards the people. A prophet's garment was made of hair, and the prophetic office was to communicate the mind of God. This was true in Christ - the Word - for He was what He spoke. This tent was also called the tabernacle of witness or testimony. If we look inside, God was there; outside, it was a holy testimony of God to those who assembled. Another thing marked the garb of a prophet - separation to God whose mind he communicated. (Mark 1:1-6.) So Christ was ever holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. It is marvellous grace that we should have the testimony of God in a world of sin, but it must necessarily be in separation from it. It centres in Christ, for He not only bears witness, but is the subject of all testimony. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Thus in the "tent" we have two leading thoughts, it is the place of assembly where Christ declares the mind of God; and this is necessarily in separation from the world. The other two curtains were simply coverings. They were not, so to speak, part and parcel of the tabernacle itself. They represent to us two characters seen in Christ, and here again we have the outer and the inner. The ram was the victim of consecration. Hence in the covering of rams' skins died red we have figured the perfect devotedness of one entirely consecrated to God. In the badgers' skins we have had that which repelled everything that would have interfered with that consecration. Outside things never affected the inward devotedness. He moved in the midst of a world of evil untouched by it; Himself the testimony of sovereign love, giving Himself in love for

men, but as a sacrifice of sweet savour to God. We see in these coverings the two characters which become the dwelling-place of God, - consecration and holy vigilance. We see these also in the new Jerusalem. His servants serve Him, and nothing that defiles can enter. There the very purity of the city is repellent of all evil. Here we need the exhortation "Be vigilant." What a contrast to Christ do we see in His disciples, when man's hour and the power of darkness came upon Him in Gethsemane. He prays while the disciples sleep. Peter smites with the sword, when He says, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" All is perfect there. He is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Testimony of God.

The Testimony of God.

It has pleased God, in the development of His ways with men, to give us in the Word pictures, perfect in themselves, of what was in His own mind as to the conduct and position of those with whom He was dealing. Whilst others will suggest themselves to the reader, I only advert to two at this moment.

First, in Numbers 10:1-36, after the arrangement in perfect and beautiful, because divine, order of the camp of Israel, whether at rest or in its order of march, the two silver trumpets are made for calling the assembly together, or for its journeying, with a further direction on Israel entering into the land for their use in time of war, as well as in the day of their gladness, and in their solemn days. Thus, when the trumpets were used, the testimony of God - the Jehovah of Israel - in priestly intelligence was proclaimed. It was He that was marching through the wilderness (Psalms 68:7), and Israel were marching with Him. They were His enemies (Numbers 10:35) that were scattered. It was His people that were summoned in assembly, and His charge that was kept as He dwelt in their midst. They rendered testimony to and for Him in their journeyings or assemblies, in their battles or days of solemnity or gladness. This testimony, which was that of priestly intelligence in the mind of God, being established by an ordinance for ever, the people take their first journey in perfect order, without a single let or hindrance; the Ark of the Lord going before them a three days' journey to search out a resting-place for them; and they concluded it by Jehovah returning to the many thousands of Israel. Alas! while it was thus a perfect picture of what the whole journey should have been, it was quickly succeeded by the murmuring and lusting of Numbers 11:1-35 - the result of departure of heart from the Lord.

Again, in Joshua 6:1-27 we have a perfect picture of what conflict in Canaan should have been. The Ark of the covenant of Jehovah - The Lord of all the earth - had passed over Jordan, and Jordan had been driven back before it. The Lord of all the earth was claiming His own inheritance to give to those whom He had taken to be a peculiar treasure to Himself, for all the earth was His. In the wilderness they were the camp in the midst of which He dwelt, and now arrived in the land they are the Lord's host. This Joshua learnt when he enquired of the man with the drawn sword, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" "Nay," was the reply, "but as captain of the Lord's host am I now come." In this chapter then we have a perfect picture of the marshalling of the Lord's host, as we had before of the ordering of the camp in its first journey, and as in Psalms 68:24-27 we have "the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary" in the days of millennial rest. The host is marshalled by the armed men passing on first, then the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horn passed on before the Lord, next followed the Ark, and the rearward or gathering up of the host completed the order of battle. Yet there was neither sword drawn nor shout given; the priests alone are proclaiming in perfect intelligence and order the testimony of God. The rights and title of Jehovah, of Him who dwelt between the Cherubim, of the Lord of all the earth, are proclaimed in every blast of the rams' horn trumpets, as against the power of the enemy sheltered

behind the walls built up to heaven. The testimony is perfectly rendered, and the whole power of evil crumbles before it. But the holiness of the Lord must not be belied by the host who proclaim His rights. Joshua had to loose his shoe from his foot in the presence of the Captain, and the host must in anywise keep themselves from the accursed thing. They do transgress in it, and thus we have recorded the marring of so fair a picture. Fellowship with evil is ruinous in every way; it detracts from spiritual intelligence, and apart from this intelligence the evil remains undiscovered. Spies are sent to Ai, and counsel is taken with flesh and blood. The sense of being the Lord's host is lost. All the people need not labour thither, as if all were not concerned in making good the testimony of God, or, speaking for ourselves, as if the interests of Christ, and the testimony of God to that once humbled but now exalted and glorified Man, were not the object of the whole assembly of God, or as if the interests of His body were not the interests of every member of that body. But how can this testimony of God be maintained while His claims upon His own people of holiness and separation to Himself from evil are unheeded? He cannot lead on to victory now. He must first teach those who name the name of the Lord to depart from iniquity. The disaster at Ai led to this purging of themselves. In turning to the testimony of God, as rendered in New Testament times, we find it characterized in three ways - the testimony of God (1 Corinthians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:4), the testimony of (the) Christ (1 Corinthians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 1:9), and the testimony of our Lord (2 Timothy 1:7-8). The first is somewhat of the same character as the "gospel of God" in the epistle to the Romans, and has for its great subject Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. It was rendered among the Corinthians by the apostle himself in weakness and fear and much trembling; yet it was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that their faith might be in the power of God. The cross of Christ set aside both Jewish superstition and Gentile wisdom; indeed it was altogether the end morally of man in the flesh; but it brought in God. The testimony of God in thus proclaiming what is of God must set aside what is of man. The recipient of this testimony becomes himself of a wholly new order, he is of God. "Of Him, are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Moreover there are the things which are freely given him of God - things which no power of man's nature can know, but which God has prepared for them that love Him, and which He reveals by His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

"The testimony of the Christ" is that of the exalted and glorified Man who has been set at the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ. The Church of God was the vessel of this testimony, and it had been confirmed among those who formed it at Corinth by no human aid, but by the grace of God given them in Christ Jesus, enriching them in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, all depending upon the faithfulness of God, by whom they were called into the fellowship of His Son. Alas! we see how the allowance of the first man, set aside by God in the cross, led them to lower their portion as being of God (in which circle all things were theirs, and they were Christ's, and Christ is God's) to glory in men. And mark the result - sin not known among the Gentiles was allowed, disputes and divisions amongst themselves, fellowship with idols, gifts used for self-importance, and such ignorance of God that the resurrection of the dead was denied by some among them. The Spirit of God by the apostle had to be a Spirit of rebuke and reproof, and to speak to them as carnal and not spiritual, instead of speaking among them the wondrous wisdom suited to full-grown saints.

It was to the saints at Ephesus that the Spirit of God could unfold the mystery of the Christ of God, the centre of all His counsels, and also the place in which He has been set in the heavenlies as the Son of man for the administration in their proper season of all those counsels of which He is the centre; for all things both in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him. The further mystery of the Church as His body, the completion of Him who fills all in all, is likewise unfolded to these Ephesian saints. Here again we are occupied with what is of God, not now as displacing the first man by the cross of Christ, but God in all the counsels and purposes which He has established in the second Man, in a scene and sphere which lies the other side of death in the heavenly places. Hence the apostle prays that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. They are thus taught that the power which operated towards them was that by which God had raised the Christ from the dead, and set Him as the exalted, glorified, and heavenly Man at His own right hand, and that thus they were quickened with Christ, raised, and seated in the heavenlies in Him. The assembly too is the habitation of God by the Spirit; there His power operates through the gifts bestowed by the exalted Man for the confirmation of "the testimony of the Christ." The Corinthians were using them for the exaltation of man, and thus we see the difference between the gifts and the vessel in which the gifts were set. The assembly is the vessel of glory to God by Christ Jesus throughout all ages; the Corinthians were glorying in men. It needed that they should practically learn, as unfolded in the second epistle, what it was to have the sentence of death in themselves in order that the vessel might be nothing, and the excellency of the power be of God. Jordan must be crossed and Gilgal reached before the Israelites could be Jehovah's host; and it is a people who have learnt that the flesh, as unable to bring forth anything for God, has been ended in the cross, and who know that they are subjects of the power of God working in a scene of death, even the power that raised up the Christ, who will learn to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and to take to themselves the whole armour of God. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to enter into detail as to the armour. I believe it to be consistency, practically with the position we are in as in the heavenlies; secondly, the bringing in the power of God; and thirdly, complete identification with the interests of Christ as shown in earnest and persevering prayer for all saints, as well as for the man against whom Satan's rage at that time was specially directed, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. All the host compassed Jericho as the trumpets proclaimed the rights and title of the Lord of all the earth; all the saints are connected with the testimony to the exalted Man at God's right hand. May the Lord give us to understand what the Church of God is as the vessel of such a testimony. Doubtless the Church has failed to be this vessel; but not the less can a feeble few act as the Lord's host, and proclaim the testimony of the Christ if indeed we know that the Church has its existence alone upon the ground of the setting aside of the first Adam, and the setting of the last Adam in a wholly new place, consequent on death and resurrection, at God's right hand.

"The testimony of our Lord" is more individual, though the assembly as the house of God is that circle upon earth where Jesus is owned as Lord (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:5) by those who compose it. Such a testimony derives special force when the house of God has become a place where vessels of wood and earth are allowed as well as the gold and silver vessels of the sanctuary. Then it is incumbent, in the precincts of the house, on every one that nameth the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity. In Ephesians 3:1-21, "Paul the prisoner of

Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," as he unfolded to them the eternal purpose of God, could tell them that his tribulations for them were their glory, but at Ephesus the tide had now set the other way. Phygellus and Hermogenes were leaders in turning away from Paul, and Timothy was in tears. It was at such a moment that he was exhorted not to be ashamed of "the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner," a moment when the ordered vessel of the testimony was being corrupted, and the Lordship of Christ had to be maintained by the individual without fear; for God had given the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, so God has set it; but now in the time of the Church's failure the man of God individually has to hold fast the form of sound words, and to keep by the Holy Ghost the deposit with which he has been entrusted. He has to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, and solemnly is he charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the word and fill up the measure of his ministry, thus would he both hold and proclaim the testimony of our Lord.

Jude tells us that the ungodly men who were creeping in among true Christians were those who denied our Lord Jesus Christ; and in connection with the Spirit's testimony by this apostle, we may notice that he speaks of praying in the Holy Ghost. Twice is prayer thus referred to in the New Testament - Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 1:20. In the one case Paul is, as it were, in the energy of Joshua, establishing the saints in the heavenly places; while Jude, like Elijah in his mystic journey from Gilgal to Jordan, is prophetically traversing the whole scene of apostacy. There was need to be in the current of the Spirit's mind - praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit - when the Lord's host were maintaining the testimony of the Christ; and need of praying in the Holy Ghost in the day of the denial of the Lordship of Jesus, when souls have to be pulled out of the fire.

Thus "the testimony of God" puts man out of sight to bring in the wisdom and the power of God. And then, whether it be "the testimony of the Christ" by the assembly, or "the testimony of our Lord" maintained by individual faithfulness, both are rendered according to the mind of the Spirit in communion with God. In each case there is as much apparent weakness as in a ram's horn trumpet, but the power of God is known. T. H. Reynolds.

S. The Word of God - Intercession - Ebenezer.

The Word of God - Intercession - Ebenezer.

1 Samuel 7:1-17.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 113.

"And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord." (1 Samuel 3:21.) Thus grace acts when the established order in Israel was broken up through the wickedness of the priesthood, and Ichabod was written on the nation. "Samuel was established [a word which carries with it the thought of God's faithfulness, see margin] to be a prophet of the Lord," who thus renews His communications with His people. It was a time of testimony until another order, that of the kingdom already announced in Hannah's prophetic song, should be set up. Then, "He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." (1 Samuel 2:10.) Till that time Samuel ministers the testimony of God to the people. The faithfulness of God is thus seen in giving His word to sustain faith during a time of disorder, as well as to act upon the conscience and conduct of those addressed by it. Never will be such a moment of distress as the time when the remnant of Israel will have to say, "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." (Psalms 74:9.) Then even the faith of the elect will all but give way, according to our Lord's own word, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8.)

Besides being the channel of divine communication, Samuel occupies another place equally important and blessed, connected also with the patient grace of God - that of intercession. This position of Samuel is very definite, and is developed in the chapter before us. We may also learn from Jeremiah 15:1 what a very blessed place of intercession both Moses and Samuel had occupied in the history of Israel, how they both took up the failure of the people, and had special access to the Lord with regard to it. No such place of nearness was accorded to Saul when the kingdom was set up in him. He was not a vessel unto honour. Hence he is dependent on Samuel's word to be shown what he must do - direct communication and approach to God. he has not. It is in this point that his breakdown begins; having no apprehension of the divine mind himself, he cannot wait to receive it by the hand of Samuel. The mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, and this makes it so serious if the flesh takes a place in the things of God. It can neither trust Him nor wait for Him, nor does it enter into His thoughts about His people. The end is awful when he who outwardly had been the instrument of the power of the Spirit of Jehovah, because of his position, becomes subjected to an evil spirit from the Lord. Such was the result of the setting up of Saul's kingdom, which was in itself the rejection of Jehovah's authority, and of Samuel's testimony and place of intercession. But to return to that which is our immediate subject. First, let us note the circumstances in which the people of God are found at the moment we are considering. For twenty years Israel had been content that the ark of God, displaced from the tabernacle at Shiloh, should be in a private house in Kirjath-jearim. Not that they had any title to find another abode for it; sovereign grace alone could accomplish that, and afterwards establish it

in Sion. During the time of its being at Kirjath-jearim, Israel had been serving Baalim and Ashtaroth. "The time was long," and vanities cannot satisfy. Hence desire of heart is awakened, so that "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." The moment of felt need is the moment when the testimony of God has its effect upon the conscience, and it becomes divine direction to the exercised soul. Moreover the state of the people, hitherto unnoticed, is discovered by the word of Samuel - "If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods." How much is discovered by the action of the word of God when its testimony is received! That which had hindered the Lord being with them is now made manifest, and the heart is challenged as to the place which He holds there. He who has written, "My son, give me thine heart," cannot be satisfied with less. He had not been unmindful of Israel's departure from Himself, therefore the word of Samuel is, "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." There is a great contrast between such an admonition and the blindness which had said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." (1 Samuel 4:3.) This was but the form of godliness without the power. What God has given relied upon, instead of the God that gave it being feared and trusted. The word of Samuel produces a twofold effect - there is separation from evil, and separation to God. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." Philistines are not external foes, but those within, allowed by the Lord to remain within the inheritance "to prove Israel by them." (Judges 3:1; Judges 3:3.) When the time of testing by them arose, we are instructed fully as to the power by which they could be met. The Nazarite (the separated one) is God's way of deliverance. (Judges 13:5.) Such was Samson to be, and such was Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11), and such, beloved brethren, must we be if the Lord's supremacy in the midst of His saints is to be maintained. Samuel's word is indeed necessary: "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord." The question of supremacy is very definitely put by the giant of Gath in 1 Samuel 17:8-9: "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul?" (not servants of Jehovah, or, as David calls the hosts of Israel, the armies of the living God) "choose you a man for you If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." It is he that has been anointed king who lays the champion low; but practical Nazariteship is that which brings in God's deliverance in the time of testing, and sets the Lord's people in the place of overcomers. But return to the Lord is not the same thing as the early days of power and blessing, when the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from circumcised Israel, and they had the presence of the Captain of the host of the Lord under the walls of Jericho; therefore, in taking the place of intercession, Samuel does not gather all Israel to Gilgal (though he judged Israel there, and there Saul was directed to await him), but to Mizpeh (the watchtower). It is not the day of the man with the drawn sword, but of the intercessor for a failed people. Surrounded by the foe, where could Israel gather but to the watchtower? and there take the place of weakness and confession. "They fasted and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." Such is the place that befits those who are conscious of the want of heart which first neglected to make the Lord and His interests supreme, and then was powerless to resist the inroads of the enemy from without, and the supremacy of the foe within. "And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." It had been a time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25.) Now there is the judging of ways and doings by him who ministers the word of God. There is not only the confession of weakness

and sin, but they are subject to the judgments of the Lord, which are true and righteous altogether.

"The word of God is quick and powerful," and "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." He it is also who says, "I know thy works." Like the word of Samuel, which was to all Israel (1 Samuel 4:1), this addresses itself to the public body; but if any are led to bow under the word and eye of One altogether beyond Samuel, do we not know that He has laid the ground for intercession righteously, in that He is the propitiation for our sins, and that He has borne them in His own body on the tree? He is able thus to save for evermore all that come to God by Him. What holy affections are called forth as we realize, though we may cry out of weakness and the sense of failure, that He has been beforehand with us, and that the very cry produced in us results from the blessed fact that He has not been ashamed to confess in His own place of intercession our names before His God and Father, though He may have to judge us in Mizpeh? If He has to judge our ways, yet never will He cease to confess His deepest interests in us. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." He counts upon there being an ear to hear, while His word is to "all Israel." But let us note further, in connection with the place of intercession which Samuel takes in the hour of the people's need, that "he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord." Here, in the sucking lamb, there would appear to be the same sense of weakness as in the pouring out of water previously; their own condition had been then confessed, while Samuel owns in his offering the feebleness of their apprehension of the only ground on which their relationship with Jehovah could be based - the ground on which Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; but whatever the feebleness of their apprehension, the sacrifice itself was wholly unto the Lord - that is, the worth of the burnt-offering. Hence the answer of the Lord to Samuel's intercession is according to His estimate of the whole burnt-offering, though the low condition of the people was fully recognized in it. The power of the Lord is now manifested as He thundered upon the Philistines. (Compare 1 Samuel 2:9-10.) The sufferings of Him who was crucified in weakness, but liveth by the power of God, are the key to every interposition of God on behalf of His people. We may have to draw the contrast between the picture given to us in Leviticus 11:22, when Aaron lifted up his hand and blessed the people from the altar of burnt-offering (compare Luke 24:50), and, now that Shiloh had been forsaken, the sucking lamb of Samuel; but the power of God towards a failed people is manifested. "So the Philistines were subdued, and came no more into the coast of Israel." They are free to enjoy the inheritance of the Lord, and cities and coasts are delivered out of the hands of the enemy. And now, whose is the victory? And what the record of deliverance? Gideon made an ephod and put in his city, and it became a snare, instead of a memorial of the Lord's deliverance. The moment of victory becomes in such case the moment of danger. "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It records the Lord's help, and not Israel's strength or faithfulness. There is no such memorial here as was written in the book of Jasher in the day of Joshua (Joshua 10:13), for Ebenezer has to tell of the Lord's intervention in other circumstances - of a stone of help for a sinful, and yet through grace, repentant people. And what is our Ebenezer? What name do we own as bringing in for us the help of the Lord? Lord Jesus, Thou art our Stone of help - our Ebenezer. If truths have been recovered, if coasts have been delivered out of the hand of the enemy, it is because Thou, who hast suffered for sins once when by the Eternal Spirit Thou didst offer Thyself without spot to God, art in the place of intercession above. Our Stone of help, our Ebenezer, art Thou!

We do well to remember, as we meditate on the intercession of Christ, that it is founded on the fact of His having settled every question between us and God by having suffered for us on the cross. As the Holy Sufferer "who offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him out of death," we have One whose heart has been the vessel of every human woe, and yet felt it all and confessed it all according to God. Hence help can flow to us in answer to the perfect expression of the desires of His heart about us, as He makes intercession for us on high. In the beautiful psalm (2 Samuel 22:1-51) which describes the Messiah entering the dark path of the sorrows of His beloved people to take them up on His own person - He who well knew their meaning - He who is able to save for evermore all that come to God by Him - calls His God "the horn of my salvation" (2 Samuel 22:3); that is, the power of it. Further, He says, "Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation." Salvation is there thrown round Him, and us in Him. (2 Samuel 22:36) In 2 Samuel 22:47 He exalts "the rock of my salvation," and in 2 Samuel 22:51 "He is the tower of salvation for His king." T. H. Reynolds.

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If in the meditative reading of every passage of Scripture the imaginative tendency of some minds is to be watched, so likewise is the literal or exact method of others. It was an error of too much exactness of interpretation to say, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" because Jesus had been speaking of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; and it was an error of too much liberty in interpretation to say, "That disciple should not die," because Jesus had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" J. G. Bellett.

S. The end of the Lord

"The end of the Lord."

T. H. Reynolds.

Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 281. When difficulties and trials arise, the tendency of our hearts is constantly to be more occupied with deliverance from the difficulty than with the end and purpose of the Lord in allowing it; and, unless the soul is exercised before Him, an issue is often sought and accepted which is neither His help nor His salvation.

Hence it is good for us, whether individually or collectively, to ponder well the Lord's way with us which surely leads to the Lord's end. Of Israel it was said that they were "a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Thus the state of heart before God becomes important, so that the soul may be disciplined and His end may be reached by it. Nothing occurs but His hand is in it. Stormy wind and rain do but fulfil His word. "He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." (Job 37:13.) It is thus we learn most precious lessons - precious because we get beyond the trial which exercises us to the loving-kindness of the Lord, and our feet can then stand in an even place. We are in the sanctuary of God, and everything falls into its proper place with us there.

Never was there a moment when the saint who desires the Lord's glory more needed to be there, in the quietness of spirit which results from the sense of everything being under God's eye. Could anything be more trying to the Psalmist (Psalms 73:1-28) than to see evil apparently prospering, while those whose desires were right, and were seeking to walk in integrity, had waters of a full cup wrung out to them? It was in the sanctuary he learned that while his heart had been grieved, he had been, and was, the object of God's care and solicitude, that he would be held by His hand and guided by His counsel. Surely we may say, "Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

Now there is something equally trying which tests the state of our hearts before Him. It has pleased God in His grace to awaken, in the midst of the surrounding form of godliness, many of His saints to the desire of holding fast the word of the Lord, and of not denying His name. But, alas! even here, while desires may be sincere, how often is the heart lacking in subjection, and consequently the end of those desires is sought, if one may speak for others, in our own way. The claim to be fearing Him, who is the Holy and the True, is put forth by saints who take different paths, and finally seek separate fellowships. When this is so, can we say that the claim does not result from sincere desire to be true to Him? But while this is admitted, shall we not find that the soul is not chastened? and thus the moral state necessary for the desire to be accomplished in us is not reached. The exhortation of the apostle to the Philippians, that they would fill up his joy by being of one accord, of one mind, evidently sprang from the tendency in each to seek to serve according to the bent of the mind of each. Euodias and Syntyche liked to have their own way in labouring in the gospel. The mind which was in Christ Jesus, humbling Himself as a man, and becoming obedient even unto death, alone would enable them to "stand fast in one spirit, with one

mind striving together [as co-athletes] for the faith of the gospel." Encouragement is not found in carrying our own point, but in Christ. There is comfort of love there. It is fellowship of the Spirit, and not unity of opinion; and bowels and compassions take the place in this poor world of sorrow of our own way. When the soul is disciplined and self-will rebuked in us, then the mind of Christ becomes dominant. He could say, "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." When evil prevails among the saints of God, it is a great thing to remember that "the Lord is good and doeth good." This should lead our hearts to Himself, and then we shall not fret ourselves because of evildoers, nor be overcome of evil; but we shall learn to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. He bears long, and moreover His end has to be reached, and not our's. Besides, in reaching His own end, He knows how to order everything so as to produce, in the one that waits for Him, exercises of heart and utterances of voice which otherwise would not have been called forth. Affections and desires are thus wrought in us which are according to Himself; we learn to silence self, and even words and thoughts are ordered before Him. This is brought before us in Psalms 5:1-12, "Give ear to my words, O Lord." It is not a general petition, but words become weighed before Him. Thoughts too. The musings of the soul are as in His presence - "Consider my meditation." There is no room for self-will to seek to gain its end from the Lord when the utterance is, as in Psalms 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight."

Further, the Psalmist continues (Psalms 5:2): "Hearken [or attend] unto the voice of my cry . . . for unto Thee will I pray." Let it be noted that these early psalms, as do others, contemplate the godly in the midst of the pressure of evil around, and turning to the Lord on account of it, and this not as a last resource, but as the first thought "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I order unto thee, and will watch." (See R. V.) The thought here is not so much the fact of directing the prayer to the Lord, but the ordered watchful state of soul which claims His ear and attention. Evil may be all around, and there is the consciousness that "He has no pleasure in wickedness; "but the soul is not occupied with evil, but with the Lord, and thus holy fear is produced - "In thy fear will I worship toward the temple of thy holiness." This does not produce indifference to evil, but rather the suited conduct with regard to it. "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of those which observe me [marg.]; make thy way straight before my face." The Lord has a way of His own, and His will is good and acceptable; but we need to learn it in the presence of watchful foes lest we dishonour Him. "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of those which observe me." (Psalms 27:11.)

It is good thus to have self-will broken up, and the soul ordered before God and men. A lowly walk results, and the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, while adoring worship flows forth.

"I bow me to Thy will, O God, And all Thy ways adore." This tunes the heart and brings the spirit into harmony with the wisdom as well as love of God. The doxologies of the saints vary in their character according to the subject which fills the soul. In Ephesians 3:1-21 the infinity into which the saints are introduced, and the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, lead the apostle into the expression of what the Church is as the vessel formed by the power which worketh in us for glory to God by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. In Romans 11:33, after the Spirit has reviewed the whole scope of the relations between men (Jew or Gentile) and God, and the abounding of sin are shown to have brought forth the super-aboundings of grace, the

apostle's utterance of glory takes another character, and celebrates "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Sin broke up the rest of God in the first creation, but opened up the way for Him to form a new scene of blessing, where that rest shall never be disturbed. And if He, in patient grace and long-suffering with evil, has, without wearying, moved on towards that rest in His own path of wisdom and knowledge, and that rest remains for us, shall we not welcome any exercise which throws the soul into harmony with that path, and teaches us His way? All was ruin with Israel when Moses prayed, "Show me now thy way." (Exodus 33:13.) He had really acted for God in the camp; the result of holy jealousy in the sense that Jehovah's presence was incompatible with that of a golden calf. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" I say not here how far his actings, prompted as they thus were, were the taking of his own way to vindicate what was dear to him - the name of Jehovah; but the pressure on his spirit of the state of the people, and the taste in his own soul of being known of God and of being the object of His favour, lead him to say, "Show me now thy way." Had not Jehovah a path in the midst of Israel's ruin? Surely He had; and as Moses pleads, he gets the consciousness that there is a glory all His own, and yet connected with Jehovah's dealings with a sinful people, which he earnestly desires to see. That was impossible. None but One - a lowly Man of sorrows indeed, but in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead - knew that glory and could meet it. As we gaze on the cross, we learn adoringly that Godhead-glory was in the One who suffered there. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." The Son of man indeed, but for God to be glorified in Him there must have been the infinite and eternal springs of Godhead fulness. "My servant Moses," honoured as he was, must be hid in the cleft of the rock as Jehovah's glory passed by. Covered with His hand he may see the back parts; that is, the Lord must first pass by. To meet Him face to face would be to take the place of an equal. When He has passed by the blessedness of His path is seen. His glory, in which He abides, alone is supreme. We now see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And yet the glory of His person remains unknown. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." Well may we ponder the grace accorded to Moses as, put into the cleft of the rock by the Lord Himself, he saw the back parts, and heard the name of Jehovah proclaimed - a name which told what He was with respect to the evil which had come in. "He made known His ways unto Moses," and Moses worships and intercedes for the people. He is with God about the people, and learns the value of His name in a fuller way than had been taught him at the bush. (Exodus 3:14-15.) That name he publishes in the prophetic song which records the lowest depths into which the people would fall. (Deuteronomy 32:3.) Put besides this his own condition is transformed, and he acquires the impress of the communion he had enjoyed. "He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights." In his actings he had been with the people, and he had acted with holy jealousy surely, but with regard to their evil. Now he is with the Lord, and all is in harmony with that place. When he comes down he reflects, unconsciously to himself, the light which shone upon him there.

Two things are thus brought before us. First, without being indifferent to evil, we learn to walk with the Lord in the midst of it, and to know His way. The end of the Lord is then quietly waited for.

"His every act pure blessing is, His path unsullied light."

Secondly, the soul is chastened, and learns to behave itself as a weaned child. There is no seeking to carry out our own will, however sincerely we may believe ourselves to be right. The eyes are not lofty, nor the heart haughty; but communion with His mind, who could say at a time when evil was specially felt, "I thank thee, Father," will cause us to bear the impress of having been with Him, by our taking His yoke and being meek and lowly in heart. The end of the Lord will be more precious to us than the end which the fretfulness of our own spirits would desire. May the Lord rekindle in each beloved saint fresh desires to lodge in the goodness of the Lord, and to have His secret with us. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Thoughts on Rom_8:1-39.

Thoughts on Romans 8:1-39.

It may be helpful to see that at the end of Romans 7:1-25 the question of "I" has been settled. It is the mind or inner man which has been brought to delight in the will of God, and which is regarded as the true "I." In Romans 7:25 the apostle says, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [he does not now say 'I myself '] the law of sin." Hence all questions as to my state are over; I have come to the conclusion that my inner man which delights in the law of God is myself, and that I have a Deliverer, Jesus Christ our Lord, from the working of sin and death in me. Then in Romans 8:1-39 deliverance is enjoyed by the Spirit of God becoming in us the Spirit of Christ, and so superseding by His operation the working of the flesh. In Romans 5:1-21 the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Ghost. The soul thus knows the thoughts and feelings of the blessed God of all grace towards it.

Here in Romans 8:1-39 the Spirit is the controlling power of our thoughts and feelings, as those brought into liberty by Christ. In the end of Romans 7:1-25 the soul has found the Deliverer, the One in whom we have life and righteousness. Life for the believer is in Him who has been raised from the dead, and in Romans 6:1-23 he is taught to reckon according to what has taken place in Christ, who has died and risen again; he is taught to reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. But in Romans 8:1-39 we get more than reckoning, the believer comes under a controlling principle, not the law, but the Spirit. The law had discovered in him another governing principle, that of sin and death; motions of sins were by the law, and sin working death in a man by that which was good; but the believer now by the Spirit is in conscious relationship with his Deliverer, being married to Him who is raised from the dead. This is no mere position or standing, but a link of life by the Spirit, and hence a link of love. The life is in Christ Jesus. He lives to God as alive from the dead, in perfect love. He has taken this place for us through death, and all this is the proof of love. The blessed and important point for us is that we have the Spirit as the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Christ is alive out of the whole circumstances and scene where sin and death are; we are not actually out of them, but the Spirit is the link of life with Him who is out of them. This is important for us, because where there were passions of sins by the law, now by the Spirit there are motions of life, and no longer obligatory compulsion, but living obedience. A further point connected with the Spirit is that it is God's Spirit. It is not merely a question of a renewed spirit in us; but the apostle says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that God's Spirit dwell in you." Here we see that the believer has that which no angel possesses - God's Spirit. They are holy, unfallen beings, and we are fallen creatures; and yet, as those who are separated from the life of flesh by the death and resurrection of Christ, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the character of God as revealed in Christ might be formed livingly in us. No angel enjoys this privilege, they desire to look into these things. They are found after their own order in the heavenly Jerusalem, but they are not the city, nor is the character of the city, that is of Christ, seen in them. Now here we are in a scene of contrariety, once fallen creatures, but redeemed, and God's Spirit dwelling in us who believe in Christ. This chapter does not carry us

into the full blessings connected with the Spirit, but shows us the leading elements connected with the Spirit of God dwelling in the Christian. We have noticed the immense privilege of God's Spirit being given, not to renovate in any way what is of man, but to bring in what is of God, that God's character in all its moral elements as seen in Christ might come out in us; hence we have the Spirit spoken of as the Spirit of Christ. The apostle continues the sharp contrast which he had previously drawn between the mind or disposition of the flesh - the way in which the flesh thinks and feels - and the mind or disposition of the Spirit - that is, the thoughts and feelings which have their source in the Spirit of God. So here he says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." It is no question of a renovated man, but being of Christ. God does not recognise any man but Christ. He has died to sin and lives to God. All is in death that is not of Him, and we are livingly of Him as having His Spirit. So it continues, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." We are still down here in the body, and our link with Christ is by the Spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." The effect of Christ being in the Christian is that the body is looked at as dead on account of sin, for Christ has died to sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Righteousness is established in Christ, and now life and righteousness go together. We are looked at as still in the body, the body not yet quickened with the Spirit, but dead, but the Spirit who dwells in us is life. Then Romans 8:11 contemplates the mortal body being made alive because of the indwelling Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead. It has often been noticed that it is this which completes the answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The first part of the answer is that we have found and reached the Deliverer, and the second that He has given us of His Spirit, and this involves as consequence that the body will be made alive in the power of the life of Christ.

Everything lies for the believer in having the Spirit; he is actually in the body and in a scene of contrariety, but God's Spirit dwells in him, hence he is in no way debtor to the flesh, though still living in the body down here. Indeed, living after the flesh is the way to death, but if by the Spirit, who is our link with Christ, we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. All this supposes that we are still in that condition where we experience the contrariety of the flesh, but the Spirit setting us free so that we may live in new affections and relationships. And here, as in Galatians, sonship is in contrast with legal bondage. Those who were under the tutelage and guidance of the law were servants, but to be guided by the Spirit gives us the character of sons. It is important to see the true character of sonship which belongs to Christians as linked with Christ. A man might adopt a child, give him the position and privilege of a son, make him his heir and so forth, but there is one thing he cannot do, he cannot give him the spirit and character of a son with its suited affections. Now this is what God's Spirit can and does do - guide the believer into all the movements of life and affection which belong to the position in which grace has set us in Christ. The Christian position is sonship, in contrast to that of servants under the law, and God's Spirit gives reality to the relationship of God's sons. It is in the cry, "Abba, Father," that the Spirit produces the response to the love of God which He sheds abroad in the heart. T. H. Reynolds.

S. Time and For Ever.

Time and For Ever.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1.) Every thing under the sun is measured by "times." There is a time to be born, and a time to die. No matter what the purpose which the sons of men may take in hand under the heaven, each has its time, but only its "time." It is not "for ever," and its time passes on and is gone. Well is it if they who are passing through these varied times are exercised by the travail which they occasion. (Ecclesiastes 1:13; Ecclesiastes 3:10.) But beneath the exercises of these times there is a "work that God maketh from the beginning to the end;" for there is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. It is hid from the eyes of the living, but God understandeth the way thereof (Job 29:1-25), and this work, wrought in ways of infinite wisdom, is "for ever." "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before Him." It is done to produce holy fear, the beginning of wisdom in man, and becomes the means of the senses being exercised to discern good and evil in those who otherwise would put good for evil, and evil for good. (Isaiah 5:20.) Man cannot find out this work, because his vision is bounded by the horizon of time, and he can but take in by his own powers and senses those things which are thus measured. Very different is God's "for ever." He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; and blessed it is to know that as the varied seasons roll round, and a time to weep and a time to laugh succeed each other, that a feeble creature of time, by faith, and through sovereign mercy, can find his dwelling-place in the eternity of God. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations . . . from eternity to eternity thou art God." The saint now, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, has the mind of Christ. On Him rested the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Even as a child He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. He needed none of the exercises of these times, though He learned obedience by the things which He suffered in passing through them. He judged not by the sight of His eyes, nor the hearing of His ears, but by the divine wisdom with which He was filled; and the saint, as having His mind, is able to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, according as he is filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; but there is the flesh in us, and the needs be of breaking our will, so that we may follow in His steps who said, "I do always those things which please Him," and thus the exercises of the way teach us something of the work which God is doing from beginning to end. But further, though creation was set up in time, when God made everything beautiful in his season, there is a new creation, which began with a Man raised from the dead in the power of an endless life. In the time scene the first man, who was made a living soul, was set in his creature estate by God, to have and to hold so long as fealty was rendered to the Creator who set him there. Such an estate could be lost, and has been lost; but new creation is no creature estate. Everything there is "of God," and has the stamp of God's "for ever." It is the scene where the Father - blessed source of all that can ever be told out of the divine nature and fulness - is manifested in the Son by the power of the Holy Ghost. This time scene is

but the platform on which the work that God maketh from beginning to end is being carried out. The centre of it all is the Word made flesh, the person of the Son - unfathomable mystery known only to the Father. He it is who has been here and known a time to be born, and a time to die. Surely we bow our heads and worship as we behold Him, whose goings forth have been of old, from the days of eternity, and whose Spirit could prophetically utter those words, "My times are in thy hand," take His place in this time scene, and pass through it and out of it, by death and resurrection, to the throne of the Father, where He now is. He is there as the Christ of God, in whom all God's counsels are to be brought out for eternity.

What different thoughts fill our minds as we apprehend these counsels of God, and this time scene which otherwise so engrosses us, as the platform for their accomplishment, and the place too where we practically learn "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" thus learning that though that which is first is natural - a creature, a living soul - yet that the work which God maketh from beginning to end is accomplished by Him who is a quickening Spirit - the second Man, the Lord from heaven. A Man He was, and yet out of heaven. Man in himself is but a creature, and yet in Christ we see him as the object of the counsels of God, and in his history in time is brought out the wisdom and power of God in His ways of accomplishing His thoughts and purposes. T. H. Reynolds.

Man looks not beyond the circumstances which surround him. To tarry in circumstances is unbelief; affliction springs not out of the dust. Satan is behind the circumstances to set us on; but, behind all that, God is there to break our wills.

S. Unity: What is it?

Unity: What is it?

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 6:4.) This was the great central truth enforced by the Lawgiver on Israel. Round it circled all other. There could be one object of love alone, this one Jehovah, to whom every affection should flow (Deuteronomy 6:5), and but one object of worship and service (Deuteronomy 6:13) quoted by our Lord in answer to Satan. This great truth was in contrast to the idols of the heathen - gods formed out of the imagination of the heart, in reality demons, to whom every unholy desire and evil passion were consecrated, and who were worshipped according to the varied passions, lusts, or fears that moved the human heart.

There was beside but one place (Deuteronomy 12:5) where this one Jehovah put His name, and in which alone He could be worshipped. Not a single association with what was of idols could be suffered. No high place, or mountain, or hill, or tree, where other gods had been served, but must be destroyed, as well as every vestige of their worship, be it altar, pillar, or grove. Thus was the unity of the testimony committed to Israel to be maintained and preserved. God Himself the one Jehovah. The place of His name - "To His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come." Every association with what was false had to be destroyed.

Connected with this was another truth; there was one people who were witnesses that Jehovah was God. (Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 43:12.) They were and are His people. This is attested by their redemption out of Egypt, by their going through the floods and not being overwhelmed, and through the fire and not being burned; and finally, created as they have been for His glory, by their establishment in glory when their Jehovah shall have destroyed all the power of the enemy, and delivered them from every false god and all association with the idolatrous nations. Consequently this people must be separated from all others on the face of the earth. (Exodus 33:16.) It was the company of Jehovah with them which made it necessary. They must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. (Numbers 23:9.) In God's mind, too, the tribes of Israel were one. Not so in the mind of the enemy. Balak says to Balaam, "Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shall not see them at all." Could not the part farthest off from the sanctuary be cursed? Nay, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." It was in this uttermost part of the camp that the fire of the Lord burnt among them at Taberah. (Numbers 11:2.) He can and will chasten His own; but Israel, in the vision of the Almighty, is seen by Balaam abiding in their tents according to their tribes, and he had to declare of the farthest tent and tabernacle, as well as of the nearest, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" That the twelve tribes were this one people before the Lord, was represented also by the twelve loaves of shewbread on the one table in the sanctuary, with the pure frankincense upon them. Practically they should have corresponded to this representation of them before the Lord. They, as all others, failed to maintain their place as Jehovah's witnesses, and in the unity of their tribes to go up to the testimony of Israel. Ten tribes under Jeroboam rallied round the calves of Dan and Bethel, and the iniquity of the other two obliged the Lord to go far off from His sanctuary and to scatter them

among the heathen; but the twelve loaves, set in order before the Lord continually, taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant, with the memorial frankincense upon them, to be burnt to Him as most holy by a perpetual statute (Leviticus 24:5; Leviticus 24:9), was a figure that they have their place before Him continually (for God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew), according to the value of the frankincense upon the loaves; and in the end, gathered back from among the nations, they will be one nation, under one King and one Shepherd (Ezekiel 37:1-28), and there shall be one Jehovah, and His name One. (Zechariah 14:9.)

"To us," says the apostle, "there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him." (1 Corinthians 8:6.) Sweet and precious thought when we know Him, that "of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things to whom be glory." He, the centre, and as everything has flowed from Him, and is by Him, so must it be for Him. This opens to us another thought as to unity; for the one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and the one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, are not two but One - "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30.) And that is more than mere co-equality or co-eternity. His words were His Father's words. His works done in His Father's name bore witness who He was. In the salvation and care of the sheep His Father's and His own interests were identical, and whoever by faith had seen Him had seen the Father, while the rejector who hated Him hated His Father also.

Unity as to God thus being made known in a way different to the revelation made to Israel as a nation in the flesh, it came out through the rejection of the Lord in words and works - a rejection which set aside man in the flesh altogether - that the people who were to be witnesses of this unity must be placed on an entirely different footing. It was the death of Christ which opened the way for the gathering together in one of the children of God who were scattered abroad. (John 11:52.) As Son of man lifted up out of the earth (John 12:32) He was to be the centre of attraction for all men. On earth the temple at Jerusalem was the religious centre, but those who boasted in it rejected Him who came in His Father's name, and that name was to be declared by Him on earth no longer, but from the place He took consequent on being lifted up out of it. Thus a people were going to be formed into a new unity; not an elect nation separate from all others with an earthly centre, but children of God, previously scattered abroad, now gathered in one, as the fruit of the corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died, His death closing the hopes connected with an earthly Messiah.

It is in view of His death and taking this new place in glory that the Lord speaks in John 17:1-26, and here we find unity spoken of in a threefold manner. He takes His place on high, to glorify the Father from thence, in becoming the source of eternal life to a people the Father had given Him, and the character of that life was the knowledge of the Father and the Son. But already on the earth there was a company to whom He had manifested the name of the Father, to whom He had given the Father's words, and who had known that He came out from the Father, and this company, the eleven, He asks the Holy Father to keep in oneness, "as we." (John 17:11) We see how intimately this is connected with their taking His place on the earth, and His being glorified in them; and in this request the desire of His heart is expressed, that those whom He had hitherto kept in the Father's name should be kept in oneness during His absence "as we," and in the power of the name of the "Holy Father." There was besides the fellowship of this oneness "for those which shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:20) The inner power of this fellowship is

contained in the words, "That they may be one in us." This we see in 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The outer expression we see in Acts 2:42-47. Alas! soon to be given up when grace became feeble in them, and the flesh began to work. What the Lord thus desired was, that there should be a unity of testimony rendered by the eleven, not of agreement merely, but of thought and purpose, "as we." And also that those believing through their word should be gathered into the fellowship of this unity, and become the manifestation on earth that the Father sent the Son, so that the world might believe it. In glory this unity will be fully accomplished. The day of faith over, the world will know, when the saints are seen in the same glory as Christ, not only that the Son came as the sent One of the Father, and thus as the manifestation of all the grace and truth which are treasured up in that name of Father, but also that the Father loved them even as He loved the Son. Precious consummation in the heavens of the display of the Father's love in the unity of glory, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one;" as there will be the display on earth of the glory of the one Jehovah, when Israel will dwell together in unity.

If we ponder the words spoken by Moses to Israel, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah," and those spoken by the Son when here on earth, "I and my Father are one," and the truths we have noticed as connected with either revelation, it should deepen in our souls the sense that all that is of God must gather to Himself according to His own blessed nature, whether in government for the earth or in the glory of His grace for the heavens. Both will be finally consummated; both should have been maintained as set up by God in their respective seasons. On the other hand, it is of the enemy to scatter and to lead man to propose himself as a centre of unity. At the very beginning of his history the devil said, "Ye shall be as gods." Self-exaltation and pride - the crime of the devil - entered in, and as a necessary consequence begat in man the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God. The ultimate issue was a scene of unbridled corruption and violence, which was swept away by the judgment of God in the flood. Afterwards we do not find a surging sea of unrestrained self-will and passion, government having been established in Noah for its repression, but the self-sufficiency of man expresses itself in an evil confederation at Babel to set up himself and his works. It was there they said, "Let us make us a name," there they joined together to build a city and tower of slime and brick which should reach to heaven (compare Isaiah 14:13, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4), intending also to make it the centre of unity characterized by independence of God. Its character sufficiently marked its author; nor need we trace the workings of the mystery of iniquity from the time of its earliest germs seen in Babel onward, until the full result is reached in the Babylon of the Apocalypse and the man of sin, whose coming is after the working of Satan, to be assured that it was the arch-enemy of God who was then leading men into a unity of independence, which would culminate at the end in open revolt. What could a jealous God do - jealous that His creatures should turn to Him, not merely because He is supreme, but supreme in goodness and love - but scatter them abroad? Must He not gather to Himself in the supremacy of His own nature? Could He brook the pride and self-sufficiency that would do without Him and His love? Luke 15:1-32 tells us of the joy of the Father's bosom in receiving back the prodigal, first to His heart, and then to His home; and we thus learn what will be the joy, tasting it in spirit now, when all are gathered to the Father's house in the enjoyment of the love wherewith He loves the Son, folded up for ever in it, and displayed also as the manifestation of it. This leads us to another thought connected with the sphere and vessel of the display of this unity, rather than its nature and

character. We have seen that it will be perfectly displayed in glory, and that the first man having been set aside in death by the cross, the centre of unity now exists outside the earth altogether. The Son of man has been lifted up from the earth, and taken His place in glory. We have been reminded by a beloved servant of the Lord, now gone to be with Him, that while John speaks of the nature of what is to be displayed, Paul speaks of the sphere or dispensation in which it is displayed; but there are connecting links. In John 20:1-31 we find those who had been scattered (luring those three days of His absence now gathered together by the news of His resurrection. There is a Person known as alive again, and this attracts them as to a common centre. It is in weakness and fear they are together, but on the evening of that first day of the week the Saviour comes into the midst of the eleven, and those gathered with them. They are the company on earth that the Saviour owns by His presence. Fifty days after, the same company, in principle, are together, and the Holy Ghost fills the place where they were sitting, and also each one assembled. They are owned by the coming of the Holy Ghost as the company now formed by His presence into the assembly of God - His dwelling-place. It has been sanctioned by the presence of the Saviour in its midst, and by the coming and dwelling of the Holy Ghost. The full revelation of this truth was not yet made known, though the fact was accomplished, nor the further truth that this assembly was the body of Christ. In the ways of God it needed that Jerusalem should consummate its guilt by the rejection of the Holy Ghost as the witness of a glorified Christ, ere it could be made known that the Son of man, who had been lifted up from the earth and taken His place in glory, was seated there as head of His body, and that He esteemed those who believed in Him as part of Himself, or that the assembly which had been owned by the presence of the Saviour, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, was the vessel in which was to be displayed the mystery of God. (Colossians 2:2.) It is the man who wasted the assembly, and kept the clothes of those that stoned Stephen, who was chosen of God to minister the wondrous truth of the union of Christ and the Church, and to unfold as a consequence a unity such as never existed before, presented to us in the figure of the unity of a body with its head and members. We have to go back to the first man and woman in Genesis 2:1-25 to find a figure of the great mystery of Christ and the Church - "They twain shall be one flesh," but "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Let us remember too, that the man was created in the image of God. He stood for God as the centre of the creation in which he was placed, and the woman as one with him. It needed that He who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, should take His place as firstborn from the dead, the beginning of the new creation, in order that He might become Head of the body the Church. In contrast with the first man who subjected every thing to vanity, He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and is the reconciler of all things to God both in heaven and earth, they are to be headed up in Him in the dispensation of the fulness of times. He is head over all things, but head of the body the Church. This body is now being formed by the Holy Ghost, and finally the church will be presented by Him who gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, in glory to Himself. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 we are told that it is by one Spirit that all the members have been baptized into one body; and further, that each has been made to drink of one Spirit. Each member is united to the Head, and each to each by the one Spirit, thus the unity is formed; but each has also drunk of the one Spirit who formed it, and there is therefore a living power of unity, It is this which we are exhorted to keep in Ephesians 4:3. Moreover, whatever the gifts, ministries, or operations, the apostle insists that it is the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God, with whom they are connected. Had this been realized by the

Corinthians instead of schism, unity would have prevailed amongst them; they would not have been puffed up for one against the other. Whatever the distance which formerly had existed between man and man - Jew alienated from Gentile, bond from free - God has now tempered the whole body together. The only middle wall of partition set up by God has been broken down, and of twain in Christ one new man is made, and both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross.

It is the former strict Jew, now a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, who exhorts to walk worthy of such a calling, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. In Colossians 3:1-25 love is the uniting bond of perfectness, and the peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts, to which we are called in one body. How necessary that love should be active, and that the lowliness and meekness that forbears should take the place of self-assertion, in order that we should walk worthy of our calling. The unity of the body can never be separated from its source, or it ceases to be a living reality. "There is one body and one Spirit." If the Spirit that forms the body be one, the body also must be one; nor could there be, as of old, a separate calling and hope for the Jew and another for the Gentile. It is "one hope of your calling." And if there is one Lord, there cannot be many faiths or many baptisms. It may be called the faith of God's elect, the common faith, the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith of the gospel, the faith which is in Christ Jesus, the mystery of the faith; but it is one, consequent on the recognition of the one person who has been made both Lord and Christ. The formation of different creeds and confessions of faith is the denial of the one Lord, and a source of division; and if the faith once delivered to the saints be a matter of doubt and perplexity, it is clear that the Church has been unfaithful to its deposit; for it is the pillar and support of the truth, not a truth; and Christ is "the truth," "the Spirit is truth," and "thy Word is truth," not a creed, though every thing in it may be true. All that is connected with Christ, as manifested here in flesh, and anointed by the Holy Ghost, or now as the glorified Man in heaven, testified of by the Spirit in the written Word, is the truth to be maintained by the saints.

Baptism also is intimately connected with the name and authority of the one Lord. Separate from that, it is easy to be divided as to the mode and subjects of it, or to be confused as to its signification - the name is all-important. Would it be one baptism if the subjects were baptized in the name of Paul or Apollos, and not in the name of the one Lord, and unto the full revelation of the name of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? The spirit of the one baptism cannot be carried out if it be connected with the set of ideas held by this or that party. The circle connected with the one Lord may be wider than the one body, because it depends on the professed acknowledgment of His title; and wider still in the whole universe is the confession of the one God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in (you) all. A denial of His universal supremacy would be a denial of His Godhead. It is the fool who says in his heart "No God," the full-blown result of departure from Him; while the result of the heading up of everything in Christ will be that everything will be subjected so that God may be all in all. The saint now loves to own that all things are of God. He has drunk of the water of life which God gives to him that is athirst; he is brought to God to know Him as Father; and he forms part of that church which, as the heavenly Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. It will be the perfect display of the light that irradiates it. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." Not one saint composing it but will have arrived at complete conformity to Christ in glory, or there would be some parts of the city which could not ray forth the glory which fills it.

It is to every one of us, in Ephesians 4:7, that grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ; no unit is left out, and the gifts for the perfecting of the saints, as well as for the work of the ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ, have been given by Him who has led captivity captive, and descended and ascended, that He might fill all things. That each individual saint should be perfected unto one is the care of Him who fills all things, and the gifts to this end are given "till we all arrive at the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at a perfect man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ." Paul could say, "The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It was the Son of God whom he preached; for it pleased God to reveal His Son in Him. Paul knew Him, preached Him, and lived by the faith of Him. Each saint also will arrive at the unity of the faith as well as of the knowledge of the Son of God, and each is "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His (God's) Son." Thus the unity will be established in each individual unit. As each one now grows up into Christ, the body makes increase unto the edifying of itself in love.

Unity must flow from living connection with its source. That source is God - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Apart from that, it is the will of man working, and the power of the enemy behind it to produce disruption and confusion. We need simplicity of soul, singleness of eye, and the knowledge of God, to discern these truths, and the power of the Holy Spirit also, by whom alone we can act on the principle of unity, which would refuse everything that is inconsistent with the source of it - God in holiness and grace - and acknowledge only that which gathers to Himself according to the revelation given as an expression of it here. The moment we descend to human wisdom or effort, the rudiments of the world, or the arrangements of men, we deny the power that is formative of unity. May we know better the blessed source of this unity, which loves to gather to itself according to the perfection of that nature from which it flows. T. H. Reynolds.

S. What Saints will be Caught Up on the Lord's Return **What Saints will be Caught Up on the ...**

What Saints will be Caught Up on the Lord's Return

It is clear to me that any doctrine which would divert from unity, or make any favoured class among the saints who compose the Church of God, cannot be the teaching of Scripture, or according to the mind of Christ. We read that He died to "gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad." (John 11:52.) The saints of this period are those who have believed on the Son of the Father through the word of the apostles. (John 17:20.) The feeblest apprehension of the grace of God has come to the weakest believer through the word of the apostles, as we have it now written in the Scriptures (see Luke 1:1-2), and the desire of the Lord for those who have believed through the apostles' word is, "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." The Lord here embraces all believers in the unity of the divine love and nature, which exists in the relationship of the Father and the Son. It is not here a unity of mutual agreement, but of nature: "as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." Nor is this the simple unity of Godhead, which would be impossible for the creature, but of relationship as it exists between the persons of the Godhead - the Father and the Son, who had become man, and here speaks as man. In this unity the Lord embraces all believers of this period, for it is clear that if anyone's faith is not founded on apostolic teaching as set forth in Scripture he cannot be regarded as a believer; he cannot be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It cannot, therefore, be of the Lord to teach that there should be some caught up into heavenly relationships when He comes, and some left behind; for those who believe after the rapture of the Church are only brought into earthly relationship to Christ. They will not know the privilege of those words of heavenly relationship, "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." That professors will be left behind to perish there can be no doubt; but we are speaking of Christians in whom there is divine workmanship, those created in Christ Jesus. That there are among Christians degrees of apprehension of the grace of God, and of their relationship to the Father and to Christ, is most true. John speaks of fathers, young men, and little children; Paul speaks of babes, who need milk, and of perfect or full-grown Christians, who apprehend what perfection in Christ means and involves for them. But John makes no distinction in declaring to all to whom he wrote the fulness of apostolic knowledge: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." And, then, he shows that the apostolic fellowship was with the Father and the Son. (1 John 1:3.) Paul, in the Epistle to the Philippians, while exhorting the perfect or full-grown Christians to be likeminded with himself, adds, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (literally "keep rank"). Nor does he merely say: "Be followers of me," but "Be followers together of me." There is the same object for the weak and immature believer as for the full-grown Christian, for the apostle and for the Philippians. It could not be less with those under Christ as Captain of their salvation, than it was with Moses of old, the leader of Israel, who said to Pharaoh, "We will go with our young and with our old." Can it possibly be that the Lord will leave behind some who have the work of His God and Father in their souls,

sealed with His Spirit, when He comes? Who is to be caught up, if only those who have walked faithfully are caught up? Who is going to be bold enough to class himself among them? It may be said, "The Lord knows"; but the rapture ceases to be the hope, of the soul, because it is not regarded as of grace, but as of faithfulness. In 2 Corinthians 1:1-24 the apostle will not make a distinction between the Corinthians and himself. He recognizes the work of God in them as in himself: he, a faithful apostle, and they, unfaithful saints. "Now He that establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." He looks at God's workmanship in the souls of the Corinthians (whom he had regarded as carnal and babes in Christ). In them it was encumbered with the flesh (as Lazarus was with grave-clothes before he was loosed), while in Paul the flesh was reckoned as crucified with Christ, so that practically in him the work of God was seen without encumbrance; and certainly the rapture will disencumber entirely the work of God in the saints from the rubbish of the flesh when Christ puts forth His conforming power.

What strikes me greatly as to this question is, that those who make a division in 'the unity of the flock of Christ at the rapture have no adequate sense of the work of God in souls. They are framing their theory according to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the saints. That will all be settled at the judgment-seat of Christ, and perfectly estimated by Him. Our reward in the kingdom will depend upon His estimate: "Be thou over ten cities"; "Be thou over five." There is such a thing as being counted worthy of the kingdom for which we suffer, but there is no such thought as being counted worthy of being saved, or of being in heaven and enjoying heavenly relationship. All that is of pure grace - "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." For heaven, all is God's workmanship, not our works or faithfulness, His new creation in Christ. All this new creation must be with Christ in heaven, or something would be wanting for the setting forth of God's glory in Christ. Christ Himself said that He would securely keep in His own hand the sheep which belong to Him.

It is further stated that only those who look for the Lord will partake in the rapture. The verse in Hebrews 9:28 does not certainly state this. It distinguishes Christians among the Hebrews by one of the great characteristics of God's ancient people; viz., the expectation of Messiah, and they would not be disappointed: He would appear to them for salvation (compare Isaiah 25:9), having settled the question of sin at His first appearing. (Hebrews 9:26.) That this proper expectation has waned is true, but the Spirit of God could not speak of the waning as characteristic of the saints, but the expectation. Christ sees what we cannot see. He sees the work which God has wrought in the souls of believers in order to produce affection for Christ, a going out of heart to Him; and if anyone does not love Christ, he is not under the power of Christ's love: he is not a Christian, Affection for Christ must link itself with Christ, and so with desire for Him, which He knows and sees, though the soul may be unintelligent as to His coming; it may only look to be with Him by means of death, but the gracious Lord knows how to estimate affection, though it be ignorant, and He interprets it according to His own perception. Mary Magdalene sought the Lord in death, instead of expecting to see Him risen, according to His word. It was ignorance, but she was the first to be given to see Him.

What I look for is the revival of affections to Christ as the Bridegroom, so that we may have more heart for Him, and then doubtless we shall intelligently wait for Him. But it would be sad to have intelligence as to the rapture, and but little desire to be with Him.

T. H. Reynolds.

S. With Christ which is Far Better

"With Christ which is Far Better."

Such was the apostle Paul's thought as to his own departure from this present life. In connection with this subject, there is, to my mind a point for consideration, which has not been much noted. If we are in the hand of Christ now with all its blessed consequences, and among them the fact that no one is able to pluck us thence — Do we cease to be in His blessed Hand when the soul leaves its earthly tabernacle? Surely not. As to the fact of the believer being with Christ in the intermediate state, the Word of God is plain; and if it be asked — "But what will it be to be there?" we have the apostle's words, "To die is gain." We may have to challenge our hearts as to what we know of Christ now; whether we can enter into the apostle's words in our measure, "To me to live is Christ" — just that one word "Christ" finding its echo in our hearts — then "to die" would be an advance; for as the apostle looked at Christ out from an earthly tabernacle, he compared it to seeing through a glass darkly. Hence "the gain" of death. We do not see "face to face" until perfected in glory, but it is the "far better," for there will be no hindrance from the body of humiliation. It is exceedingly blessed to know that part of the Lord's administration in heaven is to receive the spirits* of those saints who are absent from the body into His presence and care (comp. Acts 7:59 with Romans 14:8-9). The "new man" the "man in Christ" is now being wrought in us by God in view of a body conformed to Christ's body of glory, then that which is perfect will have come, but the capacity of that which has been wrought in the soul will be unhindered in the blessedness of His presence, and the unmingled joy of His love, when absent from the body.

[*A beloved brother now with the Lord, pointed out the difference between Ecclesiastes 12:7. "The spirit shall return to God Who gave it," and Acts 7:59. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The spirit of the Christian goes to the Jesus Who breathed it (John 20:22) J. G. Bellett.] In John 10:1-42 the Lord speaks of "putting forth" His own sheep, and of going before them when He does so. This "putting forth" places the sheep in an out-of-the-world position. Such a position comes before us in the end of John 9:1-41 Jesus and the man born blind are together — both of them "disallowed of men." They had taken up stones to cast at Jesus in the end of John 8:1-59 and they excommunicated the man born blind (John 9:34). The Jews who "cast him out" cast him unto the company of the "Son of God." Do we believe in the Son of God? I do not ask: Do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God? We should not be Christians unless we did — but have we tasted of companionship with the Son of God? If so, it must put us morally outside of this present world. Can this knowledge of Him ever cease? It does not belong to the present order of things.

Then in John 10:1-42 the mark of being the sheep of Christ is that they hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd. They follow Him for they know His voice." Has it not spoken deep down in our souls? By that voice He makes Himself known to us. It reaches us through the Word. His words, recorded for us, are spirit and life.

There may be much hindrance through the earthen vessel; but there in His presence shall we not still know communion with love that human speech could not utter I am sure we shall. Paul,

evidently apart from the hindrance of the body, heard "unspeakable words."

Listen now to the Lord's words, "I am the good Shepherd and know My sheep and am known of Mine." In what way? "Even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep." Will there not then be the consciousness of unutterable love? How will our souls expand in that consciousness of love? The Spirit of God, through the record of the Lord's Own words, will help us into divine intelligence as to what it will be to be in the company of Christ.

Let me here say a word as to the dying malefactor to whom Christ said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." How short a time was his in which to really know the One Who hung by his side. Allow me to use a figure — Suppose a room in darkness because every avenue of light had been closed. Take down the shutters, and the room is instantly flooded with light. "In Thy light we see light." The darkness of that poor malefactor's soul was that day flooded with light in Paradise. Christ was the light of life that shone there. It was not yet glory, but it was light and love in the presence of Jesus. In John 11:1-57 we see that death could not take a sheep out of the hand of Christ. Nay, if I may so say, it threw it more completely into His Hand. "This sickness," He said concerning Lazarus, "Is not unto death." In the eyes of men the Good Shepherd had allowed the sickness to terminate in death. They did not see that the sheep in death (so called) was where it was before — in the hand of Christ. Are we conscious of how completely our life is bound up with Christ? "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ must speak according to what He is, and also according to that which subsists in Him. Hence He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." The sisters at Bethany instinctively felt that death could not exist in His presence, as they said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and we have to read the Lord's reply to Martha in the light of eternal life subsisting in Himself. He was it. Therefore when He was down here, eternal life was here. So He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life," and now that He has passed by the way of death, as we speak, to the Father, the eternal life is there. Whether here or there the eternal life is the same, though the way of giving it is different.

Cannot it be said, as Moses said prophetically of the elect of Israel, "All His saints are in Thy Hand?" Their saintly character was that of Mary of Bethany. "They sat down at Thy feet, each receiving of Thy words." Can this life which we have in the Son of God be in abeyance at the departure of a saint to be with Him? They lived through having heard His voice (John 5:24-25). And again, "My sheep know My voice." It has spoken deep down in the inner chambers of the soul. If the earthly tabernacle be dissolved, a hindrance has been left behind; and what the soul has drunk in of Christ while in this tabernacle abides when present with the Lord. Who can say what that presence will be to us? I am bold to say that the real life of a saint — and Christ is that life (Colossians 3:4), will expand in the unhindered and conscious enjoyment of infinite love. T. H. Reynolds.

Reply To "With Christ Which Is Far Better."

Dearest Reynolds, A great deal of what has been on your mind has been a great comfort to me in my solitude of sorrow in this daily darkening scene through which we are passing, as an unreconciled scene to our God and His Christ. I remember attending Mrs Dennett's Funeral at Croydon and speaking a little at the grave on 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11, especially 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, "Who died for us that whether we may be watching or sleeping, we may live together with

Him." The object of His death is to accomplish the full purpose of His love — to remove death completely out of the way, by its destruction; and where two "heirs together of the grace of life" have tasted together of that love in its fulness, they remain after the separation of the earthly relationship, in the same divine life and love and relationship, only the one that has been freed from the earthen tabernacle, has been freed from what was only a hindrance to the enjoyment of heavenly bliss in the body, and the one bereaved on earth and desolated and a mourner because of the cessation of the earthly tie and companionship and affection has the greatest consolation in knowing that the high life and divine relationship, is being lived by the one taken up together with Him, Who is the source and perfection of it in heaven, as it is being lived by the bereaved one with the same beloved holy Lord on earth, and the moment when the Rapture will remove all the distance between the Bridegroom and the Bride, will be the moment when the separated ones will recontinue the life of holy communion in joy and love tasted already in earthly scenes and contrarities. J. S. Oliphant.

S. The Knowledge of God.

The Knowledge of God.

Notes of a lecture on 2 Peter 1:1-9.

We cannot rightly judge of any truth apart from the knowledge of God Himself. We may know certain truths correctly, but nothing gets its true and proper place in our souls apart from knowing Himself. However much I may think I know of truth, if it has not been learnt in connection with God I shall have to go over it again if it is to be really mine. God speaks to us in our own language, but He always has His own meaning in the words of scripture. Thus, when God uses the word "love" I ask myself what He means by it. It is a simple word, which we all use, but when He speaks of His love there is infinite fulness in the word. Whatever truth He may bring before us at these meetings, may He give us to consider it as in His own presence and in communion with Himself. In Paul's salutations to the saints he begins at God's side, so to speak, and desires for them "grace . . . and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ"; while Peter looks at these same things from our side, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Here Peter desires grace and peace for the saints through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. So that not only do grace and peace come to us as given of God (as Paul puts it), but they are multiplied to us by the knowledge of God. Thus Peter looks at the place they have in the soul, being multiplied there. What an important point then this knowledge of God is. All I seek to indicate is the importance of each getting it for himself. Of course there must first be the new nature; apart from that there is no capacity to perceive divine things. In John 3:1-36 Nicodemus came to the Lord as a rabbi, as one acquainted with divine truth and knowing the scriptures. He came to talk with the Lord about divine things, as one competent to understand them, and the Lord meets him at once with the statement, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The things of God are foolishness to the natural man. How apt we are to think when any question arises that we must of necessity know all about it, but it is not so unless we are in communion with the mind of God. We need to get into His presence and ask Him what His way is in it.

We read at the end of John 2:1-25 that the Lord knew what was in man. He knew what their thoughts were as to Himself. He knew who they were that believed in Him merely from outward miracles. He knew that Nicodemus was interested, and He says to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see" - that is, perceive - "the kingdom of God," by which He means a sphere of things where all is morally according to God. One must know God to know what is of God. The children of Israel never had an idea of what God took them up for. They saw His mighty acts and sang His praise, but immediately after it is added, "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness." I often wondered why that verse, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:1-45), came in just where it does, till I saw that God took Israel up as a people to know Him, and from whom His glory should flow out into all the earth; but they had no knowledge of it, and in their hearts turned back

again into Egypt. Then God says, as it were, Though Israel has failed, I will have My purpose fully carried out. They have not known My ways; they shall fall in the wilderness, but I will yet have a people (their children) who will answer to the desires of My heart, and the earth shall yet be filled with My glory. We see they utterly failed in the knowledge of God. Now the Christian is not only born again, but we read here (2 Peter 1:3), "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us by glory and virtue." People have the idea, "I am converted, and going to heaven when I die, and that is enough"; but can such people enter into the present enjoyment of the call of which Peter speaks here? Do you see the sphere of things to which you now belong? That the Lord Jesus Christ has gone out of this world, and sits at the right hand of God in heaven, and that everything for you, as belonging to Him, has been transferred from earth to heaven? Colossians 3:1-25 speaks of the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Everything we expect will come out from heaven now the Lord is there. Here He was in humiliation; now He is at the right hand of God in the glory, and we are to seek the things that are there. We have to walk here as belonging there. The apostle speaks to Timothy of the mystery of godliness; God has been manifested in flesh. It is in Christ walking as a man in this world that we find the first secret spring of piety. Look at Him See how He walked down here, ever doing His Father's will. Now, that once humbled man has been received up in glory; that is the other great point in the mystery of piety. Man is in the glory of God, and that is the place for man according to the counsels of God for you, for me. And we are to take our character from those two truths - God manifested down here in flesh, and man in the glory of God. I do not say that Peter rises to the height of Paul. He is more the apostle leading up to where Paul begins. Paul begins with Christ in glory.

Perhaps you say, "I am not quite familiar with that point - a Man in the glory of God." Well, have you got this point - that He has called us by glory and virtue? Every moral excellency that can be displayed in man (that is what virtue is) is in the Lord Jesus Christ who is now in the glory. Now that He is there, God says, "I can call a people by that glory," and God sees everything in connection with the glory of His Son. In Acts 7:1-60 we read that the God of glory appeared unto Abraham. No doubt Abraham did not fully understand all that was meant by the God of glory calling him out from his country, kindred, and father's house. But see what moral effect the call had upon him. In Genesis 10:1-32 the whole earth was divided, and each family and nation had their part in it; but God calls Abraham out of it to that which He would give him. Abraham had another scene altogether before him from the moment he responded to the call of "the God of glory"; he could look at the cities of men and say, "That is not the city God has given me. I look for a city whose builder and maker is God." He could look upon the well-watered plain and not desire any part in it, or in the cities there - they were all characterized by man, not God. Abraham had such a knowledge of God that he knew how to refuse what was not of Him.

How this knowledge of God would settle all difficult questions for us, just to know what is of God, not what is of men, which always brings in conflicting opinions. You remember the old prophet who dwelt at Bethel. When God wanted a witness to go and testify against the idolatry practised there, He sent a man of God out of Judah to cry against the wickedness practised in the place. He was neither to eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way he went. By the word of the Lord he cried against the altar, and really stood for God in the presence of the wicked king. For a man of God is, as you know, one that stands for God when all is going wrong. According to the word of

the Lord, the altar was rent and the ashes poured out, and more, the king's hand withered in seeking to lay hold of the man of God. It was restored in answer to prayer. The king said to him, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself"; but he refused. He said "no" to the king's invitation. He left the place, returning by another way. The old prophet who dwelt in Bethel overtook him and found him sitting under an oak: it is dangerous to loiter till we are thoroughly clear of the place testified against. "Come home with me," said the old prophet. It is no longer an idolatrous king, but a prophet, a prophet who had a home in Bethel. He said, "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with thee.'" Now here were two conflicting statements. How could the man of God decide? Two words were before him, the second being put forward as the word of the Lord (compare Galatians 1:8); how was he to know which was really the word of the Lord for him? The knowledge of God and what is due to Him would have decided the question in a moment. He would have said, "What! you, a prophet of the Lord, dwelling here with the calves and the idols, and so at home in the midst of idolaters, to whom God has to send me to lift up my voice against them, and carry a warning of coming judgment." How the knowledge of God settles the whole thing in a moment. When you know God you know what is suitable to Him. And in the measure in which you know Him will you feel what is really at work in any question, and be able to reject what is not of Him. Like Abraham, as he looked over the cities of the plain, he felt not one of them would suit him, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. So far it is negative - the knowledge of God enabling us to refuse what is not of Him. But there is the positive side. If I know Him that has called me by glory and virtue, I shall have a divine sense that what He gives is according to Himself, therefore we have, in 1 Peter 1:3-4, "exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." This does not mean being born again, but far more, even being brought into communion with what is of God; and what I understand by "partakers" is, not getting a share, but being brought into it. 1 John 4:12-13 is the nearest to it, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." We have received His Spirit. It is not a question here as to our having received the Holy Ghost as personally indwelling, but as characterizing us, and so bringing us into what is of God. Having received of His Spirit, we abide in Him, and escape what is of this world. Being made partakers of the divine nature, we have the capacity, and "we dwell in God and He in us." "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." What an ocean we touch here. Who can fathom it?

2 Peter 1:4. "Exceeding great and precious promises." What are these promises? Certainly not those God had made to the fathers. They were great indeed; but the promises here spoken of are "exceeding great and precious." We must go back into eternity to find out what they are, and they come to us that we might be partakers of the divine nature. Doubtless they include all that God purposed in His own mind to bring us into, all He has promised us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:6; 2 Timothy 1:1.) As you understand these things you are formed by them; it must of necessity be so. To illustrate what I mean. Suppose I take a child who has been born in the slums of a great city, and has never seen the country, with its green fields, flowers, and trees. I tell him about them; he is charmed, but can form no idea as to what they are really like. Now suppose, further, that I wish to wake up a desire in that child's mind to know something of the beautiful things I have told him about as belonging to another sphere, where all is so different from that by which he is

surrounded. I could show him a picture of the country and the objects in it; and in like manner the Old Testament saints had the word of promise - the patterns of heavenly things and pictures in the types. And suppose I say to that child, "I will come in a few days and take you there, to dwell in that very place I have been telling you of." The sense of such a promise would make him long to escape from the surrounding corruption, and he would be formed by his knowledge of the place to which he was going. These exceeding great and precious promises are given to us in connection with One who is already entered into glory. Hence He said to His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know"; and He prepared the place for them by entering there. Thus we become partakers of the divine nature. We are formed according to the mind of God expressed in the promises, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. The "precious faith" of 2 Peter 1:1 has been received through the righteousness of God. It is here that Peter is side by side with the truth given to Paul. The righteousness of God is by faith with Paul; while with Peter faith is through the righteousness of God. Peter leads those who have it, as we said, to the point where Paul can carry us on in the knowledge of God. (Ephesians 1:17.) He prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Lord Jesus Christ is here looked at as a man; of course, He was God too), the Father of glory - that is, He is the blessed source of all glory - that He would give to the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him - of God. The eyes of your understanding, or heart, being opened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of His power to those who believe. What God Himself is as the Father of glory gives the character to the hope of the calling - the inheritance and the power by which all is accomplished according to His own counsels. The knowledge of God enables us to enter into the things given to us of Him, and to escape what is not of Him. T. H. Reynolds.

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