WRITINGS OF WILLIAM J HOCKING

by William J. Hocking

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by William J. Hocking, compiled for study and devotional reading.

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Chapter 2

01.01. Introductory Remarks: coming forth from the Father

Introductory Remarks: coming forth from the Father

"Giving thanks unto the Father Who has . . . translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Colossians 1:12-13.

Note: Most of the quotations of Scripture in the Papers are taken from J. N. Darby's New Translation The series of papers which follow were written in the humble attempt to consider afresh what scripture teaches concerning the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine has been recently denied, and the denial of a cherished belief regarding One Whom we love and revere and adore touches our deepest sensibilities, and stirs our whole being to defence. The first impulse of our renewed nature is to resent such a denial as a deadly affront to the glory of the Essential Being of our Blessed Lord, and to reject the implication as one of the many phases of anti-Christian doctrine against which we are warned. And, indeed, an unhesitating refusal to entertain for even a moment anything derogatory to the Son of God is an effective safeguard for the simple saints; by turning at once from what appears to be evil, they are preserved from error and its defilement.

But, in the second place, while there is safety in being simple as to evil, the apostle exhorts us to be wise also concerning that which is good (Romans 16:19). And we remember that to this end the scriptures alone are able to make us "wise unto salvation" from the erroneous teachings of men. For this reason, special reference has been made to this authority in these papers, particularly to those words of our Lord and to that witness of the Spirit, which bear upon the pre-incarnate Sonship.

It has been sought to avoid mere carnal contention, and to weigh every written word of God in a spirit of meekness and godly fear, and to receive these profound unfoldings as in the presence of Him to Whose Person they refer. It is always a salutary experience for our souls when the bold challenges of the enemy drive us to the feet of our Lord for instruction. When Hezekiah received the letter of the king of Assyria reproaching the living God, he sought the presence of Jehovah of hosts, and the Lord heard and answered his prayer for guidance and deliverance (Isaiah 37:1-38). The modern challenge of reproach is that the names of God revealed in the New Testament — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — do not apply to Him in the Godhead or Deity. It is said, for example, with reference to these names of the Trinity: "To insist that this order, and the relation of the Persons to One Another, including the names attaching to Them thus seen, are the same as existed in the pre-incarnate absolute (this word is used as the converse of relative) conditions of Deity, is to force or disregard scripture, and is intruding into things we have not seen." The gist of this long sentence is that in the pre-incarnate "conditions" of Deity there was, according to their view of scripture, no relationships of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is implied that these relations, expressed in the threefold Name (Matthew 28:19), are associated with the incarnation of our Lord, and that it was then that He became the Son. This latter part of the threefold denial we now wish to examine in the light of scripture.

Coming Forth from the Father

What did our Lord Himself say with regard to His own appearance in this world? Not many of His utterances relate to His pre-incarnate state; but to those that do, we must pay the utmost heed, yet seeking in them to find food for the heart rather than material for the intellect. One word of His, which declared that He was the Son before His entrance into the world, would be sufficient to establish the truth for us, regardless of all human reasoning to the contrary. In the closing sentences of His farewell instructions to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, the Lord made reference to His coming into the world, and also to His departure out of it. He had come from a Person to a place, and was leaving that place to return to that Person. He named the Person — the Father; and the place — the world. His words were: "I came out from the Father and have come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father" (John 16:28).

Here we have the fact of the incarnation, viewed from its divine side and described as coming into the world. The Son is speaking of what He Himself is inwardly cognizant, or Self-conscious, as it is sometimes expressed. So, on another occasion, the Lord said to the Pharisees, "I know whence I came and whither I go" (John 8:14). Now, to "His own," He declares more explicitly whence He came, but not from a place: "I came forth from beside the Father." Then He adds that He was going away to the same Person from Whom He came out — the Father.

It is evidently implied in these words that the relationship of Father subsisted before He (the Son) came out from Him. And the same pre-incarnate relationship stands revealed in the Lord's frequent saying that the Father sent Him (the Son); see John 5:30, John 5:37; John 6:29; John 8:16, John 8:18; John 10:36; John 12:49; John 14:24. The sense of these passages, without forcing their meaning, is plain and unmistakable that the Lord came forth from the One Who was the Father, and came into the world; and that He was sent into the world by the One of Whom He speaks both as "the Father" and as "My Father" (John 10:29; John 14:28; John 20:17, John 20:21). The relationship, then, of Father and Son existed before the great errand of the Son was undertaken in incarnation. So, illustratively, Jesse was father and David was son before the latter appeared in the camp of Israel with his present of food (1 Samuel 17:1-58). How the gift was enhanced in value because the bearer from Bethlehem was, not the servant but, the son of the giver! But in describing His incarnation by the words, "I came out (exerkomai) from the Father" more is taught than the separate existence of the Two Persons and that the Father was known to Him as Father before that coming. The name, Father, is not a mere abstract term, but a name pregnant with the deepest and most precious spiritual meaning. Coming forth from the side of the Father, the Son came into the world enjoying the full communion of the Father's deep affection, the Father's secret will, the Father's eternal counsel. As He said, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30).

Coming Forth from God

Again, Sonship is a relation to God as well as to the Father, and the Lord referred to both names on this occasion. He spoke first as the Son abiding in intimate communion with His Father during His lowly service in the world; and He made known to His disciples the special love the Father had for them because they had believed on Him, the Son, while the world at large disowned and hated Him. He said encouragingly to them, "The Father Himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for Me, and have believed that I came out (exerkomai) from God" (John 16:27).

What gracious words of appreciation are these, addressed, as they were, to those who that same night "all forsook Him and fled!" The Lord recorded with appreciation their affection for Himself, the "despised and rejected of men," which had drawn out the Father's affections to them. He also noted their faith that He had come forth from beside God; He did not say, from the Father. Their faith had not reached this point. The measure of their attainment in knowledge was small, for the Holy Spirit had not yet come. But they had received by faith the Lord's own teaching, "I came forth from God and am come [from Him]" (John 8:42). This last sentence is remarkable in its twofold bearing. "I proceeded forth from God" expresses the Son's august movement in the Godhead. "I am come" expresses His historical appearance in the world. In the Godhead, He had His Own place, being "over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5). Yet from God, He came, as He said; but not as One apart from God, for "God was in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Though come in flesh, He still comprehended in Himself all that God is in light and love; for God is light and God is love (1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:16).

Oh, the marvels of grace! Such a divine Plenipotentiary as this coming forth from God could be none other than His Son, God manifest in flesh. This Sonship of the living God, Simon Bar-jonas, taught by the Father's revelation, confessed, and was blessed in doing so (Matthew 16:16). And other lips may own Him too, for "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15).

It will have been observed that in the New Testament the "Son of the Blessed" is sometimes named "the Son of God," and sometimes "the Son" simply. Each form is appropriate to its context, where its special significance must be sought. As a general distinction with varying shades of meaning, "Son of God" appears to be the name expressive of His coming forth from God, while "Son" is the name expressive of His coming forth from the Father; He is the Son of the Father, the Son of His love (2 John 1:3; Colossians 1:13).

Coming Forth and Being Sent In pursuing the teaching of the Holy Spirit on this theme, we must not overlook the distinction made in scripture between the Son's coming from God and the Father, and His being sent by God and the Father. Both truths bear upon the Son's pre-incarnate existence, but their distinctness is emphatic, especially when they occur in the same sentence.

Thus, in speaking to His Father, the Son said of His disciples, "The words which Thou hast given Me I have given them, and they have received [them], and have known truly that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou sentest Me" (John 17:8). And, to the Jews, the Lord said, "I came forth from God, and am come from Him; for neither am I come of Myself, but He has sent Me" (John 8:42). In both passages, the coming and the sending are named separately and in the same sequence.

It is of the first importance to observe that one statement is supplementary to the other, and not a mere repetition in different words. In His coming forth, the Son acted in His own Personal rights and of His own will; in His being sent, the Son came into the world as the accredited Delegate of God.

"Coming forth" (exerkomai) is rarely applied to departure from a person; it more often means leaving a place, as, for instance, when the Lord came out of Pilate's judgment hall: "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe" (John 19:5). In the Old Testament

(LXX), however, we have an instance of this verb being used for departure from a person. We read that "Moses went out (came forth, exerkomai) from Pharaoh" (Exodus 8:30; Exodus 10:18). This record of the incident may serve to illustrate (though illustration is scarcely needed) the saying of our Lord. But attention is drawn to two persons in each case. In Egypt, Moses, the servant of God, came away from Pharaoh, the obstinate king. In the Lord's words, "I came forth from the Father," there are two Persons antecedent to the coming, the incarnation — "I" and the Father. The "I" is the Son, and He was along with the Father before He came forth from Him. The Father was there, and if the Father, the Son was there also in blessed filial relationship to Him. The Son came out from God and the Father into the world, where creature measurements of time and space apply. But in the Godhead such terms have no application, and in that timeless and boundless state where the Deity is all, the Father and Son abide in continuous union and communion. Then, in the fullness of time, from God, from the Father, the Son came forth, and came into the sphere of creation. In like manner, two Persons are involved in the act of sending — the Sender and the Sent: and "the Father sent the Son to be Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). "The Son" was what He was before sending; the "Saviour of the world" was what He was to become when sent. In this verse, the pre-incarnate Sonship of our Lord lies upon the surface as it does in other passages also. From God and From the Father The knowledge of the Father and the Son was not made known to Jehovah's earthly people. And by this revelation of His own Personal relations to God and the Father, the Lord laid the foundation of the heavenly character of Christianity. It was His closing word to His disciples, for whom He had kept the "good wine" until the end.

Having been rejected by Israel and the world as the Messiah and the Son of God, He declared Himself as come from the Father. In Him, the Son, were hidden reserves of blessing superior to the promises made to Abraham, and to all God's dispensational dealings with the earth. And the Lord linked these revealing words with the affection the Father had for them, because they had affection for the Son, and had also believed that He came out from God.

It was to this faith of theirs that He had come out from God that the Lord added the knowledge that He had come forth from the Father, and, again, that He was departing out of the world unto the Father (John 16:27-28). They were thus put into possession of these secret divine relations, though they little dreamed what wealth of blessing for them was embodied therein and would be derived therefrom. For the knowledge of t he Father and the Son was the basis of the truth which the Holy Spirit at His coming would confirm and develop for them and within them during the Lord's absence.

Moreover, the Lord Himself had reserved something further which He would say to them concerning God and the Father before He ascended to the Father. After His death and resurrection, His first message to His own related to God and the Father. It not only reminded them of His farewell words on this theme, but added that henceforth they should share in that relationship. To Mary of Magdala the Lord said, "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Later, we note a further stage. When the Holy Spirit, through Paul, revealed to the church the unique character of our heavenly calling in Christ, He begins with the declaration that every spiritual blessing that we possess is associated with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

(Ephesians 1:1-23). As God, He has chosen us in Christ before the world's foundation (Ephesians 1:4); as Father, He marked us out beforehand for adoption (sonship) to Himself (Ephesians 1:5).

If we go on to trace the exposition of the heavenly mystery in this Epistle, which unfolds the dignities of the assembly, we shall not fail to mark repeatedly how closely these truths are connected with God and the Father. Indeed, it is God, so named, Who alone enables the saints to apprehend these exalted truths (see the prayers, Ephesians 1:17; Ephesians 3:14). These blessings in the heavenlies, so widely differentiated from those of the earthly kingdom, flow out of the Lord's message sent to His own through Mary of Magdala — "My Father and your Father . . . My God and your God." We are blessed through and in and with Him, Who is the Son of the Father's love. The company of His own in the world but not of it are the Father's gift to Him, the Son. And in His resurrection, believers became related to the Father and the Son in the most intimate way — "My Father and your Father." The promised Abrahamic and Davidic blessings through Him being postponed because He was refused by His own nation, the Son introduced a scheme of celestial blessing founded upon His own Person, apart from His terrestrial offices as King, Priest, and Prophet. And the Lord's saying in private to His own circle, "I came forth from beside the Father," prepared the way for the Holy Spirit's teaching that believers upon Him in the time of His rejection are specially and peculiarly blessed with the Son according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. From the foregoing considerations, therefore, we believe (1) that the Lord's eternal Sonship is involved in His own words, "I came forth from the Father"; (2) that His revelation of the Father and our association for blessing with the Son is the essence of Christianity, distinguishing it by this heavenly character from all other divine dealings, both past and future; and (3) that the denial of the Eternal Sonship of Christ Jesus is anti-Christian in its effect, since it impairs the doctrine of the Father and the Son, and, also, by consequence, the central truth and privileges of the assembly.

Confessing the Son or Denying Him The apostle John in his Epistles emphasizes the seriousness of tampering with the doctrine of the Son, which is declared to be inseparable from the doctrine of the Father: "Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23). Christianity is the confession of the Son. To speak disparagingly of the Son is to dishonour both the Son and the Father Whom He revealed.

There are in Christendom many forms of denying the Son, some gross, some subtle. Unitarianism comprehends many varieties of disbelief in the Deity of Christ. Christadelphianism and similarly perverted creeds deny the eternal Sonship of Christ, teaching that the "title," Son of God, should only be predicated of the human nature, born in time. The adherents of Christian Science, and those of some other modern cults, hold in a restricted sense that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, but all of them deny that He was such from all eternity, that is, in virtue of His Own Essential Being.

These varied forms of antichristian denial are all repulsive and abhorrent to the spiritual mind, since they all agree in denying that Christ is God. Another form is perhaps more specious than the classes mentioned, but hardly seems less deadly in its nature. In this case, a writer, referring to the "sonship of Christ," asserts that "There is no ground for the assumption that it (the sonship) was a relationship of Deity carried into manhood," And, to this assertion that His sonship began with His manhood, the writer adds, "Luke clearly bases our Lord's sonship on the great divine transaction of the incarnation," quoting Luke 1:35 in its support. This passage in Luke has often

been misunderstood and shamefully mis-handled in connection with this subject. Christadelphians, Swedenborgians, and others have mis-applied it for the like purpose — namely, that of denying that Christ was the Son of God before His conception by the Virgin Mary under the power of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the Highest. They all unite in ignoring the true significance of the angel's words to Mary, "The Holy Thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God," and in enfeebling their meaning by declaring that He was to be called so merely because of His miraculous birth. But the truth is that, while He was the Son of God at His birth, He was so before His birth. This name was His Personal right at His incarnation, because He was the Son of the Father from eternity. Other scriptures, such as John's Gospel, the Colossian and the Hebrew Epistles, fully establish the truth of the Eternal Sonship, and Luke 1:35 does not contradict them. The Third Gospel deals specially with the humanity of Christ, and at the outset we learn from it that the "Holy Thing" to be born of Mary should be called the Son of God. This name is not a new one conferred, but the original one confirmed. This passage is profound, its subject sacred, and all comment upon it is attended with risk. But, surely, the action of the Holy Spirit was to exclude the poisonous taint otherwise derivable from Mary, and to ensure immaculate holiness for the One to be born by virtue of the miraculous conception. Moreover, the energy of the Deity was engaged in taking this holy humanity into indissoluble union with the Son. "Wherefore," said the angel, "the Holy Thing . . . shall be called Son of God." By reason of His pre-incarnate Sonship, the Lord Jesus differed in toto from Adam and the angels, who are also called in scripture sons of God. They are so designated because of the manner of their creation and the status given them. But our Lord carried His name, Son, into His incarnate state. In Deity, He was the Son; in flesh, He was the Son of God. The angel's words guard His Holy Person against any evil thought that His eternal Sonship was in any degree weakened or dishonoured when He became flesh. When He appeared in manhood, not in maturity as Adam in Eden, but as the Babe in Bethlehem, He should be called the Son of God, and the Son of the Highest. The Knowledge of the Father and the Son The Only-begotten Son has declared God and revealed the Father (John 1:18; Matthew 11:27); while the Father reveals the Son (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:16); and the knowledge of the Son of God is the theme of the Spirit's ministry in the assembly (Ephesians 4:13), and moreover, the ambition of every Spirit-taught saint (Php 3:8-10). In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was taught the unity of Jehovah, their God (Deuteronomy 6:4); in the Christianity of the New Testament, we have revealed to us the Trinity of the Godhead, the "name" of the three Persons to be confessed in baptism (Matthew 28:19). Not only did the Son come forth from the Father Who sent Him, but the Spirit proceeded from the Father, and was sent by the Father and the Son (John 15:26; John 14:26).

We are now told, however, that there is still an unrent veil of "infinite inscrutability" between us and the true God. Though "we walk in the light as He is in the light," the Deity still dwells in thick darkness, and "God in absoluteness" is unknown and unknowable. The names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do not apply to the Persons in the Godhead, because these terms involve "graded relations" and "relative inferiority" between the Persons!

Now is not this speaking "in words taught by human wisdom," and not "in those taught by the Spirit"? We do not find such thought justified by the record God has given of His Son. Instead of gradation and inferiority, scripture teaches unity and equality among the Divine Persons revealed.

We are, for example, taught in Matthew 28:19 that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are comprehended under a single "name." Though there are three Persons, there are not three names, but one; there are not three "grades," but one Tri-personal Unity.* The Lord also said, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30); and "The Son can do nothing of Himself save whatever He sees the Father doing"; and "The Father knows Me, and I know the Father" (John 5:19; John 10:15). These and other passages teach unity and community of nature between the Father and the Son.

{Appendix A — The Three Persons of the Godhead That there is unity in the Godhead no Christian denies; while he fully believes three Persons in the Godhead, even the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Nor is this truth to be enfeebled in the least degree. He who allows no more in the Godhead than three aspects of one Person is not a Christian, but a deceiver and an antichrist. He does not confess the fully revealed and true God, not the Godhead merely in three characters but in Three Persons; and so distinct that the Father could send the Son (1 John 4:14), and the Holy Ghost descend on that Son in the presence of the Father and in the consciousness of the Son (Mark 1:10-11), as it was even outwardly before man also (John 1:33-34). The Trinity

Such is the early and immense fact recorded in the Gospels, a clear witness to "the Trinity." What sympathy can one have with those who, overlooking such a fact, stumble over the term? Why be so servile to the letter, and so anxious to get rid of a word because it is in the Bible? The thing is distinctly there; the truth, not only open in the New Testament, but pervading the Bible (in a more veiled form, characteristic of the Old Testament in general) from the first chapter to the last.

One cannot now read the first chapter of Genesis intelligently without seeing that there are more Persons than One in the Godhead. Even the first verse of the first chapter yields a positive though gradual preparation for divulging it, at least after it was revealed. The Plural Noun and the Singular Verb Do you ask how this can be? "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1). Perhaps all may not have heard, but it is nevertheless true, that in the original Hebrew "God" is in the plural, naturally pointing to more than one Person; yet "created" is in the singular, a form not used where it speaks of heathen gods, but where it speaks of the living God. With the gods of the nations, the verb is plural. With the true God, although the subject be in the plural, the verb is often in the singular. Cases like Genesis 20:13 ("God caused"), where the verb is plural (like the noun), prove that God (Elohim) was known to be a true plural.

One God, Three Persons Could anything prepare better for revealing unity of the nature and plurality of the Persons? Granted that none in the Old Testament could certainly see the Three Persons as revealed later; even the believer had to wait until the New Testament for full light and truth. But when it came in Christ and by the Spirit, the peculiar (grammatical) concord where God’s name occurs of old could not but strike those who heed every word of Holy Writ.

Every Word Inspired

Men who hold lax views of inspiration may no doubt dispute the force of any word, because their views are unbelieving and pernicious; for these necessarily enfeeble and undermine inspiration as God has revealed it, and as His Spirit reasons on it. No error has consequences more widely spread than limiting inspiration to God’s thoughts in general, and denying it to His written words. W.K.}

While the Incarnate Son continuously displayed absolute subjection to the will of the Father, this sacred servitude was equally the exercise of His own will, uniform, as this will was, both in Deity and in manhood. But the unique glory of the obedience of the Son is at once dimmed by the bold assumption that He was inferior to the Father, whether in essential nature or in relationship. Even in human relationships, filial inferiority is not true in all cases. Could it be said that Abraham was inferior to Terah? or Moses to Amram? or David to Jesse? What right then is there to assume inferiority between Divine Persons, the Son and the Father?

It is also alleged that the order in which the Names are presented in scripture indicates that They are not co-equal. But while the order, Father and Son, preponderates in accordance with the scheme of revelation, this order is not invariable, but is reversed in John 8:16, John 8:18; John 10:30; John 14:10-11; 1 John 2:24. In these instances, there are didactic reasons for the reversal, but the exceptions are sufficient to disprove the unsavoury theory that the Son is inferior to the Father because He is mentioned in the second place.

Again, we are informed that the cherished meditations of the saints on John 1:18 have been unwarrantably exaggerated. The passage, it is said, is true of the Son in manhood, but not eternally in the Deity. "In the bosom of the Father" was the position "reached" by the Only-begotten Son in declaring God, but has no prior application!

Such statements are surely self-condemned. And on this account, there is no need to dwell here upon the awkward and jejune attempt made to prove this interpretation by the Greek preposition. It will immediately shock every honest and pious soul to be told that the words, "the Only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father," must be understood to mean that the Only-begotten Son came into the bosom of the Father. Such an exposition honours neither the Father nor the Son, and is opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture, especially of John’s Gospel and Epistles.

Though the Son spoke to His Father of being loved by Him before the foundation of the world (John 17:24), it is now contended that only in manhood did He come into the Father’s affections, into the Father’s bosom. And Luke 16:22 is cited in an effort to prove by analogy of phrase that this is the meaning of John 1:18. Are we, however, content to believe that as Lazarus was not in Abraham’s bosom until the angels carried him there, so He Who is the Only-begotten Son was not in the Father’s bosom until He "came" there in the days of His flesh?

What is gained by these denials of the eternity of Sonship? If it is denied that He Who appeared among men as the Son was not in the bosom of the Father, where was He then? If He revealed as Son was not always the Object of supreme affection to Him revealed as the Father, in what fashion was He regarded by Him? They give no reply, for, they say, nothing is known. They take away the eternal glory of the Only-begotten Son, Who is the worshipping joy of the believing soul, and what do they offer in exchange? Only a locked door, and an impassable barrier — the inscrutableness of abstract form and relations — an Unknown Deity!

01.02. The Father's Love

The Father’s Love

Undoubtedly the love of the Father is the most exalted theme in the revelation of Christianity. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons [children] of God" (1 John 3:1). The love of the Father specially irradiates the family circle of grace. The love of God is for the whole world in its illimitable measure, and is proclaimed to all men for the ears of faith. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And nothing can separate those who believe from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). But the Father’s love!

What Manner of Love?

What sort of love, then, is it that the Father has given us, and that we are exhorted to behold? Is it a love which was awakened and even caused by our dire need? We are too apt to assume hastily and somewhat selfishly that the Father’s love derives its special character from the fact that we, the sinful and unworthy subjects of divine grace, are, because of its abounding energy, enabled to stand before Him in the relationship of beloved children. And if this is our only viewpoint of His love, we may learn perhaps a little of its depths, but we shall miss its invisible heights altogether, as well as its boundless length and breadth. No, love receives its prime quality from the Lover rather than from the loved one. And our highest joy, therefore, is not that we are the objects of divine love, though we should never forget the love that made us and calls us the children of God. We who know Him that is from the beginning rejoice, not only in the love that is of God, but in the God Who is love (1 John 4:7-8), in Him Who loves as only the God Who is love can love. Moreover, in a deeper intimacy still, we bless the Father, not merely, nor even chiefly, because we are loved of Him, but because the Father Himself loves us, and because He loves us as only the Father Who is God can love. The Father’s love!

Incomprehensible Love

Here it would be fitting to pause in adoring contemplation of the Father Whose love has been revealed to us. And we may also ask ourselves whether we really understand "what manner" of love the Father’s is. We speak to one another of His love, we sing of that love, we rejoice in that love, but what do we know of the extent and manner of that love? We believe sometimes that the tiny vessels of our poor hearts are filled to overflowing with that love; but can we take the measure of its "ocean fullness" from our own conception or experience of it?

It is useless, of course, to attempt to measure the love of God by man’s cubits and ephahs, and yet how can we worship the Father in spirit and truth unless we know "what manner" of love He has bestowed upon us? Its staggering immensity may fill us with amazement, as the disciples were amazed when they beheld the behaviour of the Lord in the tempest, saying, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matthew 8:27). The mighty power of the

Lord bewildered them, but astonishment is not the worship in spirit and in truth which the Father seeks from His worshippers. The Father’s love learned in the Son But we who are begotten of God ought not to be bewildered by the love of the Father. Its greatness may be, and is, utterly beyond our comprehension, but its beauty and its sweetness are not beyond our contemplation and delight, for we behold the blessedness of the Father’s name revealed in the soft radiance of the Son. Whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father. Jesus said to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:10.) In the Son therefore we know the Father, and in the Son we learn the Father’s love, which otherwise would baffle our understanding and overwhelm our hearts.

We ought not to lose sight altogether of the fact that the love of God the Father is in itself, abstractedly, an incomprehensible subject to us. This humbles us. We cannot describe His love to others nor communicate to them its sweetness. We cannot understand it even for ourselves. At the same time the knowledge of the Father is characteristic of the youngest in the family of God: "I write to you, little children [babes], because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). The newly-begotten are here said to be in a place of realized relationship to God the Father. The babes even know that One is their Father, even God, and also that they are dependent upon Him for divine nature and its nurture, for love and for counsel. How could they know the Father’s love apart from the Son?

God Unseen, the Father Declared

We are now considering especially the love of the Father, made known to us in the New Testament. God is the general name of the Deity, reflecting His absolute nature as the self-subsisting One, beyond creature knowledge. But the name, Father, implies the name, Son, also, the two being correlated terms. Moreover, the name, Son, implies, among other things, the most familiar acquaintance with the affections of the Father. Hence we read, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared [Him]" (John 18:1-40). The Father, therefore, is now made known. In this instructive passage both names, God and Father, occur. On the one hand, the inscrutability of God in His essential Being is first stated; "dwelling in unapproachable light; Whom no man has seen, nor is able to see," as it is expressed in another place (1 Timothy 6:15-16). On the other hand, the same text shows that what the creature could not by any means discover has been made known by the Son, Who alone knew Him, being the Only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. Marvellous revelation this! for it includes not only God’s hand in its omnipotent power, not only God’s mind in omniscient wisdom and knowledge, but also, and chiefly in this passage, God’s heart in its infinite and eternal love as the Father.

"Yet deeper, if a calmer, joy

The Father’s love shall raise,

And every heart find sweet employ

In His eternal praise.

Nor is its sweetness, now unknown,

Well proved in what is done;

Our Father’s love with joy we own,

Revealed in Christ the Son." The Secret of the Father’s Love

Thus, the secrets of the Father’s bosom are now made known, the love of the Father being declared by and in the Son.

". . . The Son Who knows —

He only — all His love;

. . .

Dwells in His bosom; knoweth all

That in that bosom lies;

And came to earth to make it known

That we might share His joys." Who indeed, save the Son of God, could know the heart of God? Who, save the Only-begotten Son, could interpret to man the profound emotions of the Godhead? There is an unfathomable depth of riches in the wisdom and knowledge of God; His judgments are unsearchable; His ways are untraceable (Romans 11:33). But how much more intimately associated with the mysteries of the Godhead is the love of the Father! for God Himself is love (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16) as truly and absolutely as God is light (1 John 1:5).

Competency to undertake the revelation of this love of the Father is found alone in Him Who is described in the brief phraseology of John 1:18 as "the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father." Love is essentially comprehended in the relationships of Father and Son. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things [to be] in His hand" (John 3:35). "That the world may know that I [the Son] love the Father, and as the Father has commanded Me, thus I do" (John 14:31). There was, therefore, according to the testimony of the Son Himself on earth, mutual love between the Father and the Son. Nor was this love a new experience to the Son, for He also declared, "Thou [the Father] lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24), thereby revealing Himself as the Eternal Son of the Father’s love.

01.03. The Beloved of the Father

The Beloved of the Father

We may do well to meditate still further upon the Son as the Revealer of the Father. In this work He alone is before our adoring hearts, for He alone is competent to make the Father known. His own words come to us: "The world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee" (John 17:25; also John 8:55). This conscious knowledge of the Father by the Son was personal to Himself, and from any such intimacy the world of created intelligences was necessarily excluded. But if the Son's omniscience embraced all things concerning the Father, how fully and perfectly He knew the Father's love! how able too to declare that love! In heaven's language, the Son must be One upon Whom heavenly love rests. Accordingly when the title, "Jesus Christ our Lord," is associated in scripture with the Son of God (as in Romans 1:3) , the very name, "Son," implies that the love of the Godhead (for "God is love") is in active exercise towards Him. Moreover, there being the Son, Who is loved, there is also the Father, Whose love is ever proceeding to the Son. Could there be a Father's bosom or a Father's house without the Son of the Father's love? The Son may in the fullness of time assume the office of a Servant, and thereby invest His service with His own incomparable dignity, with absolute fidelity, and with infinite worth, but, apart from and before all such service, deepest affection is conveyed in the relationship of Son. In the imperfect examples of sonship found in this sin-laden world, it is even so. When David was "much moved" at the news of the death of wicked and rebellious Absalom, the paternal love of his bleeding heart stood revealed in the pathetic repetition of two words, "my son." With bitter tears he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Samuel 18:33). Though without a princely virtue, Absalom's filial relationship to David remained. "My son," said the king. Death had touched a chord in the father's love, however unworthy its object, and however wronged the father had been by that son. The Beloved Son Our theme of meditation just now is the highest and holiest, and we may surely say the sweetest, of all themes — God's Beloved Son. Leaving ourselves and all the world out of account, as unworthy objects of divine love, we desire to contemplate the ineffable love that links the Father and the Son. This love is not vague and visionary, but is made the subject of definite revelation. Scripture contains actual expressions of mutual love between Themselves. Such utterances are of the supremest order of communion in the Godhead, and have been preserved by the Holy Spirit for our reverent meditation and worship. Nothing could be choicer than these Divine endearments expressed in human words for earthly ears.

Oh, what heavenly treasures the word of God contains! Are we alive to their intrinsic value? How transcendently gracious that we should possess the inspired record of what the Father said to the Son, and of what the Son said to the Father! It is indeed remarkable to have the Father's saying, "Thou art My beloved Son," and to have also the Son's words to Him, "The love wherewith Thou hast loved Me" (Mark 1:11; John 17:26). In the hearing of men the Father acknowledged His Beloved Son, and the Son acknowledged the Father's love for Him. This is indeed the unveiling of a holy mystery; but it was needful for us to know it, that we might the better understand the truth

revealed concerning the Persons of the Father and the Son, and so worship the Father "in truth," as He seeks (John 4:23). The Father’s Love for the Son With all meekness and lowliness of mind, we listen to every word of the Incarnate Son as He reveals the Father in the course of His ministry. But when His subject is the love of the Father for Himself, the Son, our interest is intensified to the utmost. This is a secret of the heaven of heavens, of the "heavenly things" of the dwelling-place of God, and it concerns the Beloved Son of the Father, Who is also our Beloved.

"The Father loves the Son." The theme is mighty, but the words are simple. Such words, easily uttered, easily remembered, are suited to the "babes" of the household of God, to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the "depths of God." The Son, speaking out of that intimate acquaintance with the Father, ever possessed and enjoyed by Himself only, declares in our wondering ears, "The Father loves the Son" (John 5:20).

We note that the act of loving is placed in the present tense: "the Father loves," not "has loved." It was true on the day of utterance in Jerusalem without doubt, and in all the days of His humiliation assuredly. But the saying unfolds much more also. That love is necessarily true throughout the co-existence of the Father and the Son. Looking onward or backward, whenever there was a Father to love and a Son to be loved, it was true that "the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that Himself does." Such love o’erleaps all barriers of beginning and ending, and is the outflow of eternal relationship.

How overwhelming are these precious words, redolent with the ineffable joy of all that Sonship meant to His heart Who uttered them! The love of the Father for the Son is immeasurable and indefinable. We are lost in its immensity. In human love, our thoughts are more at home. We understand the record that the love of David exceeded that of Jonathan, that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and that the assembly at Ephesus had a "first" love which was lost; these who loved had "like passions" with ourselves. But the statement, "The Father loves the Son," we cannot handle with our understandings, for, apart from divine unfoldings, we know neither the Father nor the Son in their essential Being how then can we know Their mutual love?

Food for the Heart

Why, then, did the Lord make Himself known to us as the Beloved of the Father? Not that the mind should seek to comprehend what is incomprehensible, but that the hearts of His own should believe His words, and cherish this glimpse into the profundities of a love exceeding the limits of time and space.

"The Father loves!" What infinite emotions, what unfathomable depths of affection are in the Father’s heart, since in essential Being "God is love"! It is true that "God only knows the love of God." And we may say also that only the infinite and immeasurable heart of the Son can receive in its fullness and reciprocate with equal fullness the outgoings of the infinite and immeasurable heart of the Father. "The Father loves the Son!" Such is the communion above the heavens revealed for those who now worship in the "holiest." Whatever love fills the Father’s heart finds its perfect acceptance and fullest response in the heart of the Son. Should not this love be the key-note of our loftiest praise? Has this revelation of matchless love no interest for our hearts? The Father! It is He Who sent the Son a propitiation for our sins. The Son! It is He Who revealed the Father to us. We are stirred as we remember that the Father Himself loves us, and that the Son of God

loves us and gave Himself for us. It is indeed fitting that we should rejoice that the love of the Father and the Son rests upon us. But ought we not to be stirred to a deeper depth by the knowledge that, apart from ourselves, love is the eternal bond between the Father and the Son? Shall the bride be insensible to the glories of her Beloved, Who exceeds every other beloved, since He is the Beloved of the Father before time began? The Undated Love of the Father The context (John 5:17-21) of the Lord’s utterance, "The Father loveth the Son," contains most weighty testimony to the personal glory of the Son. The Lord does not deny, but confesses the charge of the Jews that He "said that God was His own Father," for "the Son can do nothing of Himself save whatever He sees the Father doing: for whatever things He does, these things also the Son does in like manner." The Son does the same things as the Father and in the same manner. There was, therefore, absolute equality without independence.

"He had deigned to take the place of man, without forfeiting for a moment His divine nature and rights; and as such He disclaims the least shade of self-exaltation, or independence of His Father" (W.K.). There was perfect communion with the Father, for He does nothing apart from the Father, but does what He sees the Father is doing. Moreover, in exercising the divine function of giving life, the Son, equally with the Father, "quickens whom He will," acting in His own right.

Now these Godhead claims of union and communion with the Father (John 5:19) and also of quickening whom He will (John 5:21) are associated with the claim that the Father dearly loves (philei) the Son, and shows Him all things which He Himself does (John 5:20). How fully this threefold claim explains the co-operation of the Father and the Son: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). As love is the essence of the Divine Being, so love is the mainspring or motive of conjoint divine working by the Father and the Son.

Love being essential to the Godhead, because "God is love," love has neither beginning nor ending. Because God is eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27; Romans 16:26), love is eternal. Before there was a creature to be loved, "God is love." But that love in the past eternity required an object. A love that is inert, dormant, a mere abstraction, has no affinity with the love of God (1 John 3:17; 1 John 4:20-21). Love must love, and love another.

Where, then, before the foundation of the world, did love find its necessary and worthy object? The Uncreated Son Himself supplies the answer: "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Within the circle of the Godhead love was always all-pervading. The love of the Father ever rested upon the Son Who, becoming incarnate, testified what He had seen, and spoke what He knew: "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Thou, the Father, didst love Me, Thy Son, before the foundation of the world: in the light of this solemn declaration, who dare doubt that the Speaker is the Eternal Son?

Chapter 5

01.04. Loved and in the Glory of Sonship before the World's Foundation

Loved and in the Glory of Sonship before the World’s Foundation

"Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24) are the recorded words of the Incarnate Son, uttered in intimate and solemn intercourse with His Father. We would not seek to make ourselves "over-wise" in matters relating to the Deity, nor would we pry into matters unrevealed; but a question in connection with this passage has recently been forced upon us. Was the Son speaking of the love which rested upon Him as the Son before the foundation of the world? or was He speaking of the love which rested upon Him then, but was altogether apart from and prior to His being the Son? More briefly, did He speak of being loved before the world’s foundation as the Son, or as an Unnamed, Unknown Person in Absolute Deity? Our reluctant hearts are driven to this abstruse inquiry because it is stated by some that the Son was only such "in manhood," and, therefore, could not have been loved by the Father before the foundation of the world as the Son.

We believe, however, that this scripture itself and its context answer the question conclusively for all simple minds. They teach us that the Lord claimed the love of the Father as a love which was peculiarly and exclusively His own from all eternity, He being then and always the Beloved Son of the Father. For Who is it that is represented here, pouring out His heart in intercession with the Father for His own who are in the world? "Thou lovedst Me." Who is speaking? Is it One unknown to the Father as Son before the days of His flesh? Let this scripture itself answer. Who is the Speaker in John 17:1-26?

Examining the scripture, we see (1) that the evangelist describes the Speaker as Jesus (John 17:1); (2) that the Speaker describes Himself to the Father as "Thy Son" and as "Jesus Christ" (John 17:1-4); and (3) that the Speaker (John 17:5) claims to have had glory with the Father before the world was, and to have been then with the Father, not as His Servant, but as His Son. The Speaker, therefore, is the Eternal Son, the Son ’’from everlasting," the Son "before the world was," and now He seeks that He may be glorified as the Incarnate Son in heaven. Let us tarry to contemplate these great truths a little further.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God

(1) In John’s historical narrative, the Holy Spirit records that Jesus was speaking: "These things Jesus spoke, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said . . ." (John 17:1). The name, Jesus, without any addition of title, is a characteristic feature of the Fourth Gospel, where it is found much oftener than in any of the others. It occurs about 250 times in John, and only about 350 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke taken together. Here then we read, "Jesus spoke;" it was Jehovah the Saviour, as that name means; it was "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." How marvellous that we should be permitted to hear the words of Jesus addressed to the Father!

(2) In the first part of His intercession, we find that the Lord Jesus speaks, using the third person, to the Father about Himself as the Son and as Jesus Christ. He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may also glorify Thee. . . . And this is the eternal life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." He designates Himself "Thy Son" and "Jesus Christ." This passage is most instructive to us. The words in the third personal form convey to us in a marked and emphatic manner the special character in which the Lord presents His intercession. He does not plead as Son of David or as the Son of man for Israel or the Gentiles, but as Son of God for those given Him in the hour of His denial by His earthly people.

Before the Father, with eyes lifted to heaven, on the point of His departure unto the Father, the Lord Jesus in His intercession takes the place of the Son of the Father ("Thy Son"). He is not interceding as the Son of man, nor as the Messiah. He is addressing not Jehovah, but the Father. His pleadings are not for Israel that they may be blessed nationally, nor for created things that they may be purged from the blight of sin. Old Testament promise and prophecy dealing with these spheres of reconciliation and with the worldwide display of divine righteousness and glory are placed in abeyance on account of His own rejection by the world. Nevertheless, as the Father’s Son He has personal rights and privileges which are unaffected by this sinful unbelief of man, and in virtue of these rights, He is now interceding for His own company — for those who received Him (John 1:10-13).

Accordingly, the Lord Jesus presents as the basis of His intercession His own personal relationship of Son to the Father, a relationship anterior to the world’s existence, and, therefore, independent of the divine plans for the world’s complete regeneration, though, as Son, He will in due time be its sole channel of blessing, all things being placed in His hand. The prophetic revelation of administrative righteousness in the world must wait its fulfilment; but the Father’s love is not stemmed in its outflow by man’s obduracy, for it is made known by the Son, Who ever dwelled in it, never more nor less so than He did in manhood. Moreover, this love was made known by Him to a circle which had received no prophetic mention in the Old Testament programme of the world’s history; but this circle of lowly believers is now linked up with the love enjoyed by the Son before the foundation of the world. But the Son had on earth already revealed the Father’s name and the Father’s love to those whom the Father had given Him out of the world. For this company the Son prays, describing them as the Father’s gift to Him (John 1:2, John 1:6, John 1:9, John 1:11-12, John 1:24; also John 18:9; John 6:37, John 6:39). And He makes request on their account to the Father because, having glorified the Father on earth, He looks to be glorified by Him in heaven, while they would be still in the world. But in His prayer to the Father the Son speaks in the full consciousness of His own equality with the Father, as One able to pronounce upon the completeness of His own work, and to estimate the glory that work had in the Father’s eyes. What was that work? That "they might know Thee." And in order that His own might have this knowledge of the Father, the Son had given them eternal life.

It is not, therefore, as the Mediator between God and man, nor as the Servant of Jehovah that the Lord Jesus is speaking, but as the Son, in the essential glory of His own Person as the Son of the Father, Who had glorified the Father on earth in respect of His manifestation of that love which had

no beginning, for "God is love."

Having then, in manhood, revealed that love on earth, He, the Incarnate Son, now seeks to be glorified in heaven. As another has said "He was Son before time began; He had, therefore, of course, glory with the Father before the world was. But He had taken the place of servant in manhood on earth, and now asks that the Father should glorify Him along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him eternally. A man to everlasting, He would receive all from the Father, albeit Son from everlasting; and when glorified it is that He may glorify the Father. Such is perfect love and devotedness" to the Father — the unique love and devotedness of the Son. The Glorification of the Incarnate Son

(3) From John 17:4 the form of diction is changed to the first person, and the words used in speaking of Himself by the Lord Jesus from this point onward are "I" and "Me." In John 17:1 He requested, "Glorify Thy Son"; now it is, "Glorify Me, Thou Father, along with Thyself, with the glory which I had along with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). There is, as we have noted, a didactic significance underlying the variation in the phraseology of the two utterances, but they were both uttered by the same Person. They show that the One about to be glorified would enter the glory He had along with the Father "before the world was," and that the Speaker was the Son in manhood. With deepest reverence let us con over these words again that we may learn more of their true import, while we mark their intimate connection. First, the Lord Jesus says, "Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee" (John 17:1). Consumed with zeal for the Father's house, the Son, Who had glorified the Father on earth, now sought to be glorified on high that He might from thence continue to glorify the Father.

Having introduced Himself as the Son (John 17:1), the Speaker with the same uplifted eyes, with the same gracious lips (John 17:5) said, "Glorify Me." There is not a syllable to suggest that there is a change of identity of the Speaker in these closely connected utterances, the second of which reaches back to the eternal ages. For the Speaker desired of the Father definitely, emphatically ("Thou Father") that He Himself might be glorified "along with [para] Thyself," at Thine own side; and, further, this glory was the very same glory the Speaker had "along with [para] Thee," at Thy side, "before the world was." The language of this petition forbids us to think that this glory of the Speaker was not eternal, since the glory is not one which He began to have at some past period, nor one which He would have for the first time when this prayer should be fulfilled, but it is the glory which He "had" before the world was.

Considering this glory yet further, we learn that the Speaker's glory was not one derived from creatorial activities, since it was possessed by Him "before the world was." It is the glory, external and anterior to the creation, which blazed in infinite excellence "before the world was." It is the self-contained, ineffable glory which the Speaker had when, distinct personally from the Father, He was along with the Father "before the world was." It is the transcendent glory which the Father abiding in the mutually complacent love of the Godhead beheld in the Uncreated Eternal Son, Who was in His bosom before the foundation of the world.

"Before the world was." What perfections shine in every word of the Son! The world is the arena where sin dishonoured God, and where, according to purpose, the glory of God will eventually be displayed with even greater brilliance than at the creation. But the advent of the Saviour of the world was attended with such an outbreak of man's hostility that the divine schemes for the

redemption of the world from its bondage to sin and Satan were postponed. The Son, therefore, "knowing all things that should come upon Him," turns to what was in the beginning before the world even existed — the things associated with His own glory by the side of the Father, and the love the Father had for Him. As the Incarnate Son, He sought that He might enter that glory at His ascension, and be displayed in it along with the Father. But while the Son, leaving the circumstances of His humiliation, entered that glory at His ascension, it is from the wording of the petition clear that the Speaker "had" that same glory in the beginning. For if the Father Whom the Speaker addressed was Father before the world was, then the Speaker, Who was with Him before the world was, was His Son before the world was.

Some who admit "the Person was there" in the beginning assert that it is going beyond scripture "to give Him a personal name or designation." But here scripture itself, that is, the Holy Spirit, gives Him the name of Son. The Speaker, or the Person speaking, in John 17:5 discloses that He was with the Father before world was; and the same Person in John 17:1 describes Himself to the Father as "Thy Son," that is, the Son of the Father; while in both verses the Speaker directly addresses the "Father" by name. This scripture therefore presents to us, that it might become an element of our worship, a marvellously unbroken continuity in the ever-blessed Person of the Son. Before the foundation of the world the Son is at the Father’s side in His own characteristic personal glory, beloved by the Father as such. In the incarnation of the Son, the union of the two natures of God and man is so absolute that the Personality of the Son remains intact, and He in manhood is as ever "over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5). Then at the ascension, the Incarnate Son assumes His own pre-incarnate glory, but the Person is the same. The Son is the "I AM," unchangeable and absolute, in the beginning, now, and evermore; and we fall on our faces before Him in adoring worship. The Son’s Glory before the World was When the Son speaks of His eternal glory along with the Father, His personal dignity and worth in our eyes are not diminished, but enhanced beyond degree. We gladly worship the Son even as we worship the Father, knowing that the Incarnate Son is now glorified along with the Father with the glory He had in His Personal Being from everlasting.

It was not that the Lord asked "to be re-invested with" that glory, as if He had "left, as to outward form and position, the glory of Deity." Could there be Deity without the glory of Deity? Nor can we properly speak of the "outward form and position" of Deity, save with reference only to what appeared to men’s eyes. Glory may be present, though invisible to human sight. The glory of Jehovah passed by Moses, hidden in the cleft rock and covered with the divine hand. Jehovah in His glory was there, but Moses saw only the "back parts" (Exodus 33:1-23). The glory of Deity may be veiled or concealed from men, but is never obliterated so as to require renewal or restoration. As the Essential Being of the Godhead is unchangeable, so is His Essential glory.

Scripture is silent as to the Son surrendering the glory proper and peculiar to His Person. Indeed, the very fact that He was the Eternal Son in manhood imparted its unique quality to His service. His obedience as far as death, the death of the cross, was magnified beyond all comparison because He was "in the form of God," retaining the full glory of Sonship. The very words we are considering provide a vivid illustration of this spirit of obedience: "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me." He Who humbled Himself waits the Father’s pleasure for His exaltation. The Son, become a servant, Who glorified the Father on earth, yet abstains from glorifying Himself in heaven. Though possessing full personal rights to the glory He had with the Father before the world was, He

submits, in accordance with the perfection of the Incarnate Son, to the good pleasure of the Father for His glorification on high.

There is, therefore, exquisite moral glory in the petition itself. Never could such a plea ascend to the Father from other lips than His. As Son, He asks that, as Man, He may be glorified in heaven with the personal glory which was His from everlasting. Moreover, this plea He grounds, not upon His own personal glory and eternal relationship as Son, but upon His glorification on earth of the Father, and the completion of the work given Him to do, concerning which He is Himself competent to express a true judgment before the Father. "I have glorified Thee . . . I have finished the work."

Such language would be extravagant for anyone not in the glory of Sonship before the world was. But it was then that the Son was along with the Father, exhibiting in Himself the full excellence of that glory peculiar to Himself as the Son, while the Son in that glory was the ineffable delight of the Father. How inspiring to the hearts of those begotten of God to know that the eternal love in the bosom of the Father found perfect response in the heart of the Eternal Son! What glory the eyes of the Father saw in the Son throughout that past eternity when God was all! What profound complacency filled the Father’s heart as He contemplated the glory of the Son before the world was! And not less so when He beheld that Son in manhood, His Only-begotten Son in Whom He was well pleased!

How sweet that we should be given this glimpse into the inscrutable past by One on earth Who alone knew it! For we now know that before all ages and generations the love of the Father rested in an unbroken and delighted tranquility upon the Son Who was along with Him in His personal glory. That personal love and personal glory, the Son possessed and enjoyed "from everlasting," before all worlds. Now, having glorified the Father on earth, as the obedient Son in manhood He desires to be glorified with that glory which was ever His as the Eternal Son of the Father.

01.05. The only-begotten Son of God

The only-begotten Son of God

"The revelation in the world of the love of God was made by the Only-begotten Son of God. The revelation was personal, and was not a communication made to Him. No creature was competent to undertake this revelation. An angel could have conveyed to man a message of what was due from him to God, but the highest celestial intelligence could not manifest what was in the heart of the God of love towards man. Since "God is love," only omniscience can fully know that infinite love, and only omnipotence can adequately declare it. These all-comprehending attributes, which no creature could possess, are fully possessed by the Son of God in His essential Being. Moreover, this knowledge and competency to be the Revealer of divine love are expressed simply in scripture by the designation of the Son of His love — "the Only-begotten Son of God." The Gift of the Only-Begotten Son of God The term "only-begotten" (monogenees) is applied to the Son of God five times in the New Testament, occurring only in the writings of John (John 1:14, John 1:18; John 3:16, John 3:18; 1 John 4:9). In most of these passages, the special association of this term with the manifestation of God’s love determines its significance. The Only-begotten Son of God is the One peculiarly competent to be the Revealer of the eternal love of God; accordingly, He is presented as such in the Holy Spirit’s record of this revelation.

Thus, when the Lord, after His instruction of Nicodemus in the earthly things of the kingdom of God, passed to heavenly themes, He introduced Himself as the Only-begotten Son of God (John 3:16, John 3:18). As the "Son of man Who is in heaven," He, the Omnipresent One, then spoke of love for the world of which He had been eternally conscious in the dwelling-place of God. What could be more peculiarly appropriate as a heavenly theme than the love of God? What heavenly gift to the world could be more transcendent than the Only-begotten Son? And these — the gift and its motive — He unfolded and enfolded in the precious combination — "Son" and "love." Our Lord announced this love of God in words happily familiar: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." There are many marvels in this profound utterance. It is marvellous in our eyes that God should love, and it is marvellous, too, that He should love the world, fallen into sin and ruled by Satan, as it is. And these marvels are among the "heavenly things" presented to our faith in this sentence.

Moreover, the intensity of this love is also declared: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." The measure of God’s love of the world is to be seen in His giving One Who was peculiarly and exclusively the object of His affection — His Only-begotten Son. The stupendous wonder to our faith is that One was along with God in this unique relationship of Son, and God gave that One. This is surely the teaching of the text, not that God’s gift was One Who became His Only-begotten Son in manhood, that is, in the process and at the time of giving. If Sonship began in incarnation, why do we not read that God gave the Son of man? But, no, the Only-begotten Son of God was given.

Let us remember Who is speaking: "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man Who is in heaven." He speaks as a competent witness of a heavenly relationship — of Himself, God's Only-begotten Son. "He that cometh from above is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifies" (John 3:31-32). The Son was witnessing on earth of what was true in heaven, and therefore, Sonship in the Godhead was true before incarnation and before He came down from heaven as the Given Son. This is the Son's own witness concerning Himself. Whom then did God spare (Romans 8:32), and deliver up for us all? The Holy Spirit answers, "His own Son." God did not withhold this unspeakable gift, but yielded up His own Son in the spontaneity of His love. To think otherwise of Him than as the Eternal Son is to detract from the personal glory of God's incomparable gift. When the Son of man ascended into heaven He entered where He had been before, as He asked His incredulous disciples, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:62). He claimed the omnipresence of Jehovah, Who is "God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else" (Deuteronomy 4:39), being as the Son, both in heaven and on earth simultaneously (John 3:13). His Sonship before He became God's gift to the world

God gave His Son, not a servant. The force and point of this great text are only to be perceived by noting that God gave to the world the One Who was His Only-begotten Son. Consider it to mean that God gave the One Who would in manhood enter into the entirely new relationship of the Only-begotten Son, and the sublime utterance of the Lord is made comparable to God's employment of various servants in His governmental dealings with Israel and the world.

We read, for instance, that God gave the people of Israel judges (Acts 13:20), that is, certain men who became leaders and rulers of the people. But there was nothing in Gideon, Samson, or any of them to magnify the love of God. These servants in themselves possessed little moral worth. They did not magnify their office by reason of their personal excellence; it was rather that their office magnified them. God gave these servants to carry out definite tasks; they were not only subordinate to Him in office, but inferior to Him in nature. But the gift of John 3:16 is of a different order entirely. Nothing is said here about the work committed to the Son. The value of the gift is measured by the unique personality of the One given — God's Only-begotten Son. Let us for illustration consider an Old Testament instance. What was it that so enhanced the value of Abraham's surrender to God? The patriarch gave up his only-begotten son (Hebrews 11:17). Isaac was the son before they ascended Mount Moriah together, and before he was laid upon the altar. In the eyes of Jehovah, the ethical value of Abraham's act of faith was measured by the one whom he gave at His bidding — not Ishmael, but his son, his "only son," Isaac, whom he loved, in whom Jehovah's promises to him were centred. Abraham surrendered the darling of his heart, and God appraised his obedience of faith in terms of his affection for Isaac (Genesis 22:12, Genesis 22:16). In like manner, God's gift is measured by the Person given. The degree of God's love — the "so" — is commensurate only with the worth of His Only-begotten Son. He was the Only-begotten Son before He was given; and before He was sent into the world. Sonship is inseparable from His Person, and does not describe an official or mediatorial relationship assumed by Him or bestowed upon Him for service. God gave His Son, not a servant, yet, blessed be His holy name, though He was the Son, He became the Servant to serve both God and man.

Believing on His Name In John 3:16, we read of believing "on Him," and in John 3:18 of believing "on His name." "He that believes not has been already judged, because he has not believed on the

name of the Only-begotten Son of God." It is noteworthy that "name" is the word used here, not "title." A name denotes the identity of a person, being the term distinguishing that person from others. A title is the term indicating office or service, and the same title may apply to a number of different persons. King is a title, denoting regal dignity, and belonged to David, Solomon, Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar, and to all holding that office. David, however, was the name of the anointed son of Jesse. There were many entitled kings in Israel, but only one named David. The name then is personal to him who bears it, and when it was divinely given it exactly suited him: thus, the Lord said to one of the apostles, "Thou art Peter." The name expresses what a person is; the title describes what a person does. "Saviour" is a title of the Lord: "unto you is born . . . a Saviour" (Luke 2:11). But His personal name is "Jesus," meaning Jehovah the Saviour (Matthew 1:21). The idea of salvation underlies both the name and the title, but the title, "Saviour," describes the work of Him Who came that the world through Him might be saved, while "Jesus" expresses Who that incarnate Person is — Jehovah the Saviour. So, in celebrating the salvation of Israel, Moses sang, "Jehovah is a man of war; Jehovah, His name" (Exodus 15:3).

Now in scriptural usage it appears that the term, "Son of God," is recorded as a name, and not as a title. The "Son" expresses Who that Blessed Person is essentially, the One on Whom the Father’s love was outpoured before the world was. If it only designated a mediatorial office assumed at some particular time in the economy of the ages, then the "Son of God" would be a title. But scripture does not support such a thought, though it tells us frequently and emphatically that the One Who undertook the high mediatorial functions between God and man is the Son of God, e.g., it shows that the One Who is now made High Priest in heaven is the Son of God (Hebrews 5:5).

Turning again to John 3:18, and remembering that the "name of the Only-begotten Son of God" denotes all that He is as the Declarer of God’s love, being the Son of His love, we see more clearly what terrible guilt is involved in man’s refusal to believe. The refusal of the Son decides the unbeliever’s position. "He that believeth not is judged already." He has rejected "God in Christ." "He has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God." The decisive criterion of man’s destiny revealed in this passage was a new feature in the ways of God, and arose from the presence of the Incarnate Son on earth as the gift of God’s love for the world. This the Holy Spirit now testifies (John 16:9). Never before had the Son appeared among men for such a purpose, and men accordingly incurred a responsibility never before imposed. A prophet was to be received because he spoke in the name of Jehovah Who sent him (Deuteronomy 18:18-19), but now men were required to believe in the name of the Speaker Himself — the Only-begotten Son. Israel had to believe the message of the prophet, but not on his name. But now the people were called to believe on the Son, for Jehovah’s "name is in Him" (Exodus 23:21). God had now sent His Son to the unbelieving nation, not a servant as He had formerly done (Matthew 21:33-39). The Manifestation of the Love of God

While the love of God has been manifested generally to the world, it has been manifested particularly to the family of God. The apostle John wrote, "Herein as to us [or, in our case), has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

Thus, the language of inspired scripture in the Gospel and the Epistle is precise that the Only-begotten Son of God was both given and sent into the world. The eternal Sonship of the Sent One imparted unparalleled glory to His mission, while it aggravated the guilt of those in the world who disbelieved on His name. To the family of faith who live through Him, the Only-begotten Son is the abiding manifestation of the love of God in respect of themselves. The adoring contemplation of the infinite love of God displayed in the Only-begotten Son will be the everlasting occupation of the children of God in the Father’s Home on high.

Chapter 7

01.06. The Word with God: the Only-begotten with the Father

The Word with God: the Only-begotten with the Father In John’s Gospel the Lord Jesus is portrayed according to His essential names rather than His relative titles. He is to be seen there as the Word and as the Son more than as the Messiah; or as the High Priest, or as the Head of His body, the church.

Consequently, the personal glories of God and His Son form the predominating theme of this evangelist rather than the salvation of man. The "Son" sets forth the ineffable love of the Father and manifests the glory of His name. Moreover, while the forgiveness of sins is not mentioned in this Gospel even once, God’s gift to the believer of life eternal recurs so frequently that this is an outstanding feature of the Fourth Gospel, easily recognizable by every reader. The Introductory Verses of John’s Gospel The exceptionally exalted object of the Fourth Gospel is indicated by its opening verses, and the loftiness of the theme is specially noticeable when they are compared with those of its fellow-Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each in accordance with his own specific purpose, display the Lord in His earthly and temporal relations to men as they were foretold in the Old Testament, but John writes of Him in His heavenly and eternal relationship, which was perfectly exhibited among men, yet was not foretold in psalm, prophecy, or type.

Accordingly, the first three Gospels begin by showing that the Lord appeared in fulfilment of the prophecies of old and in the line of genealogical descent therein prescribed. But in John’s Gospel there is a marked absence of these preliminaries no Old Testament scripture is quoted, nor any pedigree prefixed. The reason for this striking contrast is at once apparent when we recall that John’s pen was inspired to record that "Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God." No human succession, no citation from the law, the prophets or the psalms would have been appropriate in introducing Him, Who was God, and Who was in the beginning with God. The abrupt simplicity of the opening words indicate the inexpressible majesty of the theme.

These introductory verses in John set forth three fundamental truths relating to the Person of the Lord, viz.: —

(1) The Word was God and in the beginning with God.

(2) The Word became flesh and dwelt among men.

(3) The Word was the Only-begotten Son. The Word in the beginning

We have then, in John 1:1-18, the Holy Spirit’s prologue to John’s Gospel history, John 1:15 being a parenthesis, containing the Baptist’s witness to his own personal inferiority. This preface opens by indicating the supernal elevation of the theme of this Gospel. The veil of past time is at once rent for us in a striking sentence by the Holy Spirit, and a glimpse into the eternity beyond is afforded us: "In the beginning was the Word."

There, effulgent in His essential personal glories, we behold, by the illumination of the Spirit, the Word, the Only-begotten Son of God. Led by the text to look backward, our enraptured gaze

travels beyond the confines of all created things and beyond every cycle of measurable time to adore the Eternal Word Who was "in the beginning."* {*Appendix B — In and From the Beginning

He was the Word and Son before the time described as "from the beginning." The Eternal Son of the Eternal Father no human mind can fathom; and the incarnation necessarily adds to its inscrutability. But this is not the least ground for not believing what is infinitely above and beyond us; it is revealed without a doubt. And the reason why men break down upon it all is that they reason from man up to God, which is always false. You must reason down from God to man if you are to be in the truth; for who knows the truth but God? And who can reveal the truth but God, as He has done in Christ? In the Gospel, John is most careful to say that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It matters not how far one essays back in thought into the depths of eternity. Imagine millions of years! These are not the beginning; though of course one cannot with propriety talk of "years" before the measures of time apply. But go back in imagination into these unmeasured depths, there He subsisted. No beginning had He Who is eternal, and in His own personality He was "with God."

Again, not only was He with God as a distinct Person from the Father and the Spirit; but He was God, Nor is there any property of God more distinctive than His being eternal; if not eternal, not God. But quite a different thing is referred to in 1 John 2:13. It is not knowing Him that was in the beginning with God, but knowing "Him that is from the beginning." It is the beginning of His taking flesh, the incarnate Word, in this world. Such is the absolutely new fact. "From the beginning" is reckoned from His manifesting Himself as Emmanuel, the God-Man. This was He Whom the "fathers" knew. What can you know about the Son in eternity except that He was the Only-begotten Son in the Father’s bosom, the object of His everlasting delight, as even Proverbs 8:1-36 tells us?

Such He was when not a creature existed above or below, neither angel nor man nor lower being. There was only the blessed God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as we know now; and there were divine counsels which were afterwards to be divulged to us who now believe. What do we know more than this? But if we look at "Him that is from the beginning," there is, one may say, almost everything to learn and know. Exposition of the Epistles of John, by W.K., pp. 120, 121.}

It is manifest that this declaration of the Word’s existence in the beginning conducts us to a point prior to the very earliest creative act comprehended in Genesis 1:1. That is, we are ushered into eternity. Indeed, this absolute precedence of existence is even more definitely declared in the context, where we learn that the Word created every single thing that ever was created or that received being: "All things received being through Him, and without Him not one [thing] received being which has received being" (John 1:3). The Word becoming Flesh

It is instructive to observe the sequence shown in these verses as they relate to the Word. Having first shown the original glories of the Word in the eternal past, the apostle later in his preface records His incarnation. We read, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth . . . for of His fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:14-16). We are by these combined statements taught most plainly and definitely that the Word Who became flesh was the Word Who was "in the beginning," long before He became flesh. The Word of John 1:1 is, therefore, the Word of John 1:14. The Word, Who, becoming incarnate, tabernacled among us, Whose glory we contemplated, Who was full of grace and truth, was the Word Who

was in the beginning, full of wisdom and eternal majesty.

Further unfoldings concerning the Word In the light of this scripture, it is no difficulty to faith, but an indescribable joy, to receive these unfoldings of the transcendent glories of the Word. Not only was the Word in the beginning, but "the Word was with God" — One Person with Another — as truly "with God" (John 1:1) as in manhood the Word was "among us" (John 1:14). Moreover, the Person abides continuous and unchanging, for "the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Then, in John 1:2, His distinctive personality with God in the beginning is affirmed, the emphatic pronoun being used in the original to identify Him beyond dispute with the Word: "He [this very One, just named as the Word] was in the beginning with God." We learn, therefore, our hearts meanwhile being charged with adoration, that the Word Who became flesh was not in the beginning an abstract quality or attribute, nor a special emanation of the Deity, but a Person existing with God; and moreover, that this Word was God Himself. Thus, the Word was not a personal distinction of God, but a distinct Person with God, as well as and as truly as He was God Himself. We do not read God was the Word, but the Word was God; let us carefully store in our hearts this distinctiveness of expression.

Four protecting Walls, strong and high

Surely, every reverent heart must consider this language of the Holy Spirit most precise and emphatic in establishing the Eternal Personality of the Word Himself. It will be noted that the "Word" is made the conspicuous subject of each of the four short sentences in John 1:1-2, as if to guard against attack from any point of the compass upon the glory of that Name.

(a) In the beginning was the Word, (b) and the Word was with God, (c) and the Word was God.

(d) The Same was in the beginning with God. In the first three sentences, the noun, "Word," is repeated, and in the fourth, the Greek pronoun used has a definite and undeniable reference to the same noun. So that, at the opening of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, a fourfold guardianship of the Person of the Eternal Word is provided by these concise and clear statements of inspiration.

It would appear as if these protective phrases were specially designed of God to preserve the saints from the strange doctrine that He was the Word only in incarnation. Such a doctrine can only claim support in these verses by an outrageous garbling of the text. Instead of taking the passage as it stands, a gloss, such as follows within the brackets, must be added to suit the false interpretation:

(a) In the beginning was (He Who became) the Word, (b) and (He Who became) the Word was with God.

(c) and (He Who became) the Word was God.

(d) The Same (He Who became the Word) was in the beginning with God. But we never find it stated anywhere in scripture that "God became (egeneto) the Word," nor that "He became the Word," but we do read here that "the Word was (een) God." The Word was God originally, but subsequently, "the Word was made [became, egeneto] flesh" (John 1:14). Historically, the "becoming" in this connection relates to the incarnation. Analogously, we read that the Son of God

became "of the seed of David" (Romans 1:3), "of a woman," and "under the law" (Galatians 4:4), the same Greek verb being employed in each of these passages. In John 1:1-2, however, the Holy Spirit declares what the Word "was" in the beginning, not what the Word "became" afterwards in manhood. Observe carefully the verb, "was." It is remarkable that in these sentences the past (Greek imperfect, implying continuity) tense is used, and not the present, which is of more frequent occurrence.

Thus, the present tense occurs in the clause, Who "is in the bosom of the Father," referring to the Incarnate Son (John 1:18), and also in another clause, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever," referring to the Incarnate Christ (Romans 9:5). Is it not significant that the scripture reads, not "The Word is God," which is blessedly true, but, "The Word was God"? By this grammatical means, stress is laid upon the fact that in the beginning, antecedent to the whole creation which is His own handiwork, the Word existed in absolute Deity. The Personal Word (Logos) in the beginning

Keeping our feet unshod, let us for a little still linger near this "great sight" of revelation. "The Word (Logos) was God," and "the Word (Logos) became flesh" form the Holy Spirit’s dual description of what the Word was essentially and what the Word assumed mediatorially. What special significance, then, has this term, "Word"? It is, if we may define it briefly, that which expresses or communicates what is hidden in the mind or thought. Accordingly, the scripture itself is designated the word (logos) of God, in Hebrews 4:12 and elsewhere, being an exact expression in writing of divine truth.

But, while in both cases the mind of God is expressed, there is evidently a wide and weighty distinction between the Word of John 1:1 and the written word of scripture. The former is the Person Who was God and Who was in the beginning with God; the latter, which is described as "the word of God," is impersonal; moreover, it only began to come into existence when "holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Contrariwise, the Personal Word, being God, had no beginning, but was ever inherently possessed of an absolute competency to express the mind and thought of God. For in the beginning the Word was the Word, the Potential Declarer of the love of God, of the wisdom of God, of the purpose of God, yea, of God Himself Whom no one has seen nor can see. When the Word became flesh, this declaration of God was made known to men in and by Him (John 1:14-18). The Denial that the Word was Eternal In view of these transcendent glories which ever kindle afresh our smouldering adoration, we cannot regard as a slight matter any denial that the Lord Jesus was the Word eternally. It surely cannot but be a serious infringement of the revealed truth to teach that the Lord was not the Word until He was in manhood. And yet, strangely and sadly enough, this doctrine is implied by the following question in a recent publication: "Is anything taken from Him by saying that the intelligible expression in Him of every divine thought was in Manhood, and that it awaited His incarnation to be expressed?" What is in this instance stated interrogatively is stated positively elsewhere, for error is progressive in boldness.

We reply that this doctrine takes away altogether the Personal and eternal glory of the Word, which the Holy Spirit gives Him in John 1:1-2. It denies that from all eternity the Word was God in a manner that the Father was not, and that the Holy Spirit was not. It also denies that the Word was the Word in the beginning, limiting the nature of the Holy One by this bold assertion of His incompetency to be the Word until incarnate.

For, as already said, the question quoted implies what is elsewhere plainly affirmed, that only in manhood could there be the intelligible expression of divine thought; "it awaited" the incarnation of the Holy One to be expressed. But with God all things are always possible; and the Word was God. If He was capable of such expression before incarnation, He was the Word, as scripture reveals. If He was incapable until incarnation (may the good Lord pardon the very thought!) He was not the Word until then, as some daringly allege. The Personal Logos before Incarnation

It is unquestionably true that in manhood the Word did perfectly express God to men, but what the Word did when He became flesh He Who was God was in Himself able to do before incarnation. In the Godhead, He was the Personal Word, the Logos, "in the beginning." Was He not, therefore, "in the beginning" the "intelligible expression" of "divine thought"? We are in Genesis 1:1-31 told of a secret conclave of the Deity, relating to the creation of man, at which there was an expression of "divine thought"; for Elohim said, "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Was there no expression of the thought and purpose and will of God when, as we read, "Elohim said"? Was not the Word, prior to man’s creation, uttering in holy converse within the circle of the Deity the divine counsel respecting man’s beginning? In the Word this decision of the Godhead found its expression then, and, translated into human language, was embodied in the inspired record for the ultimate enlightenment of man.

Since "in the beginning was the Word," the Person Who was the Word was there "in the beginning"; and since "the Word was God," this Personal "expression" was there "in the beginning." To whom that "expression" appeared is a circumstance not affecting its existence; our ignorance of this in no way modifies the fact of revelation that "in the beginning was the Word." Whatever communication there was in the past eternity within the Godhead, or subsequently to creatures either celestial or terrestrial, all is comprehended in the activities of the Word. Before and after incarnation, God spoke in and by the Eternal Word, thus expressing His mind and will in the utmost perfection. The Incarnate Word full of Grace and Truth The Word existed before His incarnation. The word of man is in his inward thought before it is uttered by his lips for audible reception by others. The Spirit of God reveals that the Word was in the beginning before He became flesh and dwelt among us. The tabernacle made on earth was after the pattern in the heavens shown to Moses. The One seen among men was the One till then unseen by all, dwelling in unapproachable light.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us . . . full of grace and truth." The Incarnate Word was the expression of the mind of God in respect of grace and truth. So far as their exhibition in the world is concerned, grace and truth were first seen when the Word was made flesh. And how admirably qualified for this display was the Word, since He was God and in the beginning with God! So far as grace and truth were comprised in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, so far were they embodied in the Personal Word. Accordingly, the Word when He had become flesh was seen to be "full of grace and truth." These divine qualities were in His Person. There in Him was grace, which is more than love, being love triumphant over evil; and there was truth also, the intrinsic nature of both God and man being faithfully revealed by the very presence of the Incarnate Word on earth. The Only-Begotten In scriptural usage, the "Word" is correlated with God, while "Son" is generally correlated with the Father, though it is used with God also, as, for example, "the Son of God." The Word specially reveals God, to Whom man is responsible as his Creator and Governor, and the name, Logos, suggests the fullness and

faithfulness of His revelation. The Son reveals God the Father in His love, and the name, Son, suggests depth, exuberance, tenderness, and intimacy in the revelation He makes. Both these revelations are combined in the same Blessed Person, in Whom we see His God and our God, His Father and our Father. The Revealer is both the Word, and the Only-begotten Son. The "Only-begotten" first (1) occurs in the parenthesis (ver. 14) , which speaks of the Word become flesh: "and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with [or, from beside] a father." Here is recorded what was seen by faith through human eyes enlightened by the Spirit. This sight was not a transient glimpse of a divine appearance, as was occasionally granted in Old Testament times, but the glory of the Incarnate Word was contemplated with admiring, adoring delight, in which worship devout men loved to linger, as they do still.

Moreover, the glory of the Word become flesh was a revelation of altogether a new character, and it differed entirely from everything known in Old Testament times. It was not the overwhelming, repelling, Shekinah-glory of Jehovah that dwelt between the cherubim, but the glory of an only-begotten from beside a father. The figure describes the predominating character of the Personal revelation in the Word. The glory of the Word when contemplated in "flesh" was the glory (the manifested excellence) of a unique Paternal and Filial love at home in the heaven of heavens but sojourning on earth in Him. The glory of the Word Who dwelt "among us," full of grace and truth, had the nature of an Only-begotten’s glory with a father. His glory was so perfect and symmetrical in His Personal representation of the Father that it took the character of an only-begotten with a father; hence the Lord said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." There was absolute community of nature between the Father and the Son. In Him, the Word dwelling among men, was the repository of Paternal graciousness and confidential delight such as is known by none but an only-begotten with the father. This was the character of the communion of the Father and the Son in Their eternal Essence before the foundation of the world, and was disclosed to men by the Word in incarnation. The effulgence of the Incarnate Word was the effulgence of the Father’s love. "In Thee, most perfectly expressed, The Father’s self doth shine." In the Bosom of the Father

Having first spoken of the Incarnate Word, contemplated "among us," as the Only-begotten (ver. 14), the Holy Spirit then (2) sets forth the Only-begotten Son as the Declarer of the Father’s secrets: "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He (meaning, He and no one else) hath declared [Him]."

There is but one Son of the Father — the Only-begotten. The Son, being designated the Only-begotten Son, any rash thought that the Father has Another Son is precluded. All that subsists essentially in God the Son subsists exclusively in the Only-begotten Son. No one ever yet or at any time has seen God, Whose Being is enveloped in impenetrable mystery to all creatures. But now the blank wall reaching from earth to heaven has been demolished, like the veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The eternal secrets in God Who is light and love have now been revealed, the Only-begotten Son Himself being their exponent. In the bosom! It is in connection with this personal revelation that we find this choice phraseology of the Spirit, describing the relationship of the Son with the Father, which entwines itself about our deepest affections and awakens our loftiest worship — "the Only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father." The Father’s bosom! Time was when Jehovah spoke to Israel from "the secret place of thunder" (Psalms 81:7). Now God the Father has spoken from the secret place of eternal love, and

by the Son Who ever abode and abides there. The bosom is the place of love expressed and enjoyed; the Only-begotten Son dwells there to receive and to reciprocate that love, which shares every secret purpose and delight with the One so embosomed (cf. Micah 7:5): "the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5:20). And in Him are now displayed "all those deep affections, Which fill the Father’s heart." We learn them now, but shall learn them more fully in the Father’s house, from

"The Son Who knows —

He only — all His love;

And brings us as His well-beloved

To that bright rest above;

Dwells in His bosom; knoweth all

That in that bosom lies;

And came to earth to make it known,

That we might share His joys."

01.07. Jehovah saluting his Son

Jehovah saluting his Son

"I will declare the decree: the LORD (Jehovah) hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalms 2:7) In the New Testament we read of the Son of the Father, and in the Old Testament of the Son of Jehovah. The Father is the divine Name associated with God's love displayed in His family, and Jehovah is the Name associated with God's government of the world through the nation of Israel. Let us dwell a little on this difference in the presentation of the Son with special reference to Psalms 2:1-12. The earlier communications of God to man did not disclose that "God is love." Old Testament days were a probationary period, particularly under the law, during which God was made known as the Governor of His people, Israel. The "fullness of the time" had not then arrived for God to send forth His Son, by Whom alone the Father's name could be manifested upon the earth. But in those early days, the prophets cheered the hearts of the pious with visions of "good things to come." They declared what were the future purposes of God with regard to the blessing of the earth where sin and its fruits were then dominant, foretelling the introduction of a world-wide kingdom of righteousness and peace. Moreover, these prophets predicted that the Messiah or Anointed One, Who would establish this reign of terrestrial bliss, would first of all endure, as a prelude to His entrance into the appointed glories of His administration, unexampled sufferings (1 Peter 1:11; Luke 24:25-27).

There are many titles descriptive of the various kingdom-glories of Messiah the Prince used in the ancient prophecies, but they are all attached to Him Whose Name is the Son. God's eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself was to concentrate in the Christ the efficient administration of things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:9-10). This vast governmental plan, fully made known in the New Testament, was but dimly revealed to the holy men of old.

Nevertheless, though a veil hung over many of the Messianic prophecies until Christ Himself should remove it, Jehovah made His settled purpose concerning His Son clear and definite. In the face of man's opposition, Jehovah's solemn decree was that He would set His own King in Zion to subdue the rebellious princes of the earth, and this Anointed Ruler is His Son. Such is the declaration in the second Psalm. The Spirit's Testimony in the Second Psalm The second Psalm supplies a remarkable witness to the Sonship of Jehovah's King Who is appointed to reign in Zion and to exercise His dominion to the ends of the earth. Again, as we have seen in John 3:1-36 and 5 and 17, the Son is the Speaker concerning Himself. To none would we listen with greater delight and confidence! None more competent than He to speak of Himself and things appertaining to the Godhead. As He said to the Pharisees, "Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go" (John 8:14).

Going back to the earlier record before the Incarnation, we find the Spirit of Christ in the Psalmist saying, "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; I this day have begotten Thee." The "decree," which relates to the government of the world, is declared by the Speaker in the two verses that follow (Psalms 8:9); but in the words quoted the Speaker declares

(1) that Jehovah addressed Him as "My Son;" and (2) that Jehovah had "begotten" Him "this day."

Setting aside for the moment many other corroborative testimonies from Holy Writ, we learn from this precious record alone that when the world rises up in revolt against Jehovah, He, in foreknowledge or in prophecy or in fact, looks with undisturbed complacency upon His Son, saying, "Thou art My Son." In Him was Jehovah's resource for the glory of His name in the righteous government of His enemies. Accordingly, Jehovah decreed that in the appointed "day" the Son should be "begotten" for the execution of this purpose of breaking down the power of the rebellious nations with a rod of iron.*

{*It is claimed by some that this verse supports the theory that the Sonship of Christ began at His incarnation, as if the words, "Thou art My Son," had no retrospective application. But an instance of a similar statement used with a retrospective scope occurs in Genesis 49:3. Dying Jacob, foretelling his family history, said to Reuben, "Thou art my firstborn." But Reuben had stood in this relationship to Jacob for many years. In the nature of this case, the father's words could not signify that he was bestowing primogeniture upon him at the moment of speech. If this is plainly not the case in Genesis 49:3, why should it be said that it must be the case in Psalms 2:7?} The importance of the doctrine of this prophetic passage may be gauged by the fact that it is quoted no less than three times in the New Testament as a witness to the Sonship of God's Sent One (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5). It is desirable, therefore, to consider its meaning with the utmost care, seeking first of all to ascertain what is the subject of the Psalm in which it is found, and what light the context affords. The Theme of the Second Psalm

We realize at once that the atmosphere of the second Psalm is altogether different from that of the Fourth Gospel. In John, we breathe the love and glory of God displayed by the Son in a world of death and darkness; but in David the wrath of God and His unsparing judgment of the rebellious potentates of the earth are committed to the Son. In John, we have grace and truth, in David anger and woe. In both scriptures, God is seen acting by means of the Son, and in each of them the Son is presented in the character suited to the theme of the passage. The New Testament Gospel displays the Son given to reveal God's love to the world, and also the Father's love to those who receive His Son. But in the Old Testament Psalm, the Son is shown as the Executor of divine judgment upon the world which is in open revolt against Jehovah and His Anointed. In both the earlier and the later revelations the Son enters the sphere of man's sin, but while in the later, man's darkness and evil are met by the brazen serpent of grace (John 3:1-36), in the earlier, man's enmity against God is subdued by the iron rod of righteousness (Psalms 2:1-12). The theme, then, of the second Psalm is the subjugation of man's hostility to Jehovah and His Anointed by the crushing judgments of divine power. In connection with this scheme of government, it is revealed that the One Whom Jehovah salutes as His Son will possess the whole earth, and that the foes of the Lord will by Him be broken to shivers. The Son is here seen on the throne of Jehovah rather than in the bosom of the Father, as He is seen in the fourth Gospel. The Structure of the Second Psalm This Psalm is readily divisible, according to its subject, into four stanzas of three verses each, as follows: —

(1) The world's counsels against Jehovah (Psalms 2:1-3);

(2) Adonai's derision of man's plotting (Psalms 2:4-6);

(3) Jehovah’s decree of universal rule for His Son (Psalms 2:7-9) (4) Warning to kiss the Son before judgment comes (Psalms 2:10-12). The World Alliance

(1) The first stanza (Psalms 2:1-3) predicts the coalition of Israel* and the nations in defiant resistance to the claims of Jehovah and His Anointed. The united counsel of the earthly powers is to break their bands and cast away their cords. This prediction had its fulfilment in the union of Jews and Gentiles to crucify the Messiah, Jehovah’s Anointed, and was so quoted in the apostles prayer to the Lord (Acts 4:24-28). The evil alliance against Jehovah and His Christ foretold in this Psalm will have a further fulfilment in the future agreement between the apostate Jews and the head of the resuscitated fourth Gentile empire (Revelation 13:1-18).

{*It is to be noted that in this Psalm, Israel is viewed as submerged among the other nations, and not in the separateness Jehovah had given her. The conditions are those of utter moral disorder. The nation is regarded as "Lo-ammi" (Hosea 1:9). Jehovah no longer says, "Israel is My son" (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15). The Eternal Son takes Israel’s place in the earth both as Son and as Servant (Isaiah 42:1-25).} The King on Zion’s Hill

(2) This confederation of worldly powers to renounce all allegiance to Jehovah and His Christ is regarded with contempt (Psalms 2:4-6) by Adonai (Jehovah’s title as "Lord of all the earth"). He will speak unto them in His wrath from heaven (see Hebrews 12:25-26), and in face of their organized hostility to Jehovah and His Anointed He will establish His King upon Zion, His mountain of holiness. Thus the "counsel" of man’s might and wisdom comes to naught, and "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:22) in the face of man’s concerted insurrection against Him and His Christ has its fulfilment.

Sonship and Begetting

(3) In the third stanza (Psalms 2:7-9) , the Holy Spirit makes us privy to the deliberations of the divine council-chamber in respect of world-wide human evil. The Son declares the decree made for quelling the insurgents. No date is affixed to this solemn edict. Nor need we inquire When? and Where? The finite factors of time and locality do not apply to the decrees of God, which are formulated in eternity, whenever He may be pleased to reveal them to men: "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Does any scripture deny that this utterance came to the Son "before the foundation of the world"? Did it not come to the Son before it came to David by the prophetic Spirit? But whenever this decree was enunciated, the Son sets forth its terms in the words of Jehovah addressed to Himself. First, the dignity and competency of the Person to Whom the decree is committed are expressed in His Name; "Thou art My Son." The Son is the Name of Him appointed to execute judgment in the earth. It is ever the primary concern of the Holy Spirit that His essential glory should not seem to be diminished by the service He voluntarily undertakes. In like manner, when the Lord Jesus is seen in New Testament vision about to "judge and make war," it is recorded amid the recital of His many governmental glories that "His Name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). What He becomes mediatorially is not allowed to conceal what He is essentially; unexpectedly, as it were, the Holy Spirit recalls our hearts to remember the personal glory of the Son, when He shall tread the winepress of the fury and wrath of God Almighty. At the forefront of the decree, then, is the solemn affirmation of Sonship made by Jehovah to the Son Himself — the recognition of the Son as the absolute Interpreter of Jehovah’s counsel and the consummate Doer of His will in government.

Secondly. We pass in the next sentence from eternity to time, for "day" is a measure of time, not of eternity: "this day have I begotten Thee." Now we undoubtedly have the incarnation of the Son. It is the Old Testament description corresponding with the New Testament ones "The Word became flesh"; the "Son made of a woman"; "that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Taking the two sentences in their sequence ("Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"), their joint import seems to be that He Whom Jehovah, in timeless eternity, called His Son abode in that Filial relationship when begotten of Him in time: the Son then became incarnate, but maintained all that He had ever been as Son in the Godhead. If the truth had been otherwise, would not the order of the sentence have been inverted? Would not the act of begetting have preceded the salutation as Son, if He had become the Son by His incarnation? The order as it stands is highly significant.

Indeed the full truth and beauty of the Son’s own communication of this celestial purpose for the tumultuous earth will be entirely missed unless we mark its ordered steps.

(i) First, we must note the sublime satisfaction of Jehovah beholding the Son in His changeless fullness: "Thou art My Son": He was His ineffable delight, His efficient resource, His eternal Fellow (Zechariah 13:7). This expression of complacent regard by Jehovah for His Son is the basis of what follows in the next stanza concerning the government of the world. The construction in verse 7 seems to be analogous to many other verses in the Psalms, though usually the speaker in those parallel cases is a pious saint. For example, the psalmist exclaims, "Thou art my God"; by faith he recognizes the power and goodness of God. Encouraged by the sight, he then resolves, "early will I seek Thee" (Psalms 63:1). His purpose to seek God was formed on the basis of what God was to him already.

(ii) Here, too, in verse 7, the order of thought is that the second clause (His begetting) arises out of, or on the basis of the first (His Sonship). Because He was the Son, He was able to subdue the evil of man to the glory of Jehovah; therefore, to this end, He was, in the appointed day or season, "begotten" among men: "this day have I begotten Thee." Moreover, when become flesh, the Blessed One was still the Son, as the voice from heaven declared, not once only but twice (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). This voice at Jordan and on the Mount was witness of His Sonship after incarnation, as the Psalm gives the divine testimony before it. Jehovah speaks to His Son in Psalms 2:1-12, as He also does to His Servant in Isaiah 49:1-26. The denial of the pre-incarnate Sonship of our beloved Lord is an effort to place shutters upon the windows of revelation, which look on His glory in the eternal past. But "no prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20, W.K.), and having in mind the revelation of the Absolute Deity of the Son made in other parts of scripture, we believe that the concurrent truth conveyed in this stanza of the Psalm is that the Speaker did not begin to be the Son at His incarnation, but that His Sonship was unimpaired by His humiliation. The Eternal Sonship, blessed be God, was true in the beginning, is now, and ever will be. The Son is the revealed Name expressive of His essential nature in the Deity and not only of His mediatorial office.

Begetting or generation is associated in scripture with incarnation of the Son, but is never attributed to the Holy Spirit, Who did not "become flesh." The much-used term, "eternal generation," applied to the Son is without scriptural warrant, for how could the Deity of the Son be

derived from Another? or, how could the Eternal Sonship be bestowed by generation? But being the Son from all eternity, when born of the Virgin Mary, He could be called the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32).

Begetting in this Psalm is descriptive of the manner of the introduction into this world of Jehovah's Son Who came as the legitimate King in Zion to possess the ends of the earth. Jehovah's Anointed One would be David's Son and David's Lord. Yet when Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" (Matthew 22:42) not one of them had faith to refer back to Jehovah's words to Him, "Thou art My Son," recorded in this Psalm. His Sonship and His lowliness awakened their hatred, not their homage, and, in consequence, their eyes were blinded. The Request

(3) Jehovah invites His Son to ask for the heirship of the world: "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee nations for an inheritance, and for Thy possession the ends of the earth" (Psalms 2:8). This invitation contains a description of the decreed office of universal supremacy assigned to Him as Jehovah's Anointed in answer to the tumultuous raging of mankind against His claims when He comes into the world (vers. 1-3). A comparison of this verse with the Lord's words to the Father (in John 17:9) shows the difference already noted between the two dispensations of love and righteousness in connection with the Son. In the Psalm the world is in view; in the Gospel, those whom the Father has given to the Son "out of the world"; and the ways of God in government with the world were to be set aside for a while, and after the crucifixion of Christ and His ascension, the heavenly calling was to begin.

Consequently, at that point the Son does not prefer the request of Psalms 2:1-12. His heart is now set upon those to whom He will make known the Father's love. He says, "I request for them: not for the world do I request, but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine (and all My things are Thine, and Thy things Mine), and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9-10, W.K.).

We cannot forbear quoting the following remarks on this instructive petition. "It is concerning the disciples He [the Son] makes request, not for Israel nor the nations, not for the land nor the earth at large. It is no question of taking up the world for government or blessing now: He is occupied with the joint-heirs, not with the inheritance as yet. By and by, as Psalms 2:1-12 lets us know, Jehovah will say, Ask of Me, and I will give [Thee] the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

"But then the Son will reign on His holy hill of Zion, instead of being rejected on earth and received up on high. Then, instead of sustaining the suffering family of God who bear His reproach here below and wait for heavenly glory with Him, He will break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It will be, not the interval of the gospel as now, but the day of the kingdom in power and glory.

"Here the Lord is praying for His own as the precious gift of the Father to Himself, while cut off and having nothing that was promised Him here below; and He asks the more, because they were the Father's.

"But it may be well to say that this gives occasion for a parenthetic statement which lets out much of the light of His personal glory: 'and all My things are Thine, and Thy things Mine.' As the Son of David, the Messiah, could this reciprocity have been so expressed? Is it not evidently and only in

virtue of His being the Eternal Son, one with the Father, that They have rights and interests no less boundless than common?" (Exposition of the Gospel of John, by W. Kelly). The Warning, "Kiss the Son"

(4) There is given in the concluding stanza (Psalms 2:10-12) a general warning to kings and judges of the earth in respect to Jehovah and His Anointed, Whose authority they have despised (vers. 1-3). They are admonished to "serve Jehovah with fear," and to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry." To "kiss" is to do homage to the Son as the King of kings and Lord of lords; so Samuel kissed Saul when he was anointed king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1); though himself a prophet he acknowledged the sovereignty conferred upon the son of Kish.

It is remarkable that in this phrase an unusual word is used in the original for "Son." In verse 7, the more frequent Hebrew word, ben, occurs, but in verse 12 it is bar. The latter is a Chaldaic or Aramaic form, found untranslated in some New Testament proper names, such as Bar-jona, Bar-tholomew, and others. In the Old Testament, bar is translated "son" in Ezra 5:1-2; Ezra 6:14; Daniel 5:22. But in view of the infallible precision of scripture in its jots and tittles, the question arises why this exceptional term, bar, is employed in the address to the nations (ver. 12), while the more regular term, ben, is used by Jehovah in addressing His Son (ver. 7). The inspired variation must be due to an important distinction. And the explanation seems to be that the latter, ben, correctly expresses the Son in the glory of His essential Being in the eyes of Jehovah, as the former, bar, expresses with equal correctness His Sonship as seen by the world when He, the Son of man, is manifested in the glory of His kingdom.

If elsewhere we find bar applied to the Lord as the Governor of the nations, this interpretation of it will be corroborated. And we do find it so applied in Daniel’s vision of the Messianic kingdom which will eventually supersede the four great Gentile kingdoms. The prophet sees the Son of man come to the Ancient of days to receive an everlasting kingdom over all peoples, and bar is the word for Son in the passage describing what he saw (Daniel 7:13-14). As the subject of the prophecy agrees with that of the Psalm, the occurrence of bar in both scriptures is highly significant.

Once again we find the word in Daniel. The One walking in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrews is described as "like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25). Here also bar is the word rendered "Son."* In all three cases, the special word is connected with the times of Gentile supremacy. How gracious the admonition to the nations, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way"! For when the Son of man shall come in His glory, all nations shall be gathered before the throne of His glory for judgment; and who shall escape "when His wrath is kindled but a little"? (Matthew 25:31-46).

{*The use of bar for Son in these places is the more striking, because in other passages where the title, "Son of man," occurs, as in Psalms 8:4; Psalms 144:3, bar is not used, but ben.}

We find then in this Psalm a testimony by Jehovah to the Absolute Sonship of Him Who was begotten in time that He might as the Son of man inherit the earth, ruling the riotous peoples with a rod of iron and blessing all those that put their trust in Him.

"Hosanna to the King of kings,

The great Incarnate Word,

Ten thousand songs and glories wait

The coming of our Lord.

"Thy victories and Thine endless fame

Through the wide world shall run

And everlasting ages sing

The triumphs Thou hast won."

01.08. New Testament use of the Second Psalm

New Testament use of the Second Psalm

We have already considered the Psalmist's remarkable testimony to the Sonship of Jehovah's Anointed One, recorded in the words of the Son Himself: "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." First, Jehovah makes the unqualified acknowledgment ("Thou art My Son") of a relationship in the Deity before the foundation of the world. Then, Jehovah says next, "This day have I begotten Thee." In this clause He specifies an epoch or point of time, "this day," in which the Son's birth takes place.

Jehovah's King, therefore, was Jehovah's Son before He was begotten in time, and appeared among men to establish Zion's long-promised kingdom of righteousness and peace. This Anointed One came into the house and lineage of David by no ordinary procedure. And while He was truly the Son of David because Mary, of David's royal line, was "found with child of the Holy Ghost," He was with equal truth David's Lord (Adonai) because He was Jehovah's Son from all eternity. As born into the world, He was that Son; while before that birth He was the Son, a fact which could be true of no creature, and of none beside Himself. The truth of the eternal Sonship bestows an exalted and incomparable character upon the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, and the fact of His personal glory as Son of Jehovah aggravated Israel's sin of rejecting Him beyond description. The Messiah sent to them was not only Jehovah's Servant, Whose exceptional dignity and excellence Isaiah depicts, but Jehovah's Son, as David by the Spirit testified in this Second Psalm. Jehovah sent Him as Servant to collect the fruit of the vineyard, but as His Son to receive the reverence of the husbandmen, saying, "They will reverence My Son" (Matthew 21:37). But in wicked unbelief, the nation despised the Sent One as Servant and crucified Him as Son.

Parabolically, was not the Sent One the Son of the Lord of the vineyard before He was despatched on His errand? Was He not in the parable presented as the Son abiding in reserve till other lesser means had been tried with the husbandmen, and had failed? Most truly so; He came to them, not as a Son newly become such and provided for the occasion, but in His own inherent personal right. This the husbandmen knew, for they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him." And their crime against the Son, not the murder of the Lord's servants from Abel to Zacharias, was the specific cause of the wrath of God, that fell upon them to the uttermost (Matthew 21:33-41; Matthew 23:34-36).

We will now look at the citations of Psalms 2:7, found in the New Testament, and, by marking the connection in which they are quoted, seek to discover the special significance of the prophetic words as they are there brought forward. The passage is once quoted by Paul in a spoken discourse to Jews in the synagogue at Antioch (Acts 13:33) and twice in his Epistle to Hebrew confessors of Christ (Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5). In all three cases we shall find that the purpose of the quotation is to establish the Sonship of the Messiah on the basis and authority of the divine utterance recorded in the Second Psalm. The One Whom God sent, not only came to exercise His mediatorial functions as the Begotten-One of Jehovah, but was Son in His own personal right

before that day of His incarnation. Oh, how great the sin to refuse such a One as He!

(1) God’s promises are fulfilled in the Son

Paul announced to the congregation of Jews in the synagogue at Antioch that God had brought to Israel, of the seed of David, a Saviour Jesus (Acts 13:23). He showed that though the nation rejected and slew Him, God had raised Him from the dead, and that now there was forgiveness, and also justification for all those who believe. But a brief examination of the structure of his discourse shows that the apostle’s appeal to the audience rested upon the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, which truth was from the first the special feature of Paul’s ministry (Acts 9:20), in distinction from Peter’s preaching, setting forth the crucified Nazarene glorified in heaven. The Structure of Paul’s Address

After alluding to the Jewish national history from the land of Egypt to the reign of David, the apostle declared that the raising up of Jesus was the actual fulfilment of God’s promise of a Saviour for them. He referred to three main historical facts concerning Christ: —

(1) His forerunner (Acts 13:24-25);

(2) His advent and His crucifixion at Jerusalem (Acts 13:27-29) (3) His resurrection (Acts 13:30-31). In connection with their rejection of the "Saviour Jesus," Paul mentioned two of its moral features. By denying and slaying Him, they (a) were guilty of the sin of ignorance (Acts 13:27) and (b) had fulfilled the scripture in condemning Him (Acts 13:27, Acts 13:29). The same two features are found in Peter’s charge against the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 3:17-18). The Quotation of Old Testament Scripture

Having thus briefly stated what was true historically, the apostle in Acts 13:32-37 applied to two out of these three facts the light of the Spirit’s witness in the Old Testament. Passing over (i) the prophecies of old, relating to the Baptist as the forerunner of the Saviour, he adduced the written witness of the divine oracles to the personal glory of Jesus Whom God had raised up. (2) In Him, said the apostle, was the fulfilment of the promise: "as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts 13:33).

Then the apostle applied further scripture to the third historical point also (3) — to His resurrection (Acts 13:34-37). The raising of Jesus from the dead no more to return to corruption was foreshadowed in Isaiah 55:3; Psalms 89:1, Psalms 89:19; Psalms 16:10. This prophecy, Paul said, could not refer to David, and is therefore fulfilled in his Seed.

Mark now, in the light of this preceding context, the force of Paul’s exhortation which follows: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins . . ." (Acts 13:38). The index-finger of the inspired speaker was pointing to "this Man." Paul was setting forth One to Whom, as he showed, both recent history and ancient prophecy had witnessed. It was recent history that Jesus was born in the city of David, was hanged on a tree outside Jerusalem, and was laid in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea. This was the apostle’s brief description of the "raising up" of the One in Whom the promises of God were Yea and Amen, and of His reception by those to whom He came. But what had the Psalmist said concerning the Messianic King? David recorded an echo of His personal glory out of the timeless past. Before all worlds Jehovah had saluted the Coming One. Jehovah did not say to

Him, "Thou art My King," or "Thou art My Anointed," and thus, because of the majesty of the Giver, magnify the mediatorial office given Him, but Jehovah said to Him, "Thou art My Son," dwelling only upon His personal relation in the Deity.

We learn from the doctrine of the Incarnation as it is foreshadowed in this verse of the Psalm that the Person gives unique dignity to the office. When the Son becomes the Servant, how that service is magnified! Let us consider this word of prophecy a little further. The Application of the Second Psalm The apostle, by this quotation, established the identity of "this Man," Whom he was announcing, with Jehovah's Son, foretold by the Spirit. The One Whom God "raised up" to fulfil His promise had been personally indicated in this prophecy. The Jesus of the Gospels is the Son of the Second Psalm. Jesus, "of the seed of David according to the flesh," was the Son of Jehovah in His own proper, personal, and underived nature, to Whom Jehovah said, "Thou art My Son."

It will be observed that the second member of Psalms 2:7, "this day have I begotten Thee," also bears with illuminating effect upon the fulfilment of the promise made to the people of Israel. As the first part intimated Who would fulfil the promise (the "Son"), so the second shows the manner of its fulfilment (His incarnation). The fulfilment of the promise is plainly declared to be in His "raising up." The apostle's words are, God has "raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (ver. 23) , and "God hath fulfilled the same . . . in that He raised up Jesus" (Acts 13:33, R.V. the adverb "again," is to be omitted). This "raising up," or bringing into the world, satisfied the prediction, "This day have I begotten Thee." By His incarnation, He Who was the Eternal Son was in due time "born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). The context of Acts 13:1-52, then, in which this quotation appears, when duly weighed, makes it clear at what time the predicted "begetting" of the Psalm took place. Paul's audience were instructed that it took place at that point of time when Jehovah's Son appeared in the line of promise. From David onwards, the Messianic seed was preserved and continued in unbroken succession until Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as the genealogies in Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:1-38 show. By that birth, Jehovah introduced His Son into the royal line of promise, and the written word, which had long been awaiting fulfilment, became true in fact: "This day have I begotten Thee."

"Raising up" and Resurrection

Some confusion in the interpretation of this verse (Acts 13:33) and of the one following has arisen through the unwarranted assumption that "raising up" signifies resurrection, when it is a rendering of the Greek verb, anisteemi. On this ground, it is argued that because this verb occurs in the two verses (Acts 13:33-34) , the resurrection of the Lord must be referred to in each case. But this inference will not bear examination. In the latter verse (Acts 13:34) , it is so, because its meaning is restricted by the qualifying phrase, "from the dead." When we read, "He raised Him from the dead," the resurrection of Christ is certainly stated. But the general meaning of the Greek verb is that of setting a person, or causing him to stand, in a certain position or office. And the verb is employed in this general sense in Acts 13:33 : the Lord Jesus was set in the position of the Fulfiller of the promise: "God . . . hath raised up Jesus" (the R.V. omits "again"). The same verb is used in this general sense in Acts 3:22 also, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you" and again in Acts 3:26, "To you first God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him . . ." These two passages do not refer to the resurrection of Christ, neither is there anything in their contextual subject to restrict its meaning to that event, as there is in Acts 2:24, Acts 2:30, Acts 2:32, where

undoubtedly Peter’s subject is the resurrection of the Lord. But in verse 34 of this chapter, the phrase, "from the dead," confines the application of "raising up" to the particular act of resurrection. In like manner, it may be observed that a different verb, egeiro, is used with and without a qualifying clause in verses 22 and 30. In the former case, the significance is the general one, "He raised up unto them David." But in the latter the reference is to the resurrection of Christ which is shown by adding the modifying clause, "God raised Him from the dead." The resurrection, then, was God’s answering act to the guilt of the Jews, who slew the Fulfiller of His promise. He by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus secured to them "the sure mercies of David," so that it is to the raised One, Who is "no more to return to corruption," that the apostle applies the further scriptures quoted from Isaiah and Psalms 16:1-11. In the Holy One raised up from the dead the confirmation of the promises was made objectively. And "through this Man" was preached the good news of the forgiveness of sins, and of justification from all things for all that believe.

What a mighty demonstration the apostle gave! The truth of the Sonship of Jehovah’s Anointed is the sure foundation on which the whole fabric of God’s grace and God’s government is reared. And it was to this One that Paul’s testimony was rendered at Antioch of Pisidia in the deafened ears of unconverted Jews. Moreover, seeing his hearers still refused to believe on the Son of God, the apostle turned the gospel invitation to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46), according to the saying of Jehovah to His Servant, Who is His Son (Isaiah 42:6; Acts 13:47).

(2) The more excellent name of son In the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the quotation from Psalms 2:1-12 is introduced by the Holy Spirit to establish the personal glory of God’s Spokesman Who has appeared in these days. The Epistle presents to the believing Hebrews a goodly array of witnesses from their scriptures concerning Christ and His work. Standing at the head of that noble line of unimpeachable testimony is Jehovah’s own utterance to Him: "Thou art My Son this day have I begotten Thee" (Hebrews 1:5). By these words quoted from the holy oracles in the opening statement of the Epistle, it is proved that God has last of all, "spoken to us [in the person of the] Son" (vers. 1, 2). One had now appeared Who inherits the "more excellent name" of Son. Others among His predecessors had borne the title of prophet or priest or king. Angels, too, had been intermediaries of divine communications, and that One, more distinguished than them all, "the Angel of Jehovah," had at times spoken to men in the past. But now, God has spoken to us in the Son.

Angels Superior to Man but Inferior to the Son

We know that in the various grades of created beings the angels have a status superior to that of man (Psalms 8:5). Is Jesus Christ to be ranked in the angelic order? Nay, the Holy Spirit will not permit such a debasing thought even to arise in our hearts through lack of instruction. He witnesses of the Lord Jesus that, having made purification of sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, become "so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a name more excellent than they" (W.K.). He has become "much better" now, as in the past His name was "more excellent," than the dignitaries of the heavenly host. This testimony, like that of Stephen’s, is concerning Jesus Who is now in the glory of God. He Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death is now exalted, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." But along with this glorious investiture on high, displaying how He is lifted far above angels, the Holy Spirit couples His intrinsic worth founded upon the truth of His Person and Name.

The Name exists before all titles, and is the basis on which the titles rest for comparative dignity. The Son has "become so much better than the angels," not merely by reason of the acquired glories attendant upon the eternal redemption He has obtained for us, but by reason of what He is essentially in contrast with all the angels. He has "inherited a more excellent name than they." He possesses in His own personal right the name of Son, which angels do not. No doubt, the "more excellent name," besides "Son," includes "God" and "Jehovah," as shown later in the chapter (vers. 8, 10), but we are just now concerned with the first only of these names. The "Excellence" of non-creation

What then is the peculiar "excellence" or superiority of the name, "Son," as belonging to God's Spokesman? Taken in the sense of derivation by creation, "son" is elsewhere applied to the angels (Job 2:1; Job 38:7). They, in virtue of their origin as intelligent beings and "ministering spirits," appointed to the service of heaven (Psalms 103:20), are as a class described as the sons of God, Who "is a Spirit." The One presented in Hebrews 1:1-14 is Son also, but we are warned by the Holy Spirit that in His case it has a significance of pre-eminence that theirs has not. He is the Son in His own eternal right, while the angels are sons by reason of the status and functions assigned to them as created spirits in the scheme of creation. They, as sons to a father, owe their intelligent existence to God, as creatures to the Creator. The corroborative quotation made from the Second Psalm establishes the immeasurable superiority of the Eternal Son above all the angels, though they be called "sons of God." "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" Jehovah saluted the Son as Son in the eternal immutable relations of the Deity. No angel, not even one of this most exalted order of created beings, was ever addressed by God in such a manner. To Adam who was a son of God by divine inbreathing or to an angel who was a son of God as a created spirit, God might say, after he was brought into being, "Thou art My son"; but it seems incredible that God should say this to either of them before he came into the sphere of creation. But Jehovah could and did address His own Son in this manner. And the entire force of the quotation from the Psalm depends upon its unique application to the Son, Who was the Eternal Son without begetting, and of Whom it was, therefore, true before His begetting in time as the Incarnate Son. By this conclusive witness, the personal glory of the One in Whom God has spoken is maintained. The Son does not differ from the angels merely in degree, as an archangel might differ from the hosts of angels he governs; the immeasurable difference is that between the Eternal Uncreated Son and those who became the sons of God by their creation. And when He is "begotten" in time, and is made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, His eternal relationship of Son in the Deity remains unimpaired. He does not acquire the name of Son by reason of the mediatorial functions assigned to Him, but inherits and retains it in His own personal right.

(3) The eternal sonship and the priesthood

Psalms 2:7 is a powerful witness to the Eternal Personality of the Son and of His incarnation as the Christ. In Hebrews 1:1-14 the passage is cited in connection with the One in Whom God has come down to us; it is again cited in Hebrews 5:5, but here in connection with our approach to God, for which we need the priesthood of Christ. "Jesus, the Son of God," is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession: as Apostle He has come from God to us, and fully declared Him: as High Priest, we come unto God by Him. He is God and man in one Person, and He is therefore unique in His competency to represent both God to man and man to God. This twofold truth in its divine

fullness is the special topic presented variously in this Epistle. In Hebrews 5:1-14 the subject is the induction of Christ into the office of priesthood, considered in relation with Aaron's. God made the appointments to the Levitical office, choosing Aaron as the head of the priestly line. No one took the honour of priesthood to himself, as Korah sought to do. Neither did our Lord usurp this office. In His subjection to God's authority, Christ Jesus was perfect. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience" in all things. In the matter of assuming the office of priesthood, His submissiveness was manifest also. "Thus the Christ also glorified not Himself to be made high priest, but He that spoke unto Him, Thou art My Son; I to-day have begotten Thee; even as He saith also in another [place], Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek" (W.K.) Christ did not glorify Himself to the priesthood, but was glorified to that office by Another, and to a priestly office superior in its "order" to that of Aaron.

Why are there two Quotations from the Psalms?

Who, then, glorified Him? The two passages cited from the Psalms (2 and 110) show that Jehovah made this appointment. It was Jehovah Who said to Him, "Thou art My Son," and also, "Thou art a Priest." In the case of Aaron, Jehovah said to Moses, "Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother . . . that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office" (Exodus 28:1). But in glorifying Christ there was no mediator, for Jehovah spoke direct to His Son, saying, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This verse from Psalms 110:1-7 appears to be quoted with express reference to the preceding statement that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest." Why, then, is the quotation from Psalms 2:1-12 interposed? Is not the Holy Spirit citing His own witness to those personal glories of the Son which were antecedent to His priesthood? Before saluting Him as High Priest, Jehovah had in eternity addressed Him as "My Son." And before He was made High Priest, He was "begotten" in the fullness of time, becoming the Incarnate Son. In His incarnation He is named Jesus; in His own proper Person, His Eternal Name, He is the Son of God; and, blending these glories, it is as "Jesus, the Son of God," that we see our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).

Brief Summary

We have endeavoured, in the light of the context in which each of the four occurrences is found, to ascertain the special significance of this marvellous passage. As the pure gold woven into the ephod of the high priest gave unity, strength, value, and permanence to the whole texture, so the Eternal Sonship is in these fourfold testimonies closely and inextricably woven together with Jehovah's Begotten One. Like His seamless coat, His divine and human glories may be said to be "woven from the top."

(1) In the Second Psalm, Jehovah commits the righteous government of the insurgent world-kingdoms to His Anointed King, Who is His Son in absolute personal relationship, and in due season Jehovah begets Him that He may sit on His holy hill of Zion in governmental power and glory.

(2) In Acts 13:1-52, the theme is the fulfilment of the Davidic promises in "Jesus" Whom God raised up, sending Him to His own people, who rebelliously crucified Him. The Person Who came is He of Whom the Psalmist wrote. "Jesus," Whom they had crucified, was Jehovah's Son and Jehovah's Begotten One, in accordance with that witness from their own oracles.

(3) In Hebrews 1:1-14, the personal glories of the One in Whom God now speaks are unfolded in view of the disappearance of the temporary Mosaic system, "ordained by angels." The Son is in exalted contrast with angels, inasmuch as He is addressed as "My Son" by the One Who alone knew the personal relations subsisting in the Deity.

(4) In Hebrews 5:1-14, it is shown that Christ is called or saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, an order not successional like the Aaronic. To this order Christ is glorified in virtue of His Eternal Sonship, which is verified by Psalms 2:7, where both His pre-incarnate glory and His advent in flesh are presented for the faith and adoration of those who confess His Name.

01.09. Image and Firstborn One

Image and Firstborn One The Firstborn is a title of exalted pre-eminence which the Holy Spirit gives to the Son in order to enhance the majesty of His Person in our eyes, and thereby to awaken and sustain our adoration and worship of Him Who deigned to humble Himself to manhood and death for the Father’s glory and the creature’s redemption. The highest orders of created beings worship the Son at the divine behest. "When He bringeth in the Firstborn into the inhabited earth, He saith, And let all God’s angels worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6, W.K.). If God in His jealousy for the honour of the Son commands the angels to own and respect the personal rights of the Firstborn, we may be sure that the redeemed must and will gladly yield to Him their unbounded adoration, not only as the Firstborn of all creation, but as the Firstborn from among the dead (Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:18). Who will question the Firstborn rights of the Son? Among men the rights of the firstborn are acquired by priority of birth, but the Son possesses those rights on other and superior grounds. Unlike the sons of men, His rights are independent of date of birth. In Himself, He is "without beginning," though at an appointed moment of time He became manifest among men, the Mediator between God and men. It is His eternal worth and dignity as the Uncreated Son of the Father’s love which ensures to Him in humiliation and glorification alike the pre-eminent rank of Firstborn — a rank infinitely superior to the loftiest of created beings, in which rank all created beings must in due time acknowledge Him.

What sacred and soul-elevating truth is this concerning Him, the Creator of all, Who, nevertheless, would "like wretched man be made in everything but sin!" May we guard our souls, lest being "vainly puffed up" in our "fleshly minds," we should omit to bow our hearts in adoring homage before these eternal glories of our Redeemer. Can we do other than worship the Son, Who is the Firstborn of all creation, the Firstborn from among the dead, the Firstborn among many brethren?

Let us now see how the glories and rights of the Image of the invisible God and the Firstborn One have their origin in and rest upon His Eternal Sonship. The Teaching in Colossians

It is noteworthy that in scripture, the glories of Christ Jesus are frequently revealed in close connection with the privileges of grace conferred upon those who believe in Him. Accordingly, in Colossians these glories are disclosed along with references to our inheritance, our deliverance, our translation, our redemption. Here this Blessed One is set before us as the Son of the Father’s love, the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:12-17) — to mention no more at the moment.

Indeed, the glories of the Son form a marvellous galaxy in this chapter. Look where we will — in the past, in the present, in the future — the Son in His sublime and unapproachable dignity is before us. If, looking back, we ask, Who created all things? It is the Son (ver. 16). If, looking upwards, we ask, Who is the Head of the body, the church? It is the Son (ver. 18). If, looking onward, we ask, Who is the Reconciler of all things? It is the Son (ver. 20). So that, from the foundation of the world we see an unbroken continuance of the almighty and all-gracious activities of the Son of the Father’s love, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

{*Appendix C

"The Son is here presented to us as Creator, not to the exclusion of the Father’s power, nor of the operation of the Spirit. They are One, but it is the Son Who is here set before us. In John 1 it is the Word Who creates all things. Here, and in Hebrews 1:1-14, it is under the name of Son that He, Who is also the Word, is revealed to us. He is the Word of God, the expression of His thought and of His power. It is by Him that God works and reveals Himself.

"He is also the Son of God; and, in particular, the Son of the Father. He reveals God, and he who has seen Him has seen the Father. Inasmuch as born in this world by the operation of God through the Holy Ghost, He is the Son of God (Psalms 2:7; Luke 1:35). But this is in time, when creation is already the scene of the manifestation of the ways and counsels of God.

"But the Son is also the name of the proper relationship of His glorious Person to the Father before the world was. It is in this character that He created all things. The Son is to be glorified even as the Father. . . .

"In the Epistle to the Colossians that which is set before us is the proper glory of His Person as the Son before the world was. He is the Creator as the Son. It is important to observe this. But the Persons are not separated in their manifestation. If the Son wrought miracles on earth, He cast out devils by the Spirit; and the Father Who dwells in Him (Christ) did the works.

"Also it must be remembered that that which is said, is said, when He was manifested in the flesh, of His complete Person, Man upon earth. Not that we do not in our minds separate between the divinity and the humanity; but even in separating them we think of the one Person with regard to Whom we do so. We say Christ is God, Christ is man; but it is Christ Who is the two.

"I do not say this theologically, but to draw the reader’s attention to the remarkable expression, ’All the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him.’ All the fullness of the Godhead was found in Christ."

{J.N.D.’s Synopsis, (Colossians 1:1-29).}

It is no small benefit to our souls thus to be conducted by the Holy Spirit through the dim corridors of past ages to the utmost boundary of time itself — to that point when created things were about to be brought into being. There and then, existing in His omnipotence "before all things," we see the One by Whom were created all things, the Son of the Father’s love. Before creation’s work begins, love is present and active for the Father is loving the Son, before Love’s hands formed all existing things. This is the faith of God’s elect, and in this "thought beyond all thought" we humbly adore the Son, Who is "before all" things, and in Whom all things "subsist together" (Colossians 1:17). The Lord’s Glory gives us Power to Walk Worthily

These unfoldings of the personal glories of the Son flow out of the apostle’s prayer for the Colossian saints that in hostile circumstances they might walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing (Colossians 1:10). Much suffering was inevitable for those who would be faithful to His name, and they needed a support greater than anything nature could provide. His desire for them, therefore, was that they might be "strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11). As we learn the glory of Him Who suffered preeminently, our loins will be girded to suffer with Him. Beholding the glory of the Son of the Father’s love, we are impelled to exclaim like Peter, "Lord, I am ready to go with

Thee both into prison, and to death."

Accordingly, the apostle proceeds to instruct them concerning (1) the positive blessings the Father had already bestowed upon them, and (2) the personal dignities of the Son, by Whom those blessings are secured. In the midst of their Christian hardships, they were exhorted to maintain a spirit of thanksgiving to the Father by contemplating these things of the Spirit’s revealing.

What had the Father already done for them? They were even then made fit to share the portion of the saints in light, the dwelling-place of God (Colossians 1:12). Even then, the measure of the holiness imparted to them qualified them to occupy a place in the Father’s house. Let them and us give thanks to the Father for this act of grace.

Consistently with this present meetness for the home of light, they were delivered from the authority of darkness. Further, as they had been set free from the power of darkness, so they had also been transferred to another dominion altogether. He has already translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). For all this divine activity let us indeed give thanks to the Father, being strengthened "unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" as we behold the glory of the Son. The Kingdom of the Son of His Love This kingdom into which we have been translated is not that foretold by the prophets, in which divine power suppresses evil and rewards good, because the saints at Colosse were suffering through the presence and power of evil, and were called to exhibit patience, long-suffering and joy. John, the prisoner of the Lord, in Patmos was also in that same kingdom (Revelation 1:9). This is the kingdom wherein the Father places His children that they may learn how to exhibit the patience and meekness of Christ. It is the kingdom whose atmosphere is love, not yet glory and governmental power.

Here, the Father’s love is revealed to us in and by the Son; and here, too, in this kingdom the Father reveals the personal glories of the Son, which flesh and blood can never know nor reveal (Matthew 16:17). To all who have been translated into this happy kingdom of light, the Son of the Father’s love is the food of their faith, the stay of their hope, and the satisfying portion of their love.

Moreover, this privileged position which the Father has given us is due to the Son; we are reminded that it is in Him "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (ver. 14). What the Father has given to us is the result of the Son’s atoning work for us. Let us therefore give thanks to both the Father and the Son. The Image of the Invisible God

Further, the apostle writes that the Son of the Father’s love "is the Image of the invisible God." As John says, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). An "image" denotes a visible representation of the invisible or absent.* The Son, in the eternal light of His Person in the Godhead, is the Image of the invisible God. He did not acquire this competency of representation by creation, as Adam did, who "out of the dust of the ground" was created in the image and glory of God (Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:7). Man, though made a little lower than the angels, was the appointed representative of his Maker in the world. But the Son is the Creator, and being God, He, as the Image of God, sets Him forth with an infinite fullness inseparable from His personal glory as the Son, which was His before He became flesh.

{*The root-idea of representation in the word "image" is well illustrated in the incident of our Lord and the Roman penny or denarius (Matthew 22:20). Pointing to the effigy of the emperor upon the

coin, He asked the Pharisees, "Whose is this image?" The effigy or bust was the official representation of the Imperial authority in Rome, governing in Palestine. The presence of this piece of money in the hands of the Jews, as current coin, unanswerably proved their subjection to the world-ruler in the distant metropolis, who was represented upon its face.} Divinity and Deity

Something was to be known of God in the world before Christ came into it. The existence of an unseen God, the Maker of all, may be inferred by man from the phenomena of created things (Romans 1:19-20). The works of creation give a powerful and indisputable witness to His eternal power and divinity (theiotees), though not to His Godhead or Deity (theotees). But all the fullness of the Godhead (theotees) dwelt in Christ (Colossians 2:9). The Son is the Image of the invisible God, is love and light. The Son is the effulgence of God’s glory and the very impress of His substance or being (Hebrews 1:3). He is "God, blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5).*

{*All that God is in substance and supremacy, scripture attributes equally to the Son as to the Father and to the Spirit. Much help is afforded by a valuable comment on Romans 9:5, by W. Kelly in his Notes on Romans, pp. 165-171.} As the Son knew and enjoyed in fullest measure the love of the Father before the foundation of the world (John 17:24) , He displays the Father’s love in the kingdom of His saints; moreover, being the Image of the invisible God, He displays God’s love to a world of sinners (2 Corinthians 4:4). Being Son, He is the Image or Representative, not merely by reason of His official appointment as Mediator, but by reason of His own Personal and eternal nature as the Son.

Sonship and Image This title of "Image" is in scripture applied to the Son exclusively and is never applied to the Father, nor to the Spirit. The Son is that One in Deity Who represents and manifests God to His creatures. Coming into the world, He revealed the only true God to human sight and human knowledge, as none else could do (cp. John 17:3). And in accordance with the prophecy spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, the virgin’s Son was called Immanuel, that is, "God with us" (Matthew 1:22-23). In the Holy Babe, Whose name was called Jesus, God was manifest in flesh; He is the Image of the invisible God.

It should be remarked that in the language of the Holy Spirit the Son is not said to become or to be made the Image, as He is said to become of David’s seed (Romans 1:3) , or High Priest (Hebrews 6:20) , nor as the Word was made or became flesh (John 1:14). The present tense is used in Colossians 1:15, as in John 1:18, which reveals His bosom-relationship to the Father; He is the invisible Image of the invisible God. This mode of statement is the more striking, seeing that it was when manifest in flesh that He was seen of men and angels as the Image of the unseen God.

Surely there is "dust of gold" lying in this grammatical distinction, and the personal glory of the Son is revealed in this choice of words by the Spirit. God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, became of David’s seed according to flesh when born in time (Romans 1:3) , stepping into this relationship at His incarnation, as Matthew 1:1-25 shows. But, because of His divine relationship in the Godhead, the Son was potentially the Image of the invisible God from all eternity; and the use of the present tense — "is" — supports this interpretation, and magnifies His glory to that extent. Do not "the eyes of our hearts" (Ephesians 1:18) discern an infinite difference between Adam who was created in the image of God and the uncreated Son of the Father’s love being the Image of the invisible God And does not this difference lie in the Person Who was pleased to represent and to manifest God in the creation groaning under the effects of sin? In "flesh" was the manner of this

representation, but the Eternal Son was always and is ever personally competent to declare God, though it was when incarnate that the manifestation was made to man, and is now recorded in the scriptures. So that the Son was the Image of the invisible God de jure in eternity, and de facto in time. And even now, the ascended Christ, "Who is the Image of God," shines upon men in the gospel of His glory (2 Corinthians 4:4).

"Thou vast the Image in man’s lowly guise

Of the Invisible to mortal eyes;

Son of His bosom, come from heaven above,

We see in Thee incarnate, ’God is Love.’

Thy lips the Father’s name to us reveal;

What burning power in all Thy words we feel,

As with enraptured hearts we hear Thee tell

The heavenly glories which Thou know’st so well!"

01.10. The Firstborn

The Firstborn In Colossians 1:1-29, the Son’s title, "Firstborn of all creation," is closely associated with that of "Image of the invisible God." The Son of the Father’s love is, in a single sentence, declared to be both the one and the other: "Son of His love . . . Who is Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of all creation." In relation to the Godhead or Deity He is the Image, and in relation to all created things He is the Firstborn; moreover, both these relations are combined in His blessed Person, from which they each take their incomparable character. It is the Son Who is Image and Who is Firstborn.

Representation and dignity underlie these two relations of the Son respectively. In sending His Son into the world, the love of God in respect of us has been manifested (1 John 4:9) for the Son of the Father’s love is the Image of the invisible God, representing and displaying Him Who is love.

Also, when that Son is "found in fashion as a man," He is ranked as "Firstborn," for the whole creation pales into insignificance in comparison with the all-surpassing glory of His Person even as, in the essential nature of things, He Who builds the house has much more honour than the house itself (Hebrews 3:3). The Creator-Son possesses the dignity of "Firstborn" when by incarnation He enters the sphere of His own creation. This dignity is His inherent right as the Son.

What does "Firstborn" mean?

It is to be noted at the outset that, when applied to the Lord Jesus, "Firstborn" or "First-begotten" is not followed by "Son"; so that we do not read in scripture of "Firstborn Son" as we do of the "Only-begotten Son." We learn, therefore, that the Eternal One Whom we worship is the Firstborn because He is the Son: "His Son . . . Who is . . . Firstborn." The Son takes the title of "Firstborn" in His own inherent right of Sonship, eternally possessed, and not as a title acquired by priority of birth or beginning of existence. He is not the Firstborn, because He was the first to be born. In scriptural usage, the term "firstborn" signifies pre-eminent rights with regard to paternal authority, status, property, and the like. It means, therefore, first of rank in the family, and this foremost rank may or may not arise from order of birth or primogeniture (see 1 Chronicles 26:10). For example, Jacob used the term "firstborn" in this general sense of dignified excellence when blessing his unworthy eldest son, Reuben: "Thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power" (Genesis 49:3). Such was the precedence in rank that the title of "firstborn" gave Reuben over the other sons of Jacob, though in his case its value to him and his descendants was to a great extent lost through his own sinful failure.

Now, it will be seen from the context of Colossians 1:15 that supremacy and excellence are inseparably associated with the use of the title of "Firstborn" in this passage. The reason why the Son of the Father’s love is "Firstborn of all creation" is plainly stated: it is "because by Him were created all things." The Son’s degree of superiority is that elevation which the Creator possesses above His own creation. Because the Son made the earth and the heavens, He necessarily, when He appears for our redemption, takes the dignity of "Firstborn" in relation to the earth and the

heavens and to all contained in them. The Firstborn not always the one Born first

Amongst men, priority of birth usually bestows the firstborn rights, but not always. According to the natural order of birth, Esau possessed the birthright, yet it was transferred to Jacob the younger. Although David had many sons of earlier birth than Solomon (1 Chronicles 3:1-24), yet the regal successional rights to the throne of David were granted to the latter. This is a striking instance, for on that account Solomon appears in the Messianic pedigree, traced through Abraham and David (Matthew 1:6), though he was not the eldest son of David (cf. 1 Kings 2:22). It was God's sovereign grace that conferred this high distinction of "firstborn" upon the son of David and Bathsheba (Psalms 89:27), showing that primogeniture was not always followed for firstborn rights. Solomon was not the first to be born of the sons of David, yet he became the firstborn in the royal family, and inherited the crown of Israel.

Again, we find this distinction holds good when the term is applied nationally. Here, too, "firstborn" implies, not priority in the date of becoming a nation, but an exalted precedence over other nations. For instance, Egypt had a place of eminence among the nations before the call of Abram. Yet, centuries after, before the posterity of Abram were redeemed from bondage, Jehovah's message to Pharaoh was "Israel is My son, even My firstborn . . . Let My son go" (Exodus 4:22-23).

Later in their history, this same beautiful metaphor was used by Jeremiah in connection with the predicted restoration of the nations of Israel from their scattering among the Gentiles. In the outgoings of Jehovah's "everlasting love," even to the apostate ten tribes, He says, "I will bring them" back, "for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:1-9).

Clearly, then, "firstborn" Israel was not the first nation to be formed, for Egypt and many other nations preceded it (Genesis 10:1-32); nor was "firstborn" Ephraim the "eldest" of the tribes of Jacob. In each case, "firstborn" indicated a relative position compared with others, and this privilege was not based upon priority of existence, but upon the favour and election of God.

We conclude, therefore, that "firstborn" in scriptural usage does not always mean "the first one to be born of those that are born," but that it does sometimes mean "the first in rank of those that are born." The latter sense is the one in which the term "Firstborn" is applied to our Lord in Colossians 1:1-29 and elsewhere, He being the Creator, and not a created being. The Son styled "Firstborn of all Creation" In the scriptures, the Holy Spirit sets manifold guards to the sacred Person of the Son Who became flesh. When Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai in sight of all the people of Israel, He commanded Moses to "set bounds," lest any of them should profanely intrude into the mystery of the divine Presence on the mount (Exodus 19:1-25)

And, in Colossians, the Spirit "sets bounds" to guard the glory of the Son. When He mentions that the Son of the Father's love came into the world to secure for us "redemption [through His blood], the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14), He at once affirms His supreme dignity as "Firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15) , together with His vast and all-comprehending creatorial work which establishes that dignity beyond all question (Colossians 1:16-17). Thus, in the Son of the Father's love, the Holy Spirit has united before our eyes the Creator and the cross, that we may everlastingly adore and worship, love and serve Him, confessing His eternal Sonship-glory, which was undiminished even in the lowest depths of His humiliation, to which He was pleased to

descend. Our Lord is "the second Man," not the first (1 Corinthians 15:47), and yet is called "the Firstborn of all creation." The Son is, therefore, accorded the title of "Firstborn," not by reason of the date of the incarnation, which, indeed, was comparatively late in the history of creation and of man.* No, His unequalled and incomparable excellence arises from His own intrinsic glory as Son, displayed by Him in creation and its works.

{*"'Begotten' or 'born,' in relation to the Son in the Godhead, cannot be allowed to mean a point of time, or subsequence . . . but simply the nearest relationship, or community of nature, between the Son and the Father. Was He or was He not Son from all eternity, as the Father was Father from all eternity? or are we to reason from manhood, and infer that because a father precedes his son, so it is in the Godhead? This I believe to be Arianism, and as baseless in Scripture as in sound reasoning, if we reason from the revealed nature of Godhead." Bible Witness and Review, 1:374.}

It is in this terse account of creation (vers. 16, 17) that the Spirit both testifies to the Son's personal glory, and "sets bounds" to the inquisitive intrusions of the human intellect. In His detailed description of the Son's creative work, He leaves not a single loophole for unbelieving man to suggest an exception, which might seem to invalidate His claim that the Son of the Father's love is the Creator of the whole creation. He created all things both personally in His own right, and instrumentally to the purpose and glory of God. Therefore, according to the Spirit's teaching, nothing can pass the fixed barrier between the Son, the Creator, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the created, produced by Him. The whole creation sprang into being at His voice and by His hand. The Son, therefore, is before and above the whole creation. The range of the Son's handiwork described in these brief utterances in Colossians is so extensive that even the mightiest of celestial beings are included. "He is before all" moreover, "all things" now subsist together by Him. Therefore, on these grounds of relative existence and maintenance, the Son takes precedence of all His works. Being Himself Uncreated, Uncaused, He is "Firstborn of all creation." By this revelation, the Spirit has "set bounds" to isolate thereby the Son in His own proper majesty and transcendent glory, marking off the Creator from the creature by impassable barriers, lest the proud thoughts of man should violate the Son's essential glory by presuming upon His self-humiliation to abase Him still more, on the one hand, and set up some rival to His supremacy, on the other.

"Oh, love beyond all telling,

Beyond all ken or thought,

Which, Thou, O blessed Saviour,

To us from heaven hast brought!

In Thee we see united

Both God and man in one;

Hence power and love unmeasured

Combined in Thee are shown.

The power of the Creator

Gives glory to Thy name;

The love of the Redeemer

Enhances all Thy fame:

Creator and Redeemer,

Almighty Saviour Lord,

The power and love that saved us

For ever be adored." The Use of the word, "Creature"

"The Firstborn of every creature" (A.V.) is a less faithful rendering of the original than "Firstborn of all creation," and the propriety of this change is acknowledged by scholars generally, the reason being that in this clause "created things" are viewed collectively rather than individually. It is, of course, true that the Creator of the whole creation or the universe is also the Creator of all its parts. And it is equally true that when the Son appears among men "in the likeness of men" He in His own inherent right is "Firstborn of every creature" as well as "Firstborn of all creation." Nevertheless, the correct phraseology adds the maximum beauty and value to the text, as it must always do in every inspired writing, and is always worth seeking on this account. This particular correction from "creature" to "creation" should itself act as a warning. We must know and respect the "bounds" divinely set to guard the sanctity of the Person of the Son, and we must not allow either our imagination or our logic to trespass upon forbidden ground. We have no liberty to choose our own words in speaking of the Son. And to do so without warrant would be to fall into dangerous and presumptuous error. To this danger we are ever liable, and our only safeguard against our own irreverent fancies and those of others is to cleave implicitly to the precise utterances of the Spirit concerning the Son, "Whom no man knoweth."

"Man" but not "Creature" In point of fact, while the ever-blessed Son is in Colossians 1:1-29 described as "Firstborn of all creation" (ktisis) , we do not discover in this title nor in any part of scripture that the Son became part of His own creation (ktisis) , nor that He is anywhere in the Holy Spirit’s language called a creature (ktisma).

But, as with holy caution we seek to trace the "bounds set" by the Spirit in the names and titles of the Incarnate Son, we read elsewhere that He was made a little lower than the angels. We also find in several places that inspired tongues and pens call Him "Man" in a way which shows us that He became "Man" most truly and definitely. Paul speaks of Him as "the man (anthropos) Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), and Peter of Him as "a man (aneer) approved of God among you" (Acts 2:22). Indeed, the Lord speaks of Himself as "a man (anthropos)" (John 8:40). But in vain do we search the scriptures for any reference to that Blessed One as "a creature," and therefore, we feel bound to respect the reserve of the Spirit in this matter, and to restrict ourselves to the language of revelation in regard to the incarnation. In this connection, we do not forget that words are sometimes used in a poetical or metaphorical sense, but in such instances no one would contend seriously for their literal meaning. The Spirit of Christ in the psalmist, speaking of the Holy Sufferer, said, "I am a worm, and no man" (Psalms 22:6). The expression is a figurative one, and refers to His abandonment upon the cross. And no one sees any contradiction between the "no man" of the Psalm and the Lord’s own words of Himself to the Jews, "a Man that hath told you the truth" (John

8:40). The language of David is poetical, while that in John is historical and literal, but both are expressive of the truth contained in the two passages respectively. *

{*It is by way of poetical emphasis of Christ's humiliation that "creature" is used in the lines, "Who hast a creature's form assumed That creatures God might know." The licence of the hymn-writer took him beyond the wording of Scripture "the form of a servant." The precision of expository prose is not always found along with the ardour and exuberance of verse.} But the very suggestion to apply the word, "creature," to the Son in its literal sense is repulsive to our spiritual instincts. Yet some have ventured with more boldness than reverence to do so, and to infer that because the Son is truly God and truly Man, which scripture plainly teaches, they may say with equal accuracy and meetness that He is "God and Creature." But this inference goes beyond revealed truth. And in view of the significant silence of scripture and the lack of divine permission, it would have been wiser to have said like Job, "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. . . . I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4-5). "Man" is authorized by the usage of the Spirit, but "creature" is not.

Let us cultivate a becoming reticence of language in speaking of these Holy Mysteries, and remember that the glories on the Mount of Transfiguration vanished altogether when Peter's depreciatory words concerning the Father's Beloved Son were uttered, though they were spoken sincerely enough. That striking rebuke of the apostle's unruly tongue coming from the cloud of glory is surely recorded for our warning (Mark 9:1-8).

Why is the term, "Creature," avoided in Scripture?

It must always be difficult to assign reasons for the absence of a given word from scripture, but sometimes the positive truths revealed there enable us to discern the propriety of the omission. And the truths revealed concerning the Son certainly indicate that to Him "creature" is an inapplicable word, and derogatory to His glory. We know "the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6) finding the former throughout the scriptures, and the latter throughout man's commentaries thereon.

"Creature" (ktisma) is a general designation of animated nature, covering in its wide scope every variety of being produced at the will of the Creator. Few words, if any, have a broader significance than "creature," embracing, as it does, everyone and everything except the Creator Himself, God. All, however great their diversity, are included in its range. Gabriel and Satan are both creatures. So were Pharaoh and Moses, Herod and John the Baptist, Nero and Paul. The lion and the lamb, the eagle that flies and the worm that crawls are alike creatures. Creaturehood is their nature, and they can have no other. But we will never use the confusing and dishonouring, because ambiguous, word, "creature," of the Blessed Lord Jesus, but rather, like one of old, confess to Him with adoring fervour, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

We believe that it is in the wisdom of God, guarding thereby the glory of the Son, that "creature" is withheld from every scriptural designation of Him. The Holy Spirit avoided every ambiguous word that might lead us to think less worthily of the Son than we ought to think. It is true that we may safely affirm that every man is a creature, but obviously we cannot even in human speech say that every creature is a man. And if we were to say of a certain man that he is but "a poor creature," it would be understood that we spoke of that man with some disparagement and contempt. And there lies the danger that a similar element of disparagement and contempt would be conveyed by

us when this word is applied to our Lord, and that in consequence His name would be blasphemed among His enemies by us, and His glory dimmed in our own eyes to some extent.

Let us, therefore, moved by reverence and godly fear, refrain from using this unauthorized word when speaking of the Lord. Neither let us ignore these particular boundaries of revealed truth concerning the Son set up by the Spirit of God to safeguard His glory. We are not entitled to call Him "creature," because He is Man, any more than we are entitled to call Him "Brother" because He calls us His "brethren" (Hebrews 2:11-12). The Son in Manhood

It is a revealed truth that the Son at His incarnation became "Man." The words of scripture are distinct and definite that the Lord from heaven was the Second Man (anthropos), 1 Corinthians 15:47. Being Man, He was, therefore, of that class in the diversified orders of earthly creaturehood, to which God assigned the rank of highest eminence and the office of earthly government. The first man received this place of superiority by the express appointment of Jehovah, Who breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life. Hence, man by the exceptional manner of his creation is distinguished from other created beings on the earth, all of which were from the beginning placed under his dominion (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2:7). The Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry frequently spoke of Himself as "the Son of man."

But, while man (anthropos) by his special creation is the noblest class of God’s creatures on the earth, we must not forget what degradation sin has brought upon that class. Adam was the earthly creature who sinned, introducing death and judgment to his whole race (Romans 5:12) , and also as a consequence of his sin, subjecting the whole creation to vanity (Romans 8:20). But now the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men (anthropos) has appeared (Titus 2:11). And as "by man (anthropos) came death, by man (anthropos) came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21).

Accordingly, the Lord Jesus was in due time made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9). In becoming man, He became a little lower than the angels for man’s redemption. Scripture teaches us this measure of His descent for our meditation and praise but it does not teach us that He was made "lower" than man, as well as angels; nor does it introduce the vague term, "creature," in speaking of His humiliation. The gospel is that even as by one man sin entered into the world, so God’s free gift in grace is by the One Man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12, Romans 5:19). In describing the Incarnate Son and His work, "man" is specified, but "creature" is avoided. The Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus

Therefore, when the Son of the Father’s love came in flesh into His own creation, He appeared as Man, truly and in all respects as a Man, sin excepted. The Son Incarnate is the Mediator, for "God is one, and the Mediator of God and men one, [the] man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). In this great mystery, the Holy Spirit speaks of manhood, never of creaturehood. Godhead and manhood are, in the text just quoted, declared to be the comprehending limits of this mediatorship. To extend or to modify these limits by the introduction of "creaturehood" is a foolish disregard of the precision of scriptural language. Our Mediator is the Man Christ Jesus. The Son stooped "down to man’s estate and dust" "For man — oh, miracle of grace! For man, the Saviour bled." This truth of the Son in manhood touches us very deeply, ourselves by nature being of this sinful race. We would fain break out in exulting and adoring praise for God’s great love wherewith He loved us, sending His Son into the world that we might know His love. We marvel more and more at the

grace and glory of the Eternal Son, Who deigned to become Man for the accomplishment of His redeeming work, Firstborn of all creation, though taking upon Himself the bondman's form, and also the Mediator of God and men. When we read of the Son on earth, moving visibly among His own dependent creation, we find the unerring pen of the Holy Spirit describes Him as "Man." We are amazed at the "mind which was in Christ Jesus," when we behold the Incarnate Son ranked in the highest order of terrestrial beings, but pre-eminent in humility — the "Man approved of God." It is an eternal wonder that He became a Man at all, and still more that, being so, He should humble Himself yet further — so far as the death of the cross. There and then did He descend into "the lowest deeps" of shame, suffering and abandonment for the glory of God. But up to and throughout that awful cataclysm of judicial woe upon the cross the Incarnate Son passed with unvaried nature. Neither His suffering for sins nor the suffering of death made him "lower" than man. Indeed, it was needful that as Man He should be there for men. It was as Son of man that He gave His life a ransom for many; it was as Son of God He "loved me, and gave Himself for me;" so we read, and so we believe.

We are encouraged to continue our meditations upon this sublime theme because we learn from the apostle's prayer in Colossians 1:1-29 that the character of our walk will be improved in proportion to our knowledge of the essential glories of the Son. A progressive walk is shown to be dependent upon our progress in the "full knowledge" of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and upon our progress too in the "full knowledge" of God Himself (Colossians 1:9-10). And this "full knowledge" involves, as is clear from the revelations in the subsequent verses, the "spiritual understanding" of the essential glories of the Son, unto Whose fellowship we have been called. May they be to our edification and our growth in the knowledge of Him as a result of these meditations.

These revelations were originally communicated to counteract the mischievous teachings that were then spreading among the Colossian saints. Man's imagination was engaged in the unhallowed and unlicensed occupation of defining the personal nature of our Lord. This gave occasion for the rich and precious unfoldings of His personal glories revealed by the Holy Spirit in this Epistle. And these unfoldings are now the special portion of all those who have been translated by the Father into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). Let us seek to receive them as such in all "lowliness of mind."

Worshipping the Creator and Redeemer In this kingdom of light and love, as we surely are, we shall not tire of sitting at the feet of the Firstborn to ponder again and again His unique and incomparable excellences as they are set out in these verses. Here we see the vast panorama of the whole creation, visible and invisible, unrolled before us in its staggering immensities; and here we learn that the One "in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," is the Creator and Sustainer of it all! As we see this creatorial glory of the Son of the Father's love reaching back in its potentiality ere time began, is not a chord of deepest adoration struck immediately within our souls? Can we not anticipate the song of praise by restored Israel to their Creator God, and say to one another, "Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalms 95:6)? If we do sit unmoved now as we read verses 15-17, we shall not when we see Him "as He is."

Then we shall fall down before Him that sits upon the throne, and worship Him that lives to the ages of ages. Then shall we cast our crowns before the throne, and say, "Thou art worthy, O our Lord and [our] God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and they have been created" (Revelation 4:11).

We unfeignedly bless God for these precious unveilings (Colossians 1:15-18) of the eternal past of the Son of His love. For we note that all the fifteen pronouns in verses 15 to 20 inclusive are in apposition with the noun, Son (Colossians 1:13). Each dependent sentence, therefore, declares some fresh glory of the Son, to Whom they all relate, and in Whom they all combine with a transcendent harmony. The sight of His glories moves us to exclaim, like the bride of old, "My beloved is unto me a cluster of henna-flowers in the vineyards of Engedi" (Song of Solomon 1:14).
The Son Before All Things

Moreover, the pre-existence of the Son is affirmed in the passage with remarkable definiteness. We read, "He is before all things" (Colossians 1:17). The important stress laid on the subject in this simple sentence must not be overlooked. The special force of the pronoun is perhaps lost to the English reader, but in the original Greek the emphatic pronoun, autos, is employed, which means, very self. So that it is declared that "He Himself," or "His very self" is "before all things." It is He (that is, the Son) and no other. The Person of the Son preceded the universe, and He is also the universal Cause.

Again, while the pronoun establishes the Son’s external personality "before all things," the verb establishes His existence prior to all created things: "He is," not was, "before all things" and beings. It is the scriptural phrase signifying absolute, timeless existence. The Holy Spirit uses it here of the Son, as Jesus did of Himself, when He said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), and as God said of Himself to Moses, when sending him to the children of Israel, "I am hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). With what simple force and what ravishing beauty this brief sentence in verse 17 immediately follows the recital of the creatorial glory of the Son, Who is the Image of the Invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation! He! this Very One, ever-existing, ever-living — the Firstborn — is before all things! This short statement makes the Son’s pre-existence very clear to the simplest of us; and indeed the Father’s revelations concerning the Son are written for His "babes" (Matthew 11:25). May we be preserved from the wisdom and prudence of this age, which blind the heart to the eternal beauties in the Son, often using as a veil the words of good men. The "all things" which the Son precedes in existence are His creation. Is it not a joy to our souls to meditate upon this greatness and majesty of our Lord? Are not our very hearts thrilled as we remember that the heavens and the earth are "the work of His fingers"? All things! whether we consider the universe and its contents in terms of space — the heavens, the earth, the sea —; or in terms of time — the past reaching back to the beginning of all, the present filling our life’s little day, the future with endless ages beyond — we know that the Son, in Whom we now behold the Father’s love, is before all, for "by (en, in virtue of) Him all things were created."

Thus, we have seen in our meditation upon this phrase, "He is before all things," that the Son’s eternal existence as the Son of the Father’s love is thereby affirmed. The term, "Firstborn," as we have seen, is expressive of the pre-eminent dignity and worth creationwards belonging to the Son because He is the Creator of all. In fact, the whole context forbids us to think that "first" is used as an adverb of time, or that "born" implies that the Son was "born before all creation"; but confirms

the thought that "Firstborn" expresses, not His origin, but His relation to the universe. The Son Supreme in Creation, but not Independent

It may be convenient for purposes of reference to place together the statements in verses 16, 17 concerning the Son’s relations to the universe as Creator and Sustainer.

(1) By (en, in virtue of) Him all things were created;

(2) By (dia, by means of) Him all things were created;

(3) For (eis, the end and object) Him [all were created];

(4) By (en, in virtue of) Him all things consist (ver. 17). From these revelations we learn that the Son of the Father’s love has a fourfold relationship to the whole creation or universe, each differing but all harmonizing.

(1) The Son acted in virtue of His own power in creation.

(2) The Son acted as the direct instrument in creation.

(3) The Son’s honour and glory are the end of creation.

(4) The Son’s power upholds the whole creation.

These Colossian truths are revealed to us in sequence that we may see their marvellous correlation, which exists only because of the Deity of the Son. First (1) , we behold His absolute supremacy, for He created all things in virtue of His own inherent power and right. Then (2) , by changing the preposition from en to dia (not observable in the A.V.), the Spirit unfolds that in the work of creation the Son "acted instrumentally for God the Father’s glory."

While, therefore, the Son in His own personal right is the Active Cause of all creation, He also in that same work acted, not independently, but mediately. What was done by Him was the act of the full Godhead, even as we read in Genesis, that Elohim said, "Let US make man in OUR image" (Genesis 1:26). So in Ephesians 3:9 (where "by Jesus Christ" is omitted in revised versions) God is said to be the Creator of all.

Thus, from these revelations recorded by the Holy Spirit, faith discerns the communion of the Son with the Father even in pre-creation days; for in the work of creation the Son according to the inscrutable relations in the Godhead acted both in His own right and on behalf of Another; there ever existed absolute community of nature and purpose between the Father and the Son. This truth of the eternal unity of the Father and the Son becomes very sweet to us as well as marvellous when we recollect that it is illustrated in the preservation of Christ’s sheep as well as in the making of the worlds. None can pluck them out of My hand; none can pluck them out of My Father’s hand; I and My Father are One; said the Good Shepherd (John 10:29, 30). The unity of the Father and the Son is displayed both in the circle of creation and in the circle of redemption.

Created for Him and Upheld by Him

Further, we again see how the intrinsic glory of the Son is protected by "a wall, great and high." The Spirit, having spoken (2) of the Son as the Agent in creation, jealous to maintain the pre-eminence and purity of the Son’s glory untarnished before our eyes, lest our minds should

even for a moment entertain the thought that this agency in creation involves anything derogatory to His Immutable Being, adds the clause, "and for (eis) Him" (3). As the Son is the First, so He is the Last. While all things were created through Him, it is at the same time true that all things were created for His glory. The purpose of creation is focused in the Son. The universe exists for the glory of the Son, even as it does for the glory of the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come (Revelation 4:8-11).

Hence, as we by the enabling of the Holy Spirit look behind the whole scheme of creation, we see that the Son fills no secondary or subordinate place. He alone is the Supreme Architect and Builder, and He is also the end and object of its existence. But even more is revealed. To enhance His glory yet further, the Spirit gives the additional revelation that "all things subsist together by (in virtue of) Him," (4). The Son's omnipotence continues in unceasing activity towards the universe. The Son of the Father's love maintains the existence and energy and functioning of all created things, ever and always. This knowledge of the Son is truly wonderful in our eyes, beloved. But having this knowledge of the Son, Whom no one knows save the Father (Matthew 11:27), communicated to us by the Father, let us not fail to honour the Son of His love, both in His creative and in His judicial and redemptive glory, even as we honour the Father (John 5:22-23). The early Entrance of Leavening Doctrine No doubt these truths concerning the Son have a prophylactic value, to use a medicinal term. They not only promote spiritual health, but they prevent doctrinal disease. They were unfolded to the saints at Colosse to destroy the germs of poisonous theories regarding the Person of the Lord, even then existing among them. It is well-known that these germs afterwards developed rapidly, notwithstanding this testimony of the Holy Spirit against them and by the fourth century they had become widespread heterodoxies, corrupting the churches in all directions. The evil doctrines rampant at that time were of many varieties, but the notorious Arius taught that the Son was a secondary God, created by the Father before all worlds, that He was the very highest of all creatures, and that by Him as a subordinate all things were created. This subtle but deadly blow at the full Deity of our Lord was virtually anticipated and condemned in the Colossian Epistle as well as in other parts of scripture. The truths of its first chapter that have been before us in these pages give the direct lie to this damnable doctrine.

It may perhaps be inquired why any mention should be made in these meditations of such false and wicked thoughts of a bygone age. But alas, when evil and perverse things are once spread among the saints, their pernicious influence persists among the people of God both at the time and in succeeding generations. Arius died in A.D. 336, but Arianism and kindred errors, though formally condemned, have never been thoroughly eradicated. During the past sixteen centuries, the hateful teaching has revived over and over again in varying forms under various names.

And, in our day, as might be expected when Christendom is fast filling to the full its cup of apostasy, the doctrine of the full Deity of the Son is assailed with as great, if not greater, vehemence than ever. At any rate, the outbreaks occur with alarming frequency, and in the least expected quarters, sometimes violently, sometimes speciously, but in effect always denying in some way the revealed glories of the Son of God, and bringing pain to every faithful heart.

Warning against Infection The reply, therefore, to the suggested inquiry is that, on account of the present perilous times, the matter is mentioned by way of warning against the present danger that is threatening the saints. And it is noteworthy that in this very context (Colossians 1:28) , the

apostle, as a preacher of Christ, links "warning" with "teaching" as a Christian duty; "warning every man, and teaching every man." It was because of the menace to the faith in its very groundwork that the apostle's letter had the double character of admonition and exposition. In an epidemic, precautionary measures are broadcast for the public safety, while in normal times these protective measures are not required. Dangerous departure from the truth at Colosse called forth the apostolic ministry suitable to correct such departure. The knowledge of the truth is the appointed safeguard against every lie (1 John 2:21), and the only effective one. The erroneous notion that the Ever-blessed Son was inferior to God, because, as it was alleged, He was created to act as God's deputy in the work of creation, is completely exploded by these concise utterances of the Spirit, simple, yet sublime in their simplicity. The perverse and evil allegations of the heretic were anticipated by the Spirit of truth, Who revealed that in creation the Son exercised the incommunicable powers of the Deity, and is therefore "over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:5). Was it said in the fourth century by these traducers that the Son was subordinate in Deity when He created all things? The apostle speaking by the Spirit had in the first century shown that not only was the universe created by (dia) the Son as the active Instrument, but the universe was created by (en) Him, that is, in virtue of His own personal, intrinsic (not derived) power (ver. 16). There was no subordination in the Deity, but in the work of creation the Son was Principal as well as Agent, acting in His own proper personal right, while acting also in absolute co-operation with the Father. As the Son said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17), intimating, as the Jews to whom He was speaking understood, that He was equal with, not subordinate to God.

We rejoice to know that the Blessed Son of the Father was obedient in a glory of perfection throughout His pathway of service. We remember that He said Himself, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." His whole life was a complete conformation to the Father's own activities. And this glory we beheld, writes the apostle.

But, as if to guard against any carnal conclusion that this obedience of the Son implies His subordination in the Godhead, the Son added, "What things soever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). There is, therefore, in essential Being and essential Doing, perfect equality between the Father and the Son. Moreover, this "doing" of the Son of the Father's love includes the creation of all things, as we are taught in the Epistle to the Colossians. The Son No Creature either Before or After Incarnation

While all thought of the Son's subordination in Deity is contrary to Colossians 1:1-29, so also is the blasphemous assertion that He is a creature, first and highest of all creatures, but yet a creature. This scripture declares that He is the Creator of "all things," using this comprehensive phrase four times in the two verses (Colossians 1:16-17). The Creator is not a creature; He creates, but is not created. The Son created all, but He did not create Himself.

Yet some, who would not apply the unbecoming term, creature, to the Son in His eternal essence, do not hesitate to apply it to Him in His incarnation. They declare that the holy humanity of our Blessed Lord was a special creation, and on this unfounded assumption they claim that it is permissible to speak of Him as a "creature." But there is not a word of scripture to justify this use of the ugly, unsavoury expression. The Holy Spirit does not write of the Lord as a creature, nor as One created either before the worlds were made, or at His incarnation. We read of His birth, not of

His creation. Why not let holy sobriety and godly prudence govern our language in matters like this, wherein the utmost scrupulousness is demanded? We should beware of adding any words of our own choosing to the scriptural vocabulary concerning the Son.

Woman-born, Not Created In the word of God, the incarnation of the Son is recorded, not as a creation, but as a birth: we read that "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise . . ." (Matthew 1:18; Matthew 2:1). God created Adam the first man, but Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 4:1-2). In the case of Adam, life in maturity was directly bestowed by Jehovah upon the inanimate dust of the ground, of which man was formed by his Creator; but in the case of Cain and Abel, their infant life was received by transmission from their living parents. And the whole of Adam's race began their being in a similar manner.

Now the manner of our Lord's entrance into the world was by birth, not by special creation as Adam's. His imminent birth with its miraculous character was specially announced to Mary by the angel, who said to her in her virginity, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In these words, the personal agency of the Holy Spirit acting in unspeakable power upon Mary is plainly promised, and also the consequent birth of the "Holy Thing" to be called Son of God.

It is, however, a mere gloss upon this text to claim that according to its teaching the Lord's "holy humanity was created" — that it was "brought into existence by the creative act of the Holy Spirit of God." Nothing is stated here or elsewhere in scripture which implies that the birth of Jesus Christ was "a creative act," that is, in the sense that the birth was a production of something from nothing. Such a theory rests upon the imagination of man, not upon revealed fact in scripture.

Son of God Before and When Born The manner in which the overshadowing power of the Highest wrought upon Mary is not described. She herself declared, "He that is Mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name" (Luke 1:49). But, whatever the secret and inscrutable operation of the Holy Spirit, divine power ensured that He Who was born of Mary was called the Son of God. The fullness of time had come, and God "sent forth His Son, come of woman" (Galatians 4:4). It was His own Son Whom God so sent, "in likeness of flesh of sin" for the condemnation of sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

Sonship is plainly predicted of Him Who was born of the virgin Mary. He was Son of God before His birth, for God sent His own Son; and He was Son of God after His birth, for this was His name according to Gabriel's instructions to the mother (Luke 1:35), while Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:14) was fulfilled also, according to which His name was Immanuel, that is, God with us (Matthew 1:22-23). As then He was God both before and after His birth, so He was Son of God both before and after His birth. The Seed of the Woman

Here, in Bethlehem, was the Seed of the woman, as dimly foretold in Eden (Genesis 3:15); and therefore the birth is unparalleled in human history. But its marvel of marvels is that the Holy One of God was born without taint of sin of a woman who herself was born in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psalms 51:5), a state true of every member of the whole race. The explanation of the unique miracle was given to Joseph by the angel of the Lord; "that which is conceived (or begotten) in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:20). By His sacred and pervasive influence, every trace of evil

was excluded and every risk of contamination was avoided. Speaking in typical language, the fine flour was kneaded with oil. And He Who was born of Mary was the thrice-holy Son of God. With the profoundest gratitude and praise it is recognized that this event was of God in a manner that no like event has ever been, or ever will be. The virgin birth of Jesus was unique, marvellous, miraculous, as a birth. At that point of time "the Word became flesh." This is scriptural language, but we do not read that this "flesh" was created, as is sometimes stated without adequate authority.*

{*If it be said, by way of palliation, that "creating" is employed, not in the absolute sense of calling out of nothingness into being, but in the secondary sense of fashioning by divine power out of something already created, it may very properly be inquired why "creating" should be used at all in this solemn connection? If "creation" has this ambiguous sense, why not avoid the term altogether, as scripture does? The attempt made to justify this unwholesome phrasing by a quotation from J.N.D. (Coll. Writings, vol 10, p. 521) stultifies itself. It should have been seen from the passage itself that J.N.D. deliberately refrains from applying the word, "creature," to the Lord. He is speaking of the "personal connection, in incarnation, between God and the creature — God and man in one person."

Now, in these words, J.N.D. first refers to "God and the creature"; and by the latter term, he plainly alludes to Romans 8:20-22 — to the creature in bondage to corruption, whose deliverance will come about through the Incarnate Son. But J.N.D. does not write "God and creature in one person," but "God and man in one person." It was in becoming man, that the Son was the "personal connection" "between God and the creature." The two commas enclosing the words, "in incarnation," which appear in the Coll. Wr., but which are omitted in two reprints of the words, make the meaning of the author clear and unmistakable. His reference is to the mediatorial, not the creatorial, connection between God and the creature.

W.K.’s words have also been forced out of their contextual meaning with a like object. W.K. does not speak of the Lord becoming a creature, but of His being in the place or sphere where the creatures of His hand were. His words, which occur in a condensed report of his lectures, cannot be so construed without violence. He says, "He never took the creature place until He became a man, and then must needs be the first-born. Even if He had been the last-born literally, He must still be the first-born." And again, "He was firstborn, because He Who entered the sphere of human creaturedom was the Creator, and therefore must necessarily be the firstborn" (Lectures on the Colossians, pp. 19, 20). The phrases, "the creature place," and "the sphere of human creaturedom," clearly refer to His environment, and not to His person, as some have assumed.}

Indeed, it is inaccurate and misleading, seeing it is a plain departure from scripture, to assert that the human nature of Christ was created (that is, formed out of nothing) in the virgin’s womb. Mary undoubtedly had her part in the sacred mystery, as the angel said to her, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son" (Luke 1:31). But to assert that the Lord’s "holy humanity was created by a creative act of the Holy Spirit" is in effect to deny the angel’s words to Mary herself concerning her conception.

Scripture does not divide between the Deity and the humanity of the Incarnate Son, even in the womb of the virgin. Believing that the Person of the Eternal Son abode unchanged and unchangeable when He became the woman’s Seed, we are content to be ignorant because we

are confident that the method of the Incarnation is inexplicable to the human mind, though scripture describes it so simply as "the birth of Jesus Christ" (Matthew 1:18). The Body Prepared In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit applies to the coming of the Lord into the world a quotation from Psalms 40:1-17, in which the Son, the Messiah, describes His own incarnation: "a body hast Thou prepared (or, framed) Me" (Hebrews 10:5). There is no hint of "creation" here, but in this important passage, where the mind of the Spirit is to teach us the unique nature of that body, so that "the body of Jesus Christ" was suited to become the sacrificial offering to God "once for all" (ver. 10), the word "created" is avoided, and "prepared" is used. On account of its peculiar origination this "body" had its own special feature, which was its intrinsic and unequalled holiness, secured by the agency of the Holy Spirit, in order that the Son's obedience "unto death, even the death of the cross" might be displayed therein. The Son was pleased to assume this body in His incarnation. Becoming flesh was His mode of entrance into the place of a Servant that He might reveal the Father in a world of spiritual darkness and moral squalor. Consequently, by His incomparable life and ministry in that precious body, we are made privy to divine relations between the Father and the Son, which are recorded in John and elsewhere.

Moreover, in the Son's disclosures on earth of these inscrutable heavenly intimacies, the Father's glory suffered no tarnish. Nay, such was the exquisite perfection and fullness of the Son's service that this glory was even enhanced in consequence. Hence, viewing His path from the point of its completion, the Son said to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." On the earth! In this wilderness world, shrouded, as it is, in uncomprehending darkness (John 1:5), God, Who is Light and Love, has been fully manifested by the Son in His humiliation and obedience; and His lowly labours were crowned with the Father's glory. What a body was needful for such high displays! "A body hast Thou prepared Me." Precious body! Priceless, sinless, humanity was there! Yet in "likeness of sinful flesh" to become a sacrifice for sin (Romans 8:3)! It was He Who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

"Lo, I come" was the joyous utterance of the Son in the eternal past, no less than in the due time when He assumed the prepared body in the time and manner appointed for His coming into the world (Hebrews 10:5). "He was to come by the woman, more fully man thus than Adam, but conceived of the Holy Spirit, as was neither Adam nor any other: so truly did God fit a body for the Son that even in human nature He alone should be the Holy One of God.

"Not otherwise would it have suited the Son, either as the constant object of the Father's delight all through the days of His flesh, as the adequate vessel of the Holy Spirit's power in service, or as the sin-offering at last. How different from us, who even when born of God are anointed only as under the efficacy of His blood! His body was the temple of God without blood" (W.K., Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 181). The Created "New Thing" of Jeremiah An attempt has been made by some to justify the application of the term, "creature," to our Lord by a reference to one of the prophecies of Jeremiah, as if it foretold the birth of Jesus Christ from a virgin, and spoke of the birth as a creation of Jehovah. The actual words of the prophet alluded to are, "The Lord (Jehovah) hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22).

It is assumed by these expositions that, seeing the Lord's birth in time was absolutely unique in character, His birth was the "new thing" which Jehovah promised to create in the earth; and on this

supposition the conclusion is based that it is scriptural to speak of the Lord as a "creature."

But, on examination, their bold interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy seems far-fetched, and to lack the support of the context. There is possibly some confusion, too, with Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:1-25), which clearly predicts that, through the conception of a virgin, God (Immanuel) will be with His people for their ultimate deliverance from their enemies, though the land of Judah will previously be desolated by the overwhelming power of the king of Assyria. But Jeremiah's theme is distinct from that of the earlier prophet. He does not set forth, like Isaiah, a coming Deliverer of the house and lineage of David, but the heartfelt repentance, especially of Ephraim, the idolatrous house of Israel, which will be the moral preparation for the restoration to blessing of the whole nation. It is not, as in Isaiah, the Saviour God appearing among the people by a marvellous birth, but the cleansing of their inward parts to receive the new covenant that Jehovah will make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Jeremiah therefore foretells that the restored people themselves will be a "new thing" created in the earth.

Truly, the later prophet, like Isaiah, speaks of a "virgin" (ver. 21), but not in connection with the miraculous advent of their Messiah and Deliverer. Jeremiah's reference is definitely to "the virgin of Israel," whom he also addresses as "Thou backsliding daughter." In the "new thing" the prophet has in view those who will be blessed, not the One Who will bless them. He sees that in the day of restoration the virgin remnant of Israel will keep herself morally pure, and free from all defilement with the idolatry of Babylon (see Revelation 14:3-5). Jeremiah's promise is that Israel shall in that day turn again to the cities of the land (ver. 21) from which she had been driven. It may be added that he uses this same figure, "virgin," in connection with the nation in other parts of his prophecies (Jeremiah 14:17; Jeremiah 18:13; Jeremiah 31:4). In the next verse, the prophet refers to the end of Israel's scattering among the nations, of their wandering on the earth for their sins as vagabonds, like branded Cain: "How long wilt thou wander about (or, hither and thither) , thou backsliding daughter?" The answer to this question is, until the day of their national repentance. And then immediately the prophet goes on by a striking metaphor to show how this restoration will be caused: "For Jehovah hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall encompass a man." The "new thing" is the real, Spirit-wrought, penitence of both Judah and Ephraim, and their joint establishment in their own land in the days of the new covenant. This repentance of both the houses of Israel will be an unprecedented event in the long history of the stiff-necked and obdurate generation. Then the people shall confess their guilt (Isaiah 53:1-12) , and lament for their sins; and there shall be the "great mourning in Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:10-14). This unanimous repentance Jehovah Himself will "create," for He will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications (Zechariah 12:10). The change of the nation's heart by the removal of the veil upon it (2 Corinthians 3:16) is the work of the God of their fathers, Who raised up Jesus, and exalted Him "for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30-31). Jehovah will "create" in them a clean heart, as David, a type of the remnant in his blood-guiltiness, prayed for himself (Psalms 51:10). He will make a new heart and a new spirit in His people, taking away their stony heart, as Ezekiel prophesied (Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26). The Woman of Weakness and the Man of Strength

Truly, a strikingly "new thing" on the earth will be seen in the millennial day when the people of Israel who during so many, many centuries had disobeyed Jehovah both under law and under grace, and who had rejected their Messiah both in His humiliation and in His exaltation, turn at

long last to the Lord, owning their presumptuous sins and proving His abundant mercy. The whole world’s wonder in that day will be that the unclean nation has then become holy to the Lord, that the little has become great, and the weak strong. For how few and feeble will the Jewish remnant be that shall be saved! Only the "third part" will be brought through the consuming fires of the great tribulation, but to that "little flock," Jehovah will say, "It is My people" (Zechariah 13:9), and He will hear their prayers and give them the kingdom. But it will be when they are in their weak and broken state nationally, that they will look unto God, Who will be their strength; then, as the prophet expressively said, "a woman shall encompass a man."

We take it, then, that in this bold and vigorous metaphor, "woman" is used as a symbol of the nation of Israel in her state of confessed weakness and fear immediately before her restoration. The use of this particular metaphor by Jeremiah is not an isolated instance in prophetic language. Isaiah also employs the same figure to convey a condition of weakness and apprehension in the nation of Egypt: "In that day shall Egypt be like women; and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 19:16). "Woman" as a figure of effeminacy occurs also in Isaiah 3:12; Jeremiah 51:30; Nahum 3:13. As "woman" figuratively signifies feebleness, so "man" is the symbol of strength, stated in contrast. In this passage (Jeremiah 31:22) , great power is the sense emphatically, because the word used in the original (gever) means a mighty man. It is not the more frequent word for man (enosh) , which means man in his frailty.

When, therefore, "a woman shall encompass a man," the weak nation shall become possessed of strength. This forcible promise of Jehovah instills the hope that the utter weakness of the remnant of Israel will in a future day be the chosen occasion for the display, on their part in a way never before seen on the earth, of preternatural national strength, which He, the God of their strength, will supply. The Order of Nature reversed The ways of God in His sovereign mercy and grace seldom follow the laws He Himself has established for His human creatures. They strike us by contrast, not by comparison. Therefore, the ultimate outpouring of His mercy upon unbelieving Israel will in man’s judgment seem an anomaly in God’s righteous dealing with nations. And this arresting character of His restoring mercy to the Jews has been anticipated by the Holy Spirit in the metaphor we are considering. That a woman should encompass a man is contrary to the original order set up at the creation. At the beginning, the woman was created for the man, and not the man for the woman; headship was bestowed upon Adam, not upon Eve (1 Corinthians 11:9). But, according to this prophetic figure, Jehovah will, in due course, create a "new thing" nationally involving the reversal of the natural order of earthly government. In the millennium, world empire will not be held by the nation possessing an irresistible might over all others, but supreme power and authority in the earth will be seen resting upon a nation long notorious among men for her womanly weakness.

What status at present have the wandering seed of Abraham among the peoples of the earth! No king, no territory, no army, no navy, no temple, no priesthood! But in her revival, of which Jeremiah speaks, the repentant nation will "encompass" or possess a marvellous strength, whereby all her mighty foes shall be utterly overthrown. Then the resuscitated nation will be like the forlorn and destitute Ruth, come to Bethlehem from the land of idolatry; claiming kinship of the opulent Boaz (the man of strength, as his name implies) , and in that imparted strength from him building the house of Israel in glory (Ruth 4:9-12). No Reference to the Virgin Birth In this examination of this

prophecy, we have been unable to discover any foundation for the claim of some interpreters that Jeremiah, in this somewhat obscure language, foretold the birth of our Lord. Also, it appears to be an unwise and unfounded assumption that this prophecy in any way supports the statement that the Incarnation was a special "creation" by Jehovah, or affords any licence to speak of our adorable Lord as a "creature."

It may be added for further confirmation that in this passage, the word "woman" (neqebah) does not signify a virgin or unmarried maiden (almah), the latter term being the one used in Isaiah 7:14, which has direct prophetic reference to Mary, the virgin "mother of Jesus." There is, therefore, no identity between the two predictions, nor analogy even, except that both relate to a "new thing," and Scripture tells of many "new" things.

There have been many surmises as to the precise meaning of the passage, but the most satisfactory interpretation of Jeremiah’s veiled language is that it is a prediction of the recovery of Israel in the hour of her extreme weakness and dire persecution. It will be remembered that in the Apocalypse, John sees the nation under the figure of a persecuted woman, fled into the wilderness, and the great red dragon making war with the remnant of her seed (Revelation 12:1-17). Nevertheless, Israel will eventually receive invincible strength, and will be the conquering Deborah of that day; and the Lord will sell the future Sisera "into the hand of a woman" (Judges 4:9) , as He did the Canaanite oppressor.

J.N.D., in his Synopsis, makes the following comment upon the passage: "In verse 22, I see only weakness. Israel, feeble as a woman, shall possess and overcome all strength — seeing that strength manifests itself in that which is very weakness." An analogous instance of the use of imagery, arresting because of its allusion to what is unknown in natural experience, is found in Jeremiah 30:6, 7, where the future time of Jacob’s trouble is compared with a man travailing with child. That tribulation will be unexampled in the world’s history (Matthew 24:21), and its unprecedented character is implied in the striking metaphor used by the prophet.

Chapter 12

01.11. The Fullness of the Godhead

The Fullness of the Godhead

"For in Him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell. . . . For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 1:19, N.Tr.)

"For in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. . . . For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9, W.K.) The Psalmist, looking abroad upon the world of nature around him, exclaimed, "O Lord (Jehovah), how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches" (Psalms 104:24). In Colossians 1:1-29 the believer is invited to survey even greater works than these, and in a wider sphere. Reading these verses, he might well adapt the language of the Psalm, and exclaim, O Lord, Thou Son of the Father's love, how manifold are the works of Thy power and Thy love! The earth and the heavens are full of the riches of Thy glory and Thy grace! In the apostle's recital of these glories of the Son, we may observe their holy order — a harmony of heaven beyond the power of the human mind to invent. We see the evidences of His glory distributed under two great categories. There are (1) the works of His power and wisdom before His incarnation, and (2) the works of His grace and truth after His incarnation. The first class (1) embraces the whole of the original creation in its vastness and variety: we behold the Son, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Colossians 1:15-17). The second (2) comprehends His operations in the sphere of the new creation: wherein we behold, as the final result, the removal of sin, and the reconciliation in righteousness of all things on the earth and in the heavens (Colossians 1:18-20). This widespread panorama of the works of the Lord is marvellous in our eyes, and we delight to behold that the Personal centre of it all is the Son of the Father's love, in Whom all the fullness of the Godhead is pleased to dwell. In Him, we even now have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (ver. 14); and from this little platform in His kingdom where redeeming love has safely set us, we look out with the eyes of revelation into the ever-widening expanses of eternity, and discern with holy rapture the countless glories of the Eternal Son, Who Himself fills all things (Ephesians 4:10). The Fullness Dwells in the Reconciler

It is to be remarked that in this passage the revelation of the ever-abiding fullness in the Son is associated with His work of reconciliation (vers. 18-20) rather than with His work of creation (vers. 15- 17). How evident is the jealous care of the Spirit of God to preserve the honour of the Son! Reconciliation involves the elimination of sin from the defiled heavens and the polluted earth. Side by side with the very mention of this work stands the declaration that in the Reconciler all the fullness is pleased to dwell (ver. 19); His full personal glory in the Deity is concerned in His accomplishment of redemption. This work entailed bloodshedding, the cross, and death itself (vers. 20, 21); did it, therefore, in any degree whatsoever detract from the intrinsic personal glory of the Son of God? Or, do any inquire whether the Son is of inferior rank in the Godhead., because God's enemies are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10) , and because death is attributed to the Son, but never to the Father, nor to the Holy Spirit?

All such insinuating questions are anticipated and answered here; for the Spirit writes, "In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell" (ver. 19, W.K.). The Son has no inferior or secondary position in Deity, since the whole fullness of the Godhead has a permanent abiding-place in Him. It was not an incomplete fullness, nor a portion only of the fullness, but the fullness in its perfect entirety, nothing of Deity lacking or diminished in any respect, or at any time. He is "the Son of the Blessed," and "God blessed for ever" (Mark 14:61-62; Romans 9:5). The Fullness is Personal

Moreover, the fullness found pleasure in dwelling in the Son. The fullness, therefore, is not an abstract quality or attribute. The emotion of good pleasure or delight can reside only in a person. It was God the Father Who expressed His good pleasure in His beloved Son on the holy mount (2 Peter 1:17). But this passage in Colossians, correctly rendered, does not speak of the Father taking pleasure, but of "all the fullness," intimating that there is a latent reference in the phrase to a Person Who finds delight in dwelling in Him, the incarnate Son.

Further, "dwelling" and "reconciling" are both personal acts; and it is expressly said that all the fullness is pleased to dwell in Him, and also to reconcile all things by Him unto Himself. It is a Person, therefore, Who is before the mind of the inspiring Spirit, and it can be no other than the Son in His Deity, Who is the theme of the passage throughout. Notice how the succession of pronouns in vers. 19, 20 mark the continuity of the personal reference to Him: "in Him;" "His cross;" "by Him;" "unto Himself;" "by Him." All the fullness is pleased to dwell . . . to reconcile . . . unto Himself — the Son. The Spiritual Value to us of the Son’s Personal Glory The doctrines of redemption and reconciliation are thus tinctured with the personal glory of Christ not only for our instruction, but also to awaken our worship.

It is the sight and the knowledge of the Person Who suffered and died that touches our hearts. Beholding the hands and the side of the Risen Saviour, even dull Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God! "

It is the central feature, therefore, of our priestly instruction in Colossians 1:1-29 that the Son has the first place or the pre-eminence in all things. Whether in the exercise of His mediatorial functions or otherwise, in Him the fullness of the Godhead has a permanent abode. Hence, God being in Christ, God was perfectly manifested in flesh among men. God Who is Light and God Who is Love shone in Him. Yet man’s darkness did not comprehend nor yield to the Light, nor did man’s enmity vanish before that display of Love. More must be done by God for man to remove the barriers against His light and His love.

Reconciliation was needed, to which truth the passage now brings us. Peace could be made only "by the blood of His cross." Through this, we who believe are now reconciled; and upon the same basis, the whole universe of heavenly and earthly things will in the future be reconciled, and will become a scene of divine delight. For, as all the fullness finds His (or, Its) good pleasure in dwelling in Him, so all the fullness finds His delight in reconciling all things unto Him or unto Itself.*

{*See J.N.D.’s New Translation and his footnotes on the passages (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). It may be noticed that he uses the neuter pronoun three times in the context: — "to reconcile . . . to Itself" (ver. 20); "now has It reconciled" (ver. 21); "to present you holy . . . before It" (ver. 22). The neuter pronoun is used in these cases to mark their grammatical relation to "fullness," which is of the neuter gender in the Greek.} Are we not glad to have such revelations as these? How sweet

to our souls to discover in this passage that the whole universe, now defiled by sin and hostile to God, will be reconciled to Him in Whom all the fullness dwells — to the Son of the Father's love! Truly, as we sing, "His joys our sweetest joys afford, They taste of love divine." And we may add to the couplet that His glories "our sweetest joys afford," for they too "taste of love divine." The Italics in Colossians 1:19

It will have been noticed that in the former part of this paper Colossians 1:19 has been quoted differently from the A.V., which reads "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." The R.V. agrees with the A.V., except that "the" is added before "fullness." The literal rendering is, "In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell." The fact that the words, "the Father," are placed in italics in both versions proves that in both cases the translators had to admit that no equivalent of these words is found in the original tongue, and that the two words inserted express their own interpretation of the passage, namely, that it was the Father's good pleasure that all fullness should dwell in the Son. As a general truth, this pleasure of the Father in the Son is without doubt true, but the question is whether it is the truth conveyed in this passage. And a little inquiry shows that the interpretation is without proper foundation, for it overlooks or ignores the true grammatical subject of the verb, "was pleased," which is "all the fullness," and it introduces the words, "the Father," into the passage without textual authority.

Moreover, the words in italics dislocate the whole grammatical sentence, which occupies Colossians 1:19-20. This sentence contains the principal verb, "was pleased," and two dependent infinitive verbs, "dwell," and "reconcile," both of which relate to the subject, "all the fullness." The text is faithfully rendered by W.K.: "In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell; and by Him to reconcile the universe unto Him." The same scholar says, commenting on the R.V. of " Colossians 1:19 where the old fault of the A.V. reappears. . . The doctrine is as bad as the version, and derogatory to the Son as well as the Spirit in our Epistle, and (in) the very part where the prime object is to assert the glory of Christ in every way." The best that can be said of the common rendering of the verse is that it contains a part of the truth; but of what a great deal it robs us. For in this Epistle, fullness or plenitude is used to denote the totality of the essential nature, powers, and attributes of Deity. This term implies that, not only the Father, but the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit were pleased to dwell in Him. It was the fullness; and more, all the fullness, all that is comprehended in God.*

{*The following remarks by W.K. on the insertion of the words, "the Father," may be of further help. "There is a peculiar phraseology in the passage, which may have led the English translators to put in 'Father' in Colossians 1:19. If the conjecture be correct, they did it not so much because of this verse as of the following, the 20th — 'to reconcile . . . unto Himself.' They could not make out how it could be unto Him unless it were to the Father; but I think the context is purposely so framed, because it is intended to skew us, unless I am greatly mistaken, that all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, not one Person of that divine fullness acting to the exclusion of the rest. They all had one counsel, not barely similar counsels, as so many creatures might, but one and the same. Hence the object is not to contrast one Person with another, but to state that all the fullness was pleased in Him to dwell. It is put in this general form purposely" (Lectures on the Colossians, p. 23).} In Colossians 2:9, the same term is in an ampler phrase applied to the Son: "in Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." All that is inherent in Deity has a permanent abode in Him. The added clause, "of the Godhead," does not appear in Colossians

1:19, where we have in the preceding context (Colossians 1:15-17) the Godhead or Deity of the Son strongly emphasized, and this truth is there-fore embodied in the words, "all the fullness." Accordingly, J.N.D. adds the clause, "of the Godhead," in brackets in Colossians 1:19. See the N. Tr. and the instructive footnote relating to these words given in it. The words "Godhead" and "Deity"

Christ is our all, and scripture often reveals the blessings grace has given us side by side with a revelation of the glories of Christ in Whom they are made ours. We are by this association reminded that He is the measure and the certitude of all we receive. Accordingly, we find here that the fullness of our blessedness is associated with the fullness of Christ's Person: "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete (filled full) in Him" (Colossians 2:9). This particular unfolding to us is a supremely elevating truth concerning our adorable Lord. In Him all the fullness of the Godhead has come down to us — bodily; also in Him we have that completeness needful for our acceptance before God! The incarnate Son is thus our perfect Mediator between God and man; in Him God is presented, and in Him man is accepted!

Godhead, the prominent word in this passage, is a word of our English tongue, adequately expressive of the original noun, theotees, and has been used during the past six centuries in the various successive English translations of this verse. The suffix, head, indicates the presence and embodiment of all the essential qualities and attributes of God — indeed, God Himself. It is allied in origin to the suffix, hood, found with a similar significance in words like manhood, motherhood, priesthood, Godhood (occasionally), implying in each case all the status, ability, dignity, necessary to being so-and-so.

Thus, manhood comprehends everything that is proper or essential to a man, and that distinguishes a man from every other order of beings. And, in like manner, Godhead signifies God in the absolute nature of His Being, comprising all that He is in Himself, and in none beside Himself. In view of this recognized usage, it is a misapprehension of the meaning of "the compound nature of the English word" to speak, as some have recently done, of the word "Godhead implying relation with the creation," as if -head meant Head of creation. Their definition is untrue, there being nothing "relative" in the word itself. Its meaning given in the English dictionaries is "divine personality"; "divine nature or essence"; "the character or quality of being God." Therefore, "Godhead" may be "properly used to convey The Absolute," as well as "Deity," its Latin equivalent or synonym. Indeed some prefer the plain English word to its foreign relation.

There can be no doubt that God Who was manifest in flesh, Who was in Christ, was before the writer's mind in the word, Godhead, when he wrote the simple but profound lines:

"We see the Godhead-glory

Shine through that human veil;

And, willing, hear the story

Of love come here to heal." The Use of the Word "Divinity "

It may not be inappropriate in this place to refer to the word, divinity, as distinguished from Godhead or Deity, with which, however, it is sometimes confounded. Both the latter are, as already noted, faithful translations of the Greek word, theotees, which occurs only in Colossians

2:9. This word means "Godhead in the absolute sense" (J.N.D.), and is distinct in meaning from theiotees, occurring in Romans 1:20, which signifies the character of God, rather than God Himself. The word in Romans is applied by the apostle to what may be observed of God in the works of nature — His creatorial majesty, might, and wisdom. These attributes are included in His theiotees, divinity, but are not His Essential Being. On the other hand, all the fullness of the theotees dwells in Christ bodily. To mark this important distinction between the two words, "Godhead" in Romans 1:20 is replaced by "divinity" in the R.V., the New Tr., in W.K.'s Notes on Romans, and in other translations. "Godhead" is reserved for the rendering of theotees in Colossians 2:9, where Deity in the fullest, most absolute sense is required both by the word and its context.

It is always well to note the inspired values of scriptural words, particularly of those relating to the Person of our adorable Lord. And in view of the prevailing denials and detractions of the Ever-blessed Son, it is specially important to mark this distinction between the terms, Deity and Godhead, on the one hand, and divinity on the other, and to remember that the latter should never be regarded as a synonym or as the equivalent of the former two. As evidence that this warning against ambiguity in this respect is not needless, it may be recalled that a well-known series of Lectures on the Deity of Christ was entitled, most inaptly in the interests of truth, "The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is regrettable also that many speak of "our divine Lord," "the Christ divine," forgetting how they disparage that Blessed One by such "faint praise," through using a vague description of Him, in which Arius, Socinus, and those who bring not "the doctrine of the Christ" would readily join. Let us in this sacred subject, above all others, seek to use the sacred word, "not to be condemned, that he who is opposed may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say about us" (Titus 2:8).

"O Thou peerless One,

Great God revealed in flesh, the living link

'Twixt Godhead and my soul! be Thine the praise,

The loving worship of a loving heart,

Rich in Thyself, for, oh, however filled,

Howe'er exalted, holy, undefiled,

Whatever wealth of blessedness is mine,

What am I, Lord? an emptiness, a nothing.

Thou art My boast, in Whom, all fullness dwells

Of the great Godhead, Thou Whose name I bear,

Whose life is mine, Whose glory and Whose bliss,

All, all are mine."

01.12. The Father's Audible Witness to the Son

The Father’s Audible Witness to the Son The Lord Jesus said, "No one knows the Son but the Father, nor does any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal [Him]" (Matthew 11:27). There is a mutual and intimate knowledge between the Father and the Son in the Godhead, which is necessarily infinite in character and measure. In this full and personal acquaintance with Each Other, no creature can possibly share on the ground of either right or capacity. There could be no reciprocity between the Creator and the creature. Hence the eternal relations in the Godhead, by reason of their ineffable nature, must ever be above all human scrutiny and comprehension, apart from the disclosures granted in divine revelation.

"The higher mysteries of Thy fame

The creature’s grasp transcend;

The Father only Thy blest name

Of Son can comprehend;

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou

That every knee to Thee should bow."

Nevertheless, we do not, like the Athenians, worship an "unknown God." In rare and choice passages of scripture, the inner chambers of the eternal dwelling-place of God are, as it were, momentarily unveiled to us, and from them we are permitted to learn precious and invaluable secrets concerning the Father and the Son. The Father bears witness to the Son (John 5:37) , and the Son manifests and declares the name of the Father (John 17:6, John 17:26); and both testimonies are contained in the inspired record. This revelation of what lies within the Godhead was not vouchsafed in man’s earlier days. It is true that glimpses of the external glories of the God of Israel were granted to the seventy elders, who saw under His feet "as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone" (Exodus 24:10). And Moses, privileged as he was, saw not the face of Jehovah, and only "the back parts" of His glory (Exodus 33:23). But such appearances were occasional and momentary and only in connection with the glory of God in the government of the nation of Israel particularly and the world generally. In the New Testament, where Divine love is the central theme of what is made known, revelations are given of the exercises of the heart of God itself. Here we are permitted to know a little of the activities of the Divine affections within the circle of Deity, between the Father and the Son. We learn that loving, delighting, and rejoicing, as well as omniscience and omnipotence, exist in the internal mysteries of the Godhead. Do we sufficiently prize these august unfoldings in scripture? Sheba’s queen was prostrated in spirit when she beheld the royal splendours and vast magnificence of Solomon; what is the glory of Solomon compared with the glory of God! What a chastened spirit, therefore, should be ours, beloved, when we listen to the revealed intercourse between the Father and the Son! Awed by the overwhelming wonder of such words, we shall surely adore the Father and the Son in a worship too profound to

be expressed, too fervent to be restrained.

Remembering, therefore, with worshipping spirits Whose voice was heard, let us briefly consider the Father's utterances to the Son and concerning Him at the Jordan, and afterwards on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Sonship declared at the Jordan Our Lord was baptized of John in Jordan, in succession to a multitude of Jews who had believed the preaching of the forerunner respecting the immediate coming of Jehovah, and who had publicly confessed their sins and were baptized. It was at this historical point of the public association of the Lord Jesus with the sin-burdened remnant of Israel that the unique distinction of the Blessed One from all others was proclaimed by the Father from the heavens. As the Lord Jesus went up from the water of Jordan, both visible and audible testimony were rendered to Him from the opened heavens. The Spirit was seen, and a Voice out of the heavens was heard.

Jesus Himself saw the Holy Spirit of God "descending as a dove and coming upon Him" (Matthew 3:16). The Son Whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, the Father sealed (John 6:27; John 10:36). The Lord Jesus confessed no sins, but, as the Antitype of the Levitical meal-offering (Leviticus 2:1-16), He was at once anointed with the Holy Spirit, needing no blood of atonement like the poor of His flock to whom He was bringing the kingdom. But a further astonishing event followed; and, for the first time in scriptural history, the Trinity stood revealed — Father and Son and Holy Spirit. To the Spirit's visible witness, the Father added His audible witness to the Son. How beautiful is this evidence of the interest and care displayed by the Father for the glory of the Son! In this lowly place to which the obedient Son had descended, the Father in audible and articulate speech owned Him in the full unimpaired Sonship, which was His eternally. The heavens, then, were opened, and the Paternal voice addressed the Beloved Son on earth. The voice was sweet and gracious, not like "the voice of words" at Sinai, which "shook the earth," and terrified the hearers (Hebrews 12:26). It was the voice of the Father, saying with infinite complacency, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found My delight" (Matthew 3:17).

Greater Witness than John's

John the Baptist "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all men through him might believe." But the Lord said, "I have greater witness than that of John . . . the works . . . that I do, bear witness of Me . . . And the Father Himself which hath sent Me hath borne witness of Me" (John 1:7; John 5:36-37). At Jordan, then, at the commencement of His public ministry, the accrediting voice of the Father was given to the Son. In the very beginning of Matthew's Gospel it is shown that from birth Jesus was Jehovah, Immanuel (Matthew 1:21-23). And when, as Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus humbled Himself in baptism by John, the greatest born of women (Matthew 11:11) , the Father jealous of the honour of His Sent One proclaimed aloud the glory of His Sonship to those who had ears to hear the witness. Thus, the Father bore witness to Jesus that His personal Name of Son sustained His mediatorial office as Messiah, even as the Spirit bore similar witness in Hebrews 1:1-14.

If none but the Lord Himself and John the Baptist heard the Father's Voice with understanding, the testimony then rendered was preserved for the faith of all. And what a testimony! How it lifts our thoughts from man's need to the Father's delight! "Unto you is born," the angel said, "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Unto Me, the Father said, "This is My beloved Son." Taught by the Gospel record, we know what the Father beheld in the baptized Jesus: He was His

Dearly-beloved, His Only-begotten! Pause here and meditate, my soul. The Father Addressed the Son From a comparison of the records of this incident in the first three Gospels, we find that the Father's words were spoken to the Son Himself ("Thou art . . ."), as well as to those to whom the Son was presented ("This is . . ."). The three sets of words, as arranged below, are quoted from the New Translation. The variations are not due to any imperfection in the narrative or the narrator, but in each case the Holy Spirit preserves the meaning of the Father's utterance suitable to His purpose in the Gospel where it occurs. The records are not contradictory, but complementary.

Matthew 3:17Mark 1:11Luke 3:22

This isThou art Thou art

My beloved Son,My beloved Son,My beloved Son,

in Whomin Theein Thee

I have foundI have foundI have found

My delightMy delightMy delight The account in Matthew gives the form of the revelation made by the Father concerning the Son, not for the "wise and prudent," but for "babes" (see Matthew 11:25; also John 5:37). The latter are hereby instructed in the knowledge of the Christ: to the "little flock" the Father said, "This is My beloved Son." In Mark and Luke, the declaration takes the form of an expression of communion by the Father to the Son. The utterance is an acknowledgment by the Father of His complacency and delight in His beloved Son, and it was addressed directly to the opened ear of the Son Himself: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have found My delight." Moreover, it is recorded in scripture for the deepening of our communion with the Father and the Son.

"It was the grace and perfection of Jesus which caused heaven to open" upon the dependent Man, and the Voice to come forth from the Father, expressing His good pleasure to the Son on earth. When God saw the first man, Adam, in his created freshness, He pronounced him "very good" (Genesis 1:1-31), but in the Second Man, the last Adam, the Father found His "delight." And this delight in His Sent One is no surprise to us, because it is inconceivable that the Father could have the Only-begotten Son in His bosom, and not be delighted with Him. How transcendent that delight! Did the Divine Sonship begin at the Jordan?

Because the Sonship was announced by the Father at the baptism of the Lord Jesus, we have no right to conclude that He began to be the "beloved Son" at that point of time. The truth is that, being already the Son, He had descended into this place of lowly obedience on earth (see Hebrews 5:8). In His self-humiliation, He is the dearly-beloved Son of the Father because He was that before He became incarnate. When Pilate wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37), that description was certainly true of the Lord long before it was affixed to the cross. So when the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found My delight," the words were true of the Lord long before He came up out of the Jordan. How long before, the dearly-beloved Son Himself tells us, for He said to the Father, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). And it need not be said that if the Son was beloved of the Father before the foundation of the world, the Son was there in eternity to be loved. He, blessed be His holy Name, is the eternal Son, ever abiding in the eternal embraces of the Father's love.

Moreover, when the Father said He found His delight or good pleasure in Him, He spoke retrospectively, and not merely in view of the submissive act of baptism. The force of the verb in the original is not only "I am now well pleased," but also "I was well pleased." From everlasting, the Father found His delight in His beloved Son, as also, in another place, we read that Jehovah's soul delights in His beloved Servant (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18); the former in what He is personally, the latter in what He is mediatorially. The record in Mark and Luke agrees in significance with that in Matthew. The direct address to the Son, "Thou art My beloved Son," is consistent with His Sonship in the eternal past even as at the moment of the Father's utterance. Just as the Lord's "I am" spoken to the Jews ("Before Abraham was, I am," John 8:58) reaches back into eternity, so also do the Father's words, "Thou art . . .", spoken to the Son. The phrase, "Thou art," may have a retrospective meaning even when applied to the creature. Thus, the word of Jehovah to the chosen nation was "Thou art My servant, O Israel" (Isaiah 49:3; Isaiah 41:8). This was their status from the beginning of their national existence. The children of Israel were brought out of Pharaoh's house of bondage eight hundred years before Isaiah appealed to them to serve Jehovah (Exodus 23:25). "Thou art My servant" was true of the nation from Moses to Isaiah.

Similarly, David said in the wilderness of Judah, "O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee" (Psalms 63:1). But God had been David's God from his youth. The relationship was as true when he was in the desert with the sheep and the lion and bear, or in the valley of Elah with Goliath of Gath, as when he was in the wilderness of Judah a fugitive from Saul, and the psalm was composed by him there. In like manner, we believe that when Jehovah said to His Anointed King, "Thou art My Son" (Psalms 2:7), and when the Father said to the baptized Jesus, "Thou art My beloved Son," the utterances were of the widest import and indeed comprehended the eternal relation of the Son in the Godhead.

Moreover, the Father then added the confidential communication to His well-beloved Son "in Thee I have found My delight." As we listen to these words, we learn that the Father's love was resting then, as it ever had done, even before time was, in an immeasurable, invariable complacency upon the Son Who alone could apprehend the eternal fullness of that affection, and also adequately appreciate such a word. The Lord said to the Jews, "It is My Father Who glorifies Me . . . ye know Him not . . . but I know Him" (John 8:54-55).

Further, how exquisitely sweet it is to observe in Luke's Gospel that the Father's voice came in immediate sequence to the Son's prayer (Luke 3:21-22)! As the dependent and obedient Jesus was "being baptized, and praying," the heaven opened, the Holy Spirit descended, the Voice came. What delicate perfections and spiritual beauties are here portrayed in these blended activities of heaven and earth! The Son lifting up His eyes to heaven in prayerful intercourse with Him Who sent Him: the Spirit proceeding to fulfil His part in the lowly service of the Son: the Father out of heaven, in the inexpressible blessedness of His ineffable delight, saluting the Eternal Son, with may we say, the "kisses of His mouth!"

"Loved with love which knows no measure

Save the Father's love to Thee,

Blessed Lord, our hearts would treasure

All the Father's thoughts of Thee." The Father's Witness on the Holy Mount

Once again in the days of His flesh did the Son by audible witness receive "from God [the] Father honour and glory." For on the Mount of Transfiguration His voice was again heard, not out of the heavens this time, but out of the overshadowing cloud, the pavilion of the divine Presence, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found My delight: hear Him." The record of this attestation is found in Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17, with slight variations, all in harmony with the truth and beauty displayed by their contextual setting.

Though the circumstances and the significance of this heavenly witness are so attractive to the contemplative spirit, we cannot now tarry before these passages. It will, however, bear upon the special subject of these papers to remark that by this personal testimony the Father's words turned the hearts of the awe-struck apostles from the glory of the coming kingdom to consider the glory of the Son Himself. They must "hear Him." The imminent dispensational change was now in view. The earthly kingdom and its glory was deferred by the cross, but the personal glory of the Son, due to His essential relationship to the Father, was revealed to them, and would remain as the portion and joy of those who took up their cross, and followed the Master in His rejection. Hence the word of command to them (added in the Gospels, but not included in the Epistle), "hear Him." From this witness out of the cloud of glory the apostles would learn that the rejected Christ was the Beloved Son and the delight of the Father. "So it had been in eternity before creation; so it was when the world was made by Him, and in all the dealings of providence, in the secret working of grace with individuals, and in the public government of Israel under the law.

"So still more when the incarnate Word presented that object of His everlasting complacency as man on earth in unwavering dependence and obedience on His way to death for His glory, for man's salvation, for the church's blessedness, for His people's deliverance, and for the reconciliation of all things" (W.K.). This revelation on the holy mount is, therefore, a heavenly truth concerning the Person of the Son, in its character infinitely above, and indeed independent of His mediatorial offices in the earthly kingdom. Being the eternal Son, He had become the Servant to take in due time the kingdom of universal rule and authority; and in that same proper personality He will at the end deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

01.13. The Son, Himself God and Jehovah, as God's Spokesman

The Son, Himself God and Jehovah, as God’s Spokesman In Scripture, the name of Son sets forth both personal relationship and special representation. For instance, in John’s writings, the Sonship of Christ especially connotes His personal relationship to the Father, Whose love rested upon Him before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). In Hebrews, the Sonship of Christ is especially associated with His perfect revelation and representation of God to men, and also with His perfect administration of divine government. The Son is the One in and by Whom God has now spoken, Whose sceptre is a sceptre of equity, and Whose throne is for ever and ever (Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:8). The Sonship of God’s Spokesman is therefore the keynote of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and this relationship imparts an infinite value to His past sacrificial offering and His present priestly service. For this reason Christianity is shown to excel and supersede the Levitical system, ordained through angels as it was, in the hand of a mediator, Moses (Galatians 3:19). Christ, because of His inherent dignity as Son, is the Mediator of a better covenant which is established on the footing of better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

First Son, then Spokesman

All the superstructure of Christ’s mediatorial service, as expounded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is founded upon the truth of His Sonship. Accordingly, the Deity of the Son is elaborately demonstrated in the forefront of the Epistle. However great had been the former messengers of God, and whatever variety was in their communications, they all are now surpassed by the advent of the Son. "God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days has spoken to us in [the person of the] Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).* {*Appendix D — Jesus Christ is called Son, but not Child of God

Jesus is never called teknon but whyos. It would be derogatory to, and a denial of, His eternal glory to speak of Him as God’s teknon (child).* But He is Son (whyos) in more senses than one.

[*In the phrase, "Thy Holy Child" (Acts 4:27, Acts 4:30, A.V.), pais not teknon occurs in the original, and therefore "Servant" is a more correct translation than "Child."]

He is Son of God as born in time and viewed on earth in His predicted association with Israel as their Messiah and King (Psalms 2:1-12). He is determined Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). And what is more important than all, and the basis of all, He is Son of God, Only-begotten Son in the Father’s bosom, entirely apart from the time of His manifestation or the results of His work of redemption, Son of the Father in His own nature and personal relationship in that eternal subsistence which is essential to the Godhead and characteristic of it. For this last we have to consult the Gospel and Epistles of John.

Nothing therefore can be more correct than the language of all the inspired writers; nothing more feeble than its appreciation by theological writers even with the facts and words before their eyes. But the source of their failure is quite intelligible: a sense of Christ’s glory as inadequate as of the derived privileges of the Christian. W.K.}

Now we see that directly the Son is mentioned (vers. 1, 2) in company with the prophets of olden time, the Spirit proclaims the all-surpassing personal glories of the Son that there may be no confusion of rank in the minds of any of the saints. As on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets, both vanish that Jesus may be seen alone in His unapproachable personal glory, of which the Father's voice out of the cloud witnesses, so in this first chapter the Spirit witnesses that the Son is God and Jehovah, and is infinitely superior to the angels of heaven and the prophets of Israel, the Creator being necessarily far above the most exalted of His creatures. The Son Who now is God's Speaker is Himself declared to be the One Whom the Spirit of God in Psalms 45:1-17 addressed as God (Psalms 45:8) "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In like manner, the Spirit had, "as to the Son," said in Psalms 102:1-28, "Thou, Lord (Jehovah), in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of Thine hands" (Psalms 102:10). The names and functions of the Godhead are here attributed by the Holy Spirit to God's Spokesman. "Son" denotes His personal relationship to the One Who sent Him, while "Spokesman" denotes His relationship to those to whom He came and spoke. He was deputed of God to be Spokesman, but not to be Son, for He was the Son in His own Person and nature before all worlds. He was first Son, then Spokesman. Of old, in a subsidiary way, Aaron was deputed by Jehovah to be the "spokesman" of Moses to the people of Israel (Exodus 4:14-16). He was to be to Moses "instead of a mouth," and Moses was to be to him "instead of God." Aaron was formally appointed to the office of an intermediary between Moses and the people, and was therefore Moses' spokesman. But his original personal relationship to Moses was that of brother, and Jehovah described him as "Aaron the Levite thy brother." Aaron was first brother, then spokesman. This historical incident from Exodus may therefore be used to illustrate the truth of Hebrews 1:1-14. Aaron was the voice of Moses to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1-2). Moreover, the family relationship between the two men consolidated this special service of communicating the commands of Jehovah to the king of Egypt. Aaron was first the brother of Moses, and then his spokesman. Christ was first Son, and then God's Spokesman. The Servants and the Son in Christ's Parable In the main feature of the Holy Spirit's opening address (Hebrews 1:1-14), there is a correspondence between one of the Lord's parables spoken to the Jewish leaders and the Epistle written to the Jewish believers. In both the parable and the Epistle extreme emphasis is laid upon the coming of the Son. The authority and glory of God's New Testament message takes its unique character from the personal glory of the Messenger. How, indeed, could it be otherwise than unparalleled when Jehovah Himself became His own Messenger? The Lord when challenged by the high priest confessed Himself to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed (Mark 14:61), but He had very shortly before that occasion, while teaching in the temple-courts, spoken to the Jews of His Sonship.

During the last week of His ministry in Jerusalem, our Lord illustrated His own rejection and death by the parable of the wicked husbandmen and their ill-treatment first of the servants and then of the son sent to them by the owner of the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). This parable formed part of the Lord's final appealing testimony to the chief priests and elders of the people. It contained a solemn warning, too, for it showed that they (the builders) would refuse the Stone Jehovah laid in Zion, but that He, to their confusion and utter destruction, would make that despised Stone the exalted Cornerstone (Luke 20:16-19). In this brief pictorial summary of God's dealings with Israel as a nation set apart, sheltered, and cultivated to bear fruit that should be a joy to Him (Isaiah 5:1-30), the Lord so worded the parable that we may observe

the marked fundamental distinction, as well as the general resemblance, between the servants and the son sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard.

There is resemblance, in that both servants and son were "sent," that is, they were both accredited messengers of the owner. In the manner of their reception there is a further resemblance, for both were shockingly handled and murdered by the husbandmen. But the wide distinction between the servants and the son lay, not in the office, but in the person of the latter. While both were delegates as to office, the one sent "last of all" was the son, his "one son, his well-beloved" (Mark). The son was one whom the husbandmen were to "reverence," a respect not due to servants (Revelation 22:8-9). By reason of his filial dignity as the only son, he had an unequalled personal standing. He was the "heir," as the husbandmen recognized, and put him to death on that very account. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on the inheritance."

How vividly our Lord portrayed in this parable the awful sin of the Jews in crucifying the Son of God and putting Him to open shame (Hebrews 6:6)!

Crucifying the Son of God This parable, therefore, was a testimony of the terrible sin of the Jews against the Son, rendered by Him in the ears of its responsible perpetrators on the very eve of its accomplishment. In the past the children of Israel had sinned against the many servants of God by whom He had spoken to them, but now they were about to lay violent hands upon the Son of God. That evil generation was guilty in respect of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from Abel to Zacharias, the son of Barachias (Matthew 23:34-35) but now as a climax they were about to deny and slay Him Who was pre-eminently the Holy and Righteous One (Acts 3:14-15). For those former outrages upon God’s servants, the sword of His just retribution remained sheathed, but when the Jews should have committed the more determined and deadly sin against the Son, that sword would awake, and the rebellious husbandmen should not escape. Because they cast the Son and Heir out of the vineyard and slew Him, thus treading under foot the Son of God (cp. Hebrews 10:29) , Jerusalem is even now trodden under foot by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24) , while in the future the terrible unsparing vintage judgments, now held in abeyance, will fall upon the guilty people from the hand of God (Revelation 14:1-20). Not only as their King, but as the Son, the Jews refused their Messiah. When Pilate was disposed to release Him, they insisted upon His crucifixion, saying, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). In thus denying before the Gentiles the Son, they denied the Father also, even as the Son Himself said of them, "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:21). The Son is called Well-beloved, not the Servants

According to the terms used in the parable, the son, though commissioned for service in the vineyard like the servants, was in an entirely different category from them. They were bond-slaves (douloi) , but a son is not a servant (doulos) in status; he is heir and "lord of all" (Galatians 4:1, Galatians 4:7). The son by his relationship belonged to the innermost and most dignified circle of the family, to which the servants could offer no title. Therefore, in coming into the vineyard as son, he came with full proprietary rights, not only to the fruits, but to the vineyard itself. His claims were just, and were presented in his own absolute right, as well as in that of the father. According to the truth conveyed by the parable, the Servant-Son of God appeared in the midst of the husbandmen as "the Just One," of Whom they became "the betrayers and murderers," as Stephen said (Acts 7:52).

Further, love is an element revealed in this parable, as well as the Son’s rightful authority. The father sent his "beloved" son (Luke 20:13). But the father’s love for that son had no softening effect upon the husbandmen. They, however, discerned the identity of the son, saying, "This is the heir"; and reasoning about the heirship (Luke 20:14) , they conspired to slay him on that account. If they thought at all that he was the father’s "well-beloved" (Mark 12:6), that thought did but inflame their anger towards him (John 5:18).

Historically, we learn from the Gospels that it was no matter of interest or knowledge to the unbelieving Jews among whom the Lord ministered that the Father loved the Son Whom He had sent to them. But how ineffable was that love between Themselves! By that intimate bond of reciprocal love ever existing in the Godhead, the Son when manifested on earth was everything to the Father, and the Father was all things to the Son.

Why then, we may ask, should Jehovah now made known as the Father send His only Son, His well-beloved, to the vineyard, when in past days His bondslaves had gone there only at the expense of their honour and their lives? Ah, the sending of the Son of His love proved the patience of God the Father with the refractory husbandmen, and also His earnest desire that when they saw His Son they might "reverence" Him and behave themselves righteously in respect of the vineyard with which He had entrusted them. Alas, how it proved also the inveteracy of the evil in the hearts of the husbandmen!

First Son, then Servant The love, then, of God the Father was in exercise towards the Son, though not towards the servants who preceded Him in coming to the vineyard. He was the well-beloved Son, not they. But when did this love of the Father for the Son first arise? The thought is incredible that there ever was a moment when the love of God the Father did not flow out to the Son. "I am Jehovah, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Did the One Who was sent "last of all" to the vineyard on a servant’s errand begin to be the Son of the Father at the moment when He entered the vineyard as Servant to do the will of Him Who sent Him? Did the love of God the Father for the Son begin at His incarnation? Or rather, since "God is love," is not Their mutual love a necessary activity of Their nature and relationship in the Deity, and therefore without beginning or ending? Scripture teaches that this uncaused spontaneity is the distinguishing character of divine love, placing it in the utmost contrast with all human love.

Clearly, in His parable, our Lord spoke of love and filial relationship making this contrast between the Son and the servants. The fact of His Sonship, which previously existed, enhanced His embassy beyond all comparison. No greater ambassador than "God in Christ" could be sent to man. For the execution of this mission, then, the Son was pleased to become a Servant. He was, therefore, the Son before He took upon Himself "the form of a servant" (doulos). He was the Son from all eternity, but He became the Servant in the fullness of the time. Because of this humiliation, there never could be such a Servant as He, blessed be His holy name for ever and ever. Our Lord in this parable lays stress upon the fact that the Son was such before He was sent: "Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send My beloved Son" (Luke 20:13). The words show that, looking on to the future, the Owner planned to send One Whom He could, before sending, describe as "My beloved Son."* So that the One Who was deputed to take up the "mediatorial office" so soon as "the fullness of the time was come" (Galatians 4:4) was God’s beloved Son. He was first the Son, then the Servant.

{*There seems to be prophetical allusion to this love in the Godhead in the terms of affection, "My well-beloved" and "My beloved," used at the beginning of Jehovah's song about His vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7): "Now will I sing to My well-beloved a song of My beloved touching His vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard. . . ." Jehovah sings the song (ver. 1) , and the vineyard, the house of Israel, belongs to Him (ver. 7), and to His beloved also (ver. 1). The title, "well-beloved" (y'deed), points to the Messiah and is embodied in Jehovah's name for Solomon (Jedidiah), the "beloved of his God" (2 Samuel 12:25; Nehemiah 13:26), type of Him Who was the true Heir of Jehovah's vineyard (Mark 12:6-7). The other term, "My beloved" (dohd), in Isaiah 5:1 seems also to apply to the Messiah. The word occurs frequently (about thirty times) in the Song of Solomon, but nowhere else in the Old Testament, with the exalted meaning of divine love. There is, therefore, a close link between Jehovah's song of the vineyard in Isaiah and the Lord's parable of the vineyard in the Gospels.} The Son and the Angels

We now turn again to Hebrews 1:1-14. The Sonship of the Messiah, which truth, as we have seen, is taught parabolically in the Gospels, is also affirmed doctrinally at the outset of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and is there accompanied by a wealth of testimony selected by the Holy Spirit from His own written records in the Old Testament concerning the Saviour Who was to come. In the parable, the Son is seen to be superior to God's servants on earth, and in the Epistle to God's angels in heaven. This pre-eminence in the heaven of heavens belongs to the Son in virtue of His own Person and Name, quite apart from what is due to Him in virtue of His mediatorial work. It is mentioned that He has made purification for sins (ver. 3), but it is not stated here that in consequence of that purgation God has exalted Him to His right hand, as announced elsewhere. In this passage, the Son takes His exalted place of pre-eminence in virtue of His own right. In Ephesians 1:17-23, God, the Father of glory, sets Him down at His right hand, but here the Son in His own glory sets Himself down in the place of supreme Majesty, far removed above all angelic beings. He, "having made [by Himself] the purification of sins, set Himself down on the right hand of the Greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as He inherits a name more excellent than they" (vers. 3, 4). His "more excellent" name of Son entitles Him to this peerless rank, and this name is His by personal right — by inheritance. Is it asked, How far is the Son above the angels? What is the degree of His pre-eminence? How much "better" than they? The answer is, By so much as the glory of the name of the Son exceeds that of angels. So far in His nature as God is above the creatures of His hand, so far in His nature is the Son Who made the worlds above the angels. And this exalted dignity is declared to be due to Him because of His "more excellent" name and apart from His work of atonement, the worth of which is immeasurable too.

Moreover, the apostle proceeds to show from the scriptures that God said to the Son what He never said to angels. God witnessed to His Sonship both as a never-changing fact from all eternity, and also as equally true in the amazing stoop of incarnation. Speaking to Him, Jehovah said, "Thou art My Son;" and, speaking of Him, Jehovah said, "He shall be to Me a Son" (ver. 5). The first quotation is expressed in the abstract, timeless present: "Thou art . . ." acknowledging the Son in the eternal Godhead. The second quotation relates to the Son incarnate, and the Gospel narratives show how amply this promise was fulfilled to Him during the days of His dependence: "I will be to Him for Father, and He shall be to Me for Son." No angel knew such relationship as this.

Further, angels themselves never are to be worshipped, but even they, whatever their high celestial dignity, must worship God’s Spokesman. This homage the angels are commanded to render to the incarnate Son, the Firstborn, whenever He is brought into this habitable world (ver. 6). Angels will be sent to testify to man in the future (see Revelation, passim), as they were in past times (see O. Test., passim), and as indeed, even now, they are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). But, however great their heavenly rank, when the Son is made a little lower than they for the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:7, Hebrews 2:9) , they must still worship Him, the Son of man, as the Eternal Son, Whose Deity they know.

What Witness to the Eternal Sonship is given in Hebrews 1:1-14? The chapter shows conclusively that the Nazarene despised and crucified by the Jews was the Son of God. In Him God had now spoken fully and finally, because, being Son, He was abundantly competent to represent God in authority and government. And this competency, which is essentially involved in Sonship, is shown to be His intrinsically. Being Son absolutely, He carried that relation of Son in power and grace with Him for His mediatorial work.

(1) The eternity of the Sonship is shown by His creation of the worlds (Hebrews 1:2). He made the worlds or aions, that is, all the time-phases and the space-phases of the universe (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), fulfilling God’s will thereby. The work of creation was wrought through or by (dia) Him Who is called Son. In His pre-incarnate Deity, therefore, the Son acted as God’s efficient co-operating Agent in making the worlds.

Since the Holy Spirit attributes creatorial activity to the Son, His existence must have preceded that of the universe which He called into being. The Son Who made purification for sins had previously made the worlds, and in both transactions He wrought mediately, in the former before incarnation, and in the latter after incarnation.

(2) The eternity of the Sonship is involved in His inherent ability to reveal God (Hebrews 1:3). This ability is associated with His "Being," that is, His eternal continuous existence: being the effulgence of God’s glory and the very impress or expression of God’s substance or essential nature, as well as upholding the universe by the word of His power.

These glories of the Son arise from His own proper nature, and are therefore associated with the eternity of His Being, and they cannot be restricted to His incarnate condition. In the Godhead the Son is the outshining of God’s glory and the expression of His substance, as truly as in manhood. What stupendous import the apprehension of this truth adds to the words, "God . . . has spoken to us in [the person of the] Son"!

(3) The eternity of the Sonship is taught by the fact that the Son is personally addressed as God and as Jehovah (Hebrews 1:8-12). These names are applied prophetically to the Son in His kingdom (Psalms 45:1-17), and in His affliction and humiliation (Psalms 102:1-28), but their application to Him in those circumstances proves that these names are His by inherent right, and were not acquired at His incarnation. For if the Son was at all entitled to the name, God, and to the name, Jehovah, He was so entitled from all eternity. The divine Name is not transferable: "I am Jehovah, that is My Name; and My glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8).

Chapter 15

01.14. Before the Foundation of the World and before the Ages of Time

Before the Foundation of the World and before the Ages of Time

Nothing more effectually baffles the mind of man than the conception of eternity before the world began. Man can know nothing at all concerning it except what God has revealed. Scripture is comparatively silent about the eternal past. Even in the New Testament, where the clearest and fullest light of God’s revelation shines, very few passages reach backward in their scope further than the foundation of the world and the beginning of the ages of time. But these few allusions are to be prized and studied as of choicest worth, seeing they unveil to us a little of God’s secret purposes formed by Him before He launched the universe into being by His omnipotent word and furnished it by His omniscient wisdom. The "foundation of the world" is frequently mentioned in scripture as the extreme border-line of the past "from" which human history is reckoned (Matthew 13:35; Matthew 25:34; Luke 11:50; Hebrews 4:3; Hebrews 9:26; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8). For instance, the names found in the book of life were written "from the foundation of the world," as the two passages in the Revelation (N. Tr.) declare. The divine record of these elect persons began at that point. But what lies beyond that border-line of creation’s beginning, when God was all? What was "before the foundation of the world?" What took place when the Deity was Absolute, and unrelated to the non-existent universe? An answer can be found only in the disclosures God has been pleased to make in His word. And from His revelations we learn of His love, of His foreknowledge, His election, and His promise of eternal life; and we know, therefore, that these plannings of infinite love were formulated before the foundation of the world. The counsels of grace existed in the Godhead from eternity, but the fact of their existence then was revealed to man in time. The phrase, "before the foundation of the world," occurs three times in the New Testament (John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20) , and the kindred phrase, "before the ages of time," twice (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2, N. Tr.). Let us with unaffected humility of mind look at these five passages, remembering the sacred and profound nature of their communications, proceeding, as they do, from "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isaiah 57:15). Let our hearts be as the "weaned child" that the Lord alone may be exalted in our eyes as we receive His word. The Father was loving the Son before the World’s Foundation In John 17:24, the Son presents to the Father His desires for those whom the Father had given Him, basing His request upon the love that existed between Them before the foundation of the world. He said, "Father, [as to] those whom Thou hast given Me, I desire that where I am they also may be with Me that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before [the] foundation of [the] world." The Son knows that His Father’s eternal love would give Him His heart’s desire, and would not withhold the request of His lips. The Son’s desire for His own is that they may contemplate His given mediatorial glory in company with Himself — in that sphere which is proper and peculiar to Himself. For we must note that the Son said, "where I am," not "where I shall be." Moses had his Pisgah from whence he viewed the earthly inheritance promised to the fathers. The disciples too were led up into the "high mountain apart" where in company with "Jesus only" they

beheld a transient display of the coming glories of Messiah's kingdom. But the Lord here seeks a viewpoint more exalted for His own. He requests the Father that with Him ("where I am") they may view His conferred glory, in that day when all things in the heavens and on the earth shall be headed up in Him (Ephesians 1:10). But how divinely transcendent is the basis presented to the Father for this exceptional boon! The Son does not make request for His own, because "Thine they were; and Thou gavest them Me" (as in ver. 6); nor because Thou "hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (as in ver. 23); but because "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." The Son knew that there was no plea weightier in the Father's estimation than the love which was co-eternal with the Father and Himself. In the secret intimacies of the Deity, the Father loved the Son "before the foundation of the world," and therefore the Father can deny His Beloved nothing in His incarnation. In this passage, then, a single phrase of the Son of the Father conducts us to the regions of the timeless past. As a "door was opened in heaven" for John to behold visions of judgments and glories to come (Revelation 4:1), so for us a door is opened in the eternal Home of love. Standing at the world's foundation, we by faith gaze from that threshold into that unapproachable dwelling-place of Light, and behold that then and there "God is love." Moreover, we hear, reverberating throughout the heights and depths of infinite inscrutability, these words of the Son, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." "Thou" — the Father; "Me" — the Son! So that before the worlds were, the Father was there, and the Son was there — living and loving Persons in that eternal past. This utterance to the Father, allowed by God's matchless grace to fall upon the creature's ear, is a marvellous unveiling of the seclusions of the remotest eternity. By it we are, if we may so speak, brought into the presence of the divine relations of the Father and the Son, in Absolute Deity. Truly these relations are "the depths of God," of which the apostle speaks, and adds that "the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). But God's Spirit has revealed to us this eternal relationship of the Father and the Son through these words of the Son Himself. Will it weary us to tarry a little in the light of these revealing words? They contain so much in such little compass. They surely unfold that in the eternal all-comprehending Godhead, love was ever being bestowed, and love was ever being received. Before the existence of any creature or created thing, One was being loved by Another: "Thou lovedst Me." The One Who was loved before the foundation of the world speaks to the One Who loved Him then, and addresses Him as Father: "Father, I will . . . for Thou lovedst Me" — the Son.

How exquisite is this confidence of eternal love! The Son discloses "the secrets of the Father's breast" to those whom He has chosen out of the world. He would have them, not the world, know that, in the essential nature of Deity, "before the world was," the Father's love dwelt in complacent affection upon "the Son of His love." Before the foundation of the world, the Father in His essential Being was Father relatively to the Son, and the Son in His essential Being was Son relatively to the Father.

How fervent the Father's love for the Son! How ardent the Son's love for the Father! The love of the Deity is no personified abstraction. We do not read that love is God, but that "God is love," and also that in its exercise the love of God is Paternal and Filial. The Son, speaking with the perfect knowledge of that love in all its fullness, desired of the Father that "His own" might be with Him and behold the glory given Him. The Son knew that the Father, Whose love for Him was eternal, found His good pleasure in the "will" of the Son even as He did in the obedience of the Son to the will of

the Father. And on this immutable basis the Son, blessed be His holy name for evermore, places the special character of our destiny in endless bliss.

Let us now pass from the words of the Son relating to His glory to the words of the Holy Spirit, which relate to matters decided by consultation in the Godhead "before the foundation of the world."

Chosen in Christ before the World's Foundation In Ephesians 1:1-23, we are again led back to the threshold of time, and again receive a revelation of what was enacted before the worlds began. Again, we learn that in that timeless state we were present before the mind of God. Even as we begin to read, the Holy Spirit puts into our lips the language of praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:3-4).

Observe the divine names employed in the passage. The Spirit speaks not of "God" but of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the exercise of this discriminating choice of those who were to be "in Christ," the Centre in Whom all things in the heavens and on the earth should be headed up in the fullness of times (1: 10). God the Father made His selections "in Christ" before the world's foundation.

There is love as well as government embodied in the new creation "in Christ"; accordingly, the appropriate name of relationship in love is added, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." His eternal purpose is that we should be "holy and blameless before Him in love"; hence, it is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has chosen us in Him Who is the Son of His love, "His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:3).

Thus, we are taught in Paul's Epistle as in John's Gospel that the divine relations of Father and Son are associated with those counsels and purposes formulated in Deity before the world's foundation. Then the Father was loving the Son and determining who should be His companions in that effulgent glory to God which will be the crowning outcome of His mediatorial work, when all things are headed up in the Christ, the Son of man. That the Father should have loved the Son before the world's foundation is perhaps less wonderful in our eyes than that we should have been then chosen in Him; but both truths are clearly revealed to us for the exaltation of our worship and the exuberance of our praise.

Foreknown before the World's Foundation In Peter, this remarkable phrase occurs for the third time. We are here shown that God's redemptive plan for heavenly as well as for earthly blessing and glory was foreknown by Him "before" the world's foundation. While the redemption and salvation of God's earthly people were announced "by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70) , the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, was foreknown before the world began. The apostle writes, "knowing that ye have been redeemed . . . by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of [the] world" (1 Peter 1:18-20). Peter speaks of what preceded the divine purposes for Jehovah's earthly people which are said to be "from the world's foundation."

Here, also, we are admitted into secrets "hid in God" before any creation or time relations were established. Then was foreknown "the blood of Christ Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." Then in the circle of Absolute Deity the divine will in respect to the sacrifice for sins and the sanctification of believers was enunciated. The "volume of the book" was written (Hebrews 10:7-9). The order of the Son's coming into the world was fixed, and recorded in "the roll of the book," known only to the Deity.

There were, therefore, foreknowledge and determination in the Godhead before the world's foundation with reference to the great sacrificial work, and to the One Who would undertake it "in these last days." It was God's Son Who said, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me;" "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psalms 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7). That will of God involved not only the revelation of the Father, but the service of sacrifice and priesthood and the sanctification of believers (Hebrews 10:10).

Purpose and Promise before the Ages of Time But we read in scripture of priority to the ages of time as well as to the world's foundation. The "world" in Biblical usage may be said to be the scheme of material things designed for Adam and his race, into which sin entered (John 1:10; Acts 17:24; Romans 5:12). The "ages of time" seem to be the successive phases and periods of God's dealings with His creatures, and the beginning of these ages coincides with the beginning of creation.

Anterior to both and to the whole sphere of space and time is the boundless, timeless state of eternity, where Godhead dwells. But God has revealed certain matters which took place before the ages of time as well as before the world's foundation. These matters relate to counsels and purposes determined within the Deity. With regard to the creation of mankind, for example, we read that God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Man was created in accordance with that expression of purpose, whenever determined. The phrase, "the ages of time," rendered "before the world began" in the A.V., is found twice in the New Testament, once in Timothy and once in Titus. In Ephesians, Paul speaks of our being chosen in Christ before the world's foundation; and in Timothy speaks of God's purpose and grace which was give to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time (2 Timothy 1:9). He connects the Christian calling with the determining will of God exercised toward "us in Christ Jesus" before the successive ages of time with their varied characters began to run their course. This divine purpose and grace existed in the counsels of the Godhead before all ages and time-cycles, and are now revealed to the church, the chosen vehicle of their display. In Titus, we read of the promise of eternal life before the world began: "in the hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time" (Titus 1:2). Here again, we are shown that the promise which the Christian inherits goes back in origin before all human history into the eternity of the past. This is the "promise in Christ" of which Gentile as well as Jewish believers equally partake (Ephesians 3:6). But who was there before the ages of time to receive a promise? For "promise" implies a plurality of persons concerned. At least, there must be one to make a promise and another to receive it. This promise of eternal life was, therefore, made by God and received by the Son in the counsels of the Godhead before the world began. The following extract is from J.N.D.'s Synopsis on this passage in Titus: —

"'Promised before the world began' is a remarkable and important expression. One is admitted into the thoughts of God before the existence of this changing and mingled scene. . . . Eternal life is

connected with the unchangeable nature of God; with His counsels, which are as abiding as His nature; with His promises, in which He cannot deceive us, and to which He cannot be unfaithful.

"Our portion in life existed before the foundation of the world, not only in the counsels of God, not only in the Person of the Son, but in the promises made to the Son, as our portion in Him. It was the subject of those communications from the Father to the Son, of which we were the objects; the Son being their depositary.

Marvellous knowledge which has been given us of the heavenly communications of which the Son was the object, in order that we might understand the interest which we have in the thoughts of God, of which we were the objects in Christ before all the ages!"

What then in substance do these few scriptures teach us? They reveal divine relations which in the beginning existed in Absolute Godhead. They show that before created things were called into being, that before the ages of time began to roll their course, and that when Deity was absolutely all, the Father loved the Son, and, moreover, purposed that when the universe should be brought into subjection to the Son as its Head, there should be heavenly associates with Him in His universal rule, whom He would choose out of the sinful and lost world to occupy this exalted station. Such is the Father’s good pleasure in His beloved Son, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be.

"What raised the wondrous thought,

Or who did it suggest,

That we, the church, to glory brought,

Should with the Son be blest?

"O God, the thought was Thine,

Thine only it could be,

Fruit of the wisdom, love divine,

Peculiar unto Thee."

01.15. The Manifestation in the Son

The Manifestation in the Son

It would be wicked folly and gross irreverence on the part of any to attempt to pry into the mysteries of the Trinity or to comprehend the Blessed Person of the Son. On the other hand, it would be an affront to divine grace to despise such revelations of Himself as He has been pleased to make. What has been revealed is necessary to the development of the spiritual nature that the Father may receive from us that worship in truth which He seeks; and that in our worship we may intelligently worship One Whom we know (John 4:22) according to His own manifestation in the Son. The Meaning of Manifestation

Let us then strive to "receive with meekness" what unfoldings of the Father and the Son are stored in scripture for the deepening of our communion. It is an amazing comfort to remember that the profoundest truths of scripture are learned in a personal manner. They are communicated to us, not on tables of stone like the law, but in the Person of Christ Himself. To know the Son is to know the Father also (John 8:19).

We of course treasure and "keep" His words; they are to us "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." But the Lord Jesus is Himself what He taught. As He said to the Jews, answering their question, Who art Thou? "Altogether (or absolutely) that which I also say to you" (John 8:25). So that the incarnate Son was Himself the embodiment of what He came into the world to communicate. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This truth holds good of Him now in glory. Paul had before him as a governing motive the excellency of "the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and his ambition was "that I may know Him" (Php 3:8, Php 3:10). And to come to "the knowledge of the Son of God" is the pursuit of the whole assembly under the combined teaching of the gifts of Christ Himself (Ephesians 4:13).

Setting out the truth in this living personal manner before the eyes of men is sometimes spoken of in scripture as "making manifest" or "manifestation." We read of "God manifest in flesh," and that "the Son of God was manifested." Before considering the context of these and other of its occurrences, it is helpful to recollect the meaning of the word. To make manifest (phaneroo) is to bring to light what has been hidden hitherto. The idea of manifestation is never a transition from a state of non-existence to that of existence. You could not call the manufacture of the first locomotive, for instance, its manifestation, for the word takes for granted that the locomotive was in existence previously, but unmanifested, so that it could not be intelligently applied in this or such a case.

Manifestation, therefore, signifies that there is a point of time in the history of the person or thing at which it passes out of a concealed into a public or visible life. Scripture speaks of "God manifest in flesh." That manifestation took place at the time when He Who was God became flesh and was seen of men and angels. In like language, it is said that the Son of God was manifested. He Who was the Son, and unseen and unknown as such, appeared or was manifested "in the likeness of

sinful flesh."

Accordingly, if we would do the honour to the Son that is due to Him, we must acknowledge that He was the Son of God before His manifestation. The true and acceptable confession of the Son is to own Him in the relationship assigned to Him by the Holy Spirit in the written word. To deny His Sonship before His incarnation is to deny the plain meaning of "manifestation" in its scriptural usage, and to rob the Son of God of this revealed glory. Being Son of God eternally, He has been manifested publicly and visibly in flesh for His mediatorial work (1 John 3:8).

Manifest in Flesh

"Manifest in flesh" is a scriptural term for the incarnation. We find it in 1 Timothy 3:16, that remarkable passage: "And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh . . ." There is no need to refer to the alternative reading here, "He Who"; for with either phrase, the sense of the passage is unaltered. There is but One of Whom it could be written that He appeared or was manifested in flesh. Other scriptures confirm that it was the Son of God Who was manifested in flesh; and He is the true God and eternal life.

It may be said of all mankind generally that they are flesh, since all men are naturally born of the flesh (John 3:6). But the Word became flesh (John 1:14). The incarnation was a manifestation of the Word, of Him Who was in the beginning, Who was with God and Who was God (John 1:1). Becoming flesh, and therefore "manifest," was a point, an era in the history of the One Whose existence as the Word was previous and eternal and invisible to the creature. The word, "manifest," irresistibly carries our thoughts backward from the date of the incarnation or of becoming flesh, marvellous as that event is. The One Who became visible is the same as He Who was invisible, for there is no change in Him personally, when manifested. The "Infinite Unseen" became visible at His manifestation in flesh. He Who dwelt "in light unapproachable" came and "dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth," "the image of the invisible God."

Manifestation and Mediation

It may be well to remind ourselves that in scripture the fact of the manifestation is closely coupled with its purpose. The incarnation itself is not atonement. The fact of the manifestation of One Whom man has not seen nor could see is wonderful. But the object of the divine manifestation, the true Theophany, was to secure the full glory of God in His dealings in grace and righteousness with sinful man. Therefore, the Son of God Who has been manifested is the Mediator between God and men.

Manifestation and mediation are intimately associated in New Testament teaching, the latter being consequent upon the former, and both being "in flesh." God’s manifestation among men was "in flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), and "the Mediator of God and men" was in flesh also, for He is the "man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). And He "gave Himself a ransom for all." His mediation involved not only His appearance in the likeness of sinful flesh, but the sacrifice of Himself, God’s Son sent a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10) and "not for ours alone, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). In John’s writings, the Spirit seems to love to dwell upon the redemptive work of Him Who was manifested. For example, He shows that the object of the manifestation of the Son of God was the removal of our sins and the destruction of the works of the great enemy. He says, "Ye know that He has been manifested that He might take away our sins; and in Him sin is not"; and

further, "To this end the Son of God has been manifested that He might undo the works of the devil" (1 John 3:5, 1 John 3:8). Similarly, Paul links His sacrificial work with His manifestation, saying, "Now once in the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for [the] putting away of sin by His sacrifice" (Hebrews 9:26).

These scriptures all relate to the mediatorial work of Him Who has been manifested. They combine to show that He Who was manifested in time as the Mediator of God and men was the Son of God before His manifestation in time; and He was therefore the Son in eternity. His original and essential relationship of Son in Deity was manifested in flesh, and having been made manifest and recorded, what blindness and hardness of heart to deny it! The Manifestation of Hidden Treasures In the treasury of the Father's house the deep and precious things of eternity are stored, unseen by human eye and unknown to man's heart. All "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29), Who reveals at His pleasure what He will to whomsoever He will. At the moment we are not concerned with the revelation of Jehovah's ways with men in the government of the earth. Above and beyond all these plans are the truths relating to the Essential Being of God, concealed of necessity from the eyes and heart of the creature. What God is must be even more private and profound than what He will do: "Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures?" (Deuteronomy 32:34). In New Testament days, many choice treasures of heavenly wisdom and knowledge connected with God and His Son were revealed. Even then, such supernatural knowledge was hidden from the wise and prudent of the earth, but revealed to "babes" by the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth (Matthew 11:25). So the treasures of God's latest revelations are included in the mystery, the truth entrusted to Paul concerning Christ and the church (see Colossians 2:2-3). The assembly has now been made the depositary of those transcendent truths, hitherto kept secret in the heavenly archives. We may briefly note the following, among other revealed truths of this character: —

(1) God's eternal purpose and grace are now manifested. Accordingly, we find the apostle Paul declaring that God's purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, has now been made manifest (2 Timothy 1:9-10). The time for this revelation did not come until Messiah had presented Himself to Israel according to promise and prophecy, and was abhorred by the nation and crucified. This wicked refusal of their King and Saviour was anticipated by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

Consequently, "a better thing" was purposed by God from the beginning. If man's infamy thwarted the introduction of promised blessing for the earth, God purposed to let loose the flood-tides of His grace and bestow spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Silence was kept throughout the times of the ages concerning this purposed heavenly calling of the assembly, but now the treasured heavenly secret is made manifest, being announced by prophetic scriptures (see Romans 16:25-27).

(2) Life is now manifested in Christ Jesus. The apostle John was chosen by the Holy Spirit to set out in his writings the present manifestation of life in Christ Jesus. Again we encounter the term, manifestation: "the life has been manifested" (1 John 1:2). It was not a life recently come into existence, but it was a life eternally existent in the Son, and hidden until now when it has been manifested. Its characteristic feature is "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3); and this fellowship is for us!

Here, then, is another priceless secret brought forth from the treasure-house of eternity, and now disclosed to the family of God. Sin-tainted life had been upon the earth since the days of Adam, but none had seen that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, until it was displayed in the Son Who became incarnate. That Eternal Life was ever with the Father, but in these last days has been manifested among men by Him Who is "the true God and eternal life." This life then was ever existent, for it is "in the Son," but was concealed from men until its manifestation, of which John testifies for himself and his fellow-witnesses: "the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us" (1 John 1:2).

(3) The love of God has now been manifested. The love of God announced in the gospel is not of recent origin. It was hidden, but is now made manifest. Upon this aspect of love John dwells. He teaches us that "love is of God" and that "God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). God Himself is the origin, the primeval fount of love: He is love.

It being so that love is the very nature of God, that love of God is inscrutable, incomprehensible, inaccessible to the creature, as the divine nature must necessarily be. But in our day the choicest treasure of the Father’s house has been manifested, being adequately and gloriously displayed in the Incarnate Son. "Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). This manifestation is very simple in its results to us, and profoundly blessed. How do the family of God learn the eternal love of God as it rests upon and affects themselves? They absorb it as they meditate upon it and contemplate it where alone it has been or could be manifested — in the Person of God’s Only-begotten Son.

Measureless Manifestation

Among other beauties that shine upon us as by faith we behold the Son of His love is that we perceive in the glory of that Blessed One the unbounded measure of His manifestation of the love of God. We may inquire to what degree the infinite love of God has been displayed in this poor world. On the one hand is the illimitable expanse of the love of God for manifestation; on the other, the tiny vessel of the human heart for its reception. Was the eternal fullness of divine love manifested sufficiently to fill our little cups, and then did the display stay, like the widow’s oil?

Ah, no; a restricted display of His love was not the will of God. His boundless love has been manifested to its utmost bounds, for the glory of His own name and the delight of His own heart. It is His will that we should know the love which passeth knowledge, and that we should learn its rich plenitude in Jesus Christ, His Son. In Him, in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, dwells the love of God, which in its essence, its qualities, its activities, baffles all human comprehension. The love abiding in Him is the love wherewith the Father loved His Only-begotten Son before the foundation of the world; yet we may say, Of that vast fullness have all we received.

Manifestation in the Son The competency of the Son of God to manifest the Father’s name (John 17:6) rests upon His own relationship with the Father before His incarnation. His own self-revealing words were, "I came forth from the Father . . . again, I leave the world and go to the Father" (John 16:28). Moreover, while here in the lowly guise of manhood His relationship of Sonship remained intact. He speaks of the Father as "My Father," and in addressing the Father He

speaks of "Thy Son."

Incarnation had not broken nor weakened the eternal bonds between the Father and the Son. Throughout His manifestation, They were in the most intimate communion. His disciples might leave Him alone, but He was not alone, for the Father was with Him (John 8:29; John 16:32). He said, "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 10:38; John 14:10); and, speaking of His service, He said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10).

These sayings in the mouth of even the greatest of mankind would seem contradictory and paradoxical, and even worse, but as utterances of "God manifest in flesh" they are exquisitely appropriate and illuminating. The Son was in conscious communion with the Father, for He said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). He was in conscious manifestation of the Father's name, for He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Clearly, the plenitude and perfection of the Son's manifestation of the Father depended upon His eternal relationship. In this lay the radical difference between the Son and the many servants of God. The latter were assigned their several duties, and each entrusted with some particular message. They remained subordinates, however high their temporal dignity.

Abraham was called the friend of God, and Jehovah confided in him the impending destruction of the cities of the plain (Genesis 18:17). Jehovah spoke to Moses, the mediator of Israel, face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). These were great honours for two of the sons of men, yet they never advanced above their original status, as the parallel record of their frailties and failures testifies concerning both of them. In the lips of Abraham, how incongruous and evil would have been the words, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Almighty"! But our Lord said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." How true and how blessed the saying in His lips! Nor would Moses have dared to say, "I and Jehovah are one" yet the Lord said (not, My Father and I are one), but "I and My Father are one." This order of precedence was not used invariably, for elsewhere He said, "My Father worketh, and I work" (John 5:17). Each phrasing is beautiful and appropriate in its setting; while all His sayings unite to show the divine personality of the Son on earth as the Sent One of the Father.

None but "God manifest in flesh" could make such claims, and escape the blasphemer's doom. We may surely take up the language of redeemed Israel, and as we consider the manner of this marvellous manifestation, say, "This is the Lord's doing it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23). The Son came down from heaven (John 6:33) to reveal the Father to whomsoever He would (Matthew 11:27). Coming down out of heaven, He testified what He had seen and what He had heard (John 3:31-32). The Son's words were, "I speak what I have seen with My Father" (John 8:38). The character of His manifestation rested upon the fact that He was with the Father before His entrance into the world. Of this eternal presence with the Father, and of the glory He had along with Him before the world was, the Son was fully aware, and of it He has testified (John 17:5) , that we may believe that the Father sent the Son, and, believing, Father and Son adore.

01.16. Concluding Remarks: Sonship and Service

Concluding Remarks: Sonship and Service In the course of our meditations upon the "Son of His love" we have surely learned that in that Blessed One, the Mediator of God and men, we possess a perfect representative of God Who is love, since He, the Son, is God, the fullness of Godhead dwelling in Him abidingly. Moreover, He is the Son Who reveals the Father to whomsoever He will (Matthew 11:27). This manifestation by the Son was made "in flesh." "The Word became flesh." The Incarnate Son appeared among men to accomplish atonement and to set forth the revelation of His Father "in the days of His flesh." "In Him is no sin," but "God, having sent His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The Son at the close of His earthly ministry said to the Father, "I have completed the work which Thou gavest Me that I should do it" (John 17:4). We honour the Son, therefore, even as we honour the Father, honouring Both as being equal in the Deity.

Now, the transcendent glory of the obedience of Christ which He carried as far as death, even the death of the cross, lies in the fact that being the Eternal Son He deigned to enter into that relationship of submission for the glory of God. Being Son in the Godhead and exempt from all obligations and conditions of servitude, He became the Servant of God, of Jehovah. To this end, He "emptied Himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking His place in [the] likeness of men" (Php 2:7). But while the Holy Spirit in Philippians describes graphically how One "in the form of God," a Divine Person, took the "form of a servant," or bondslave, we nowhere in scripture read that He took "the form of a Son," though scripture witnesses that in His incarnation He was still the Son, but not Child.* {*Compare Appendix D (see footnote to chapter 11).} To the place of subjection, the Blessed One "descended," for He chose to become the Righteous Servant of Jehovah, but all scripture is silent as to His becoming the Son. Being the Son, He both willed and submitted to be sent, and being sent, He did the will of Him that sent Him. "Though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). His obedience was more than the obedience of a Servant; it was the obedience of the Son — an obedience, moreover, which He learned in the school of suffering. The New and Strange Doctrine This unique excellence of the obedience of Christ appears to be obscured, if not entirely obliterated, by doctrines much in vogue now in some quarters. It seems to be held that "Son" is applied to our Lord in the sense of "Servant," subjection being, it is said, denoted by sonship, and for this reason Sonship could not be true of our Lord before His incarnation. The following quotation is a definite doctrinal statement to this effect, denying the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Scripture teaches, as has been variously pointed out in recent years, that while His Person remains unchanged, the sonship of our Lord denotes subjection, and thus does not rightly apply to Him in pre-incarnate Deity, when He was eternally in the form of God, which cannot imply subjection." (The italicized words are in the original statement.) This statement contains the substance of one of the main arguments of the Unitarians who deny the Deity of the Lord Jesus, maintaining that since the Lord asserted His own Sonship, He by this, His own confession, took a subordinate place, and therefore could not be the Supreme God! The teaching quoted above also maintains that "sonship," since it denotes

subjection, does not and cannot apply to the Lord in His pre-incarnate Deity. Thus, while they differ widely in other matters, they both agree with the enemies of the Lord in denying His eternal Sonship, and for the same insufficient reason. The reason adduced (that sonship "denotes subjection") is without support from scripture, where in general usage, as we shall seek to show, sonship frequently denotes dignity, character, nature, and privilege, rather than subjection. And, therefore, since sonship does not invariably in scripture denote subjection, their argument falls to the ground. For example, we read in Psalms 72:17 (margin) , "His name shall be as a son to continue his father’s name for ever." The son, here, is he who transmits fully and faithfully to a future generation the dignity and excellency of the father. Again, Moses refused to be "called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter" (Hebrews 11:24); he surrendered the dignities of the royal court of Egypt, where he was recognized as a "son," not as a "servant."

Sons are those who reproduce the typical or distinctive traits of their fathers, and this sense of parental representation is often used in moral matters. Thus, the "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) are those whose conduct displays disobedience as definitely as a son resembles a father. Barnabas exhibited the features of consolation so clearly that he was called the "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36). The Lord said that the Jews were of their "father, the devil," because they did his lusts and his deeds, showing their moral origin (John 8:41-45).

There are many similar phrases, such as, sons "of light," "of this age," "of the resurrection," "of perdition," "of the prophets," "of the covenant," and the like, where character and nature are denoted, but not subjection or service. The truth is that the new theory which claims that "sonship" denotes subjection confuses the scriptural distinction between "son" and "servant." Subjection is a feature which is essential to the character of a servant, but exceptional and voluntary in the case of a son. A son may consent to become a servant, but a servant cannot elevate himself to become a son. When the son obeys, his obedience is that of a son, and not of a servant. The Son Learned Obedience The teaching of scripture concerning our Lord is that He, the Son, at His incarnation came into the place of subjection or obedience. It was in that place of relationship that He "learned" to submit to the will of Him Who had sent Him. "Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience from the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). The personal dignities and glories of Him Who is the Son and Who assumed the conditions of subjection and suffering are previously unfolded in the same Epistle (Hebrews 1:1-14). He Who is there shown to be God and Jehovah as well as Son learned obedience from the things which He suffered. Does not the essential glory of His Person magnify His obedience beyond all comparison and elevate His submission to an unexampled excellence?

Subjection was foreign to the nature of the Eternal Son, yet He learned obedience when incarnate. The absurdity of the assertion that subjection is denoted by the word, Son, is seen at once when applied to this passage, substituting those words for the word "Son." The statement of the Messianic glory is converted into a mere platitude by this change: "Though He were in subjection, yet learned He obedience from the things which He suffered." How commonplace! The one who is subject must obey. The emphatic force of "though," which means "notwithstanding the fact that," is lost. The glory of the obedient Son is departed from the passage! This gratuitous suggestion is a real dishonour done to the Lord in the circumstances of His humiliation. If sonship "denotes subjection," as they say, then obedience is the normal duty of the Son, and if He does the things commanded Him, He is not worthy even to be thanked (Luke 17:9). If His obedience cost Him

suffering, does not every good soldier endure hardness (2 Timothy 2:3)? By this faulty interpretation of Sonship as applied to our Lord, the true significance of Hebrews 5:8 is perverted, and the glory of the obedience of the Son is reduced to the level of the faithfulness of a servant. The subjection described in this text was exceptional and unequalled because it was found in One Who obeyed, "though He were Son." His personal status exempted Him from all obligation to be subject, yet He obeyed. Of His own voluntary will, He undertook the position and responsibilities of a bond-servant. The Son becoming subject was a glorified excellence unparalleled in the history of creation, and this excellence the Holy Spirit delineates and magnifies, especially in the Gospel of Mark and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Sonship denotes Liberty not Bondage When in his minority or nonage, a son is regarded as a child or infant, and as such is subject to the family authority. But in due time, having passed the stage of "infancy," or immaturity, he is recognized as the "son," and is freed from his former bondage to guardians and stewards. The apostle uses this distinction between sonship and childhood in teaching the difference between law and grace (Galatians 4:1-7; Romans 8:15).

Here again, we find that the dictum that sonship "denotes subjection" does not hold good; for, in this passage, sonship is placed in contrast with subjection or bondage. Under the law, the Israelite was in bondage, held in subjection to its rites and ceremonies by its threatened curse; he was a bondservant. Under grace, however, the believer is delivered from the bondage of the law, and his obedience is not constrained, but spontaneous and delightful, the obedience not of a slave, but of a son, crying Abba, Father from the heart; in its character it is the obedience of Christ, unto which he is sanctified (1 Peter 1:2). "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master" (Malachi 1:6); and the subjection of the Son was perfect, as He said Himself, "I honour My Father," and "I have kept My Father’s commandments" (John 8:49; John 15:10). He Who was the Eternal Son became the Servant-Son.

Sonship denotes Community of Nature

"Son" only "denotes subjection" in childhood and in the adolescent stage, before maturity is reached. When full-grown or fully developed, the son is competent to represent the father, because he corresponds in nature and qualities with the father. The son, therefore, in normal conditions, is considered not inferior but equal to the father, and able to maintain the prestige of the family. This sense agrees with scriptural usage of the word, son. In this representative sense, Isaac is called the son of Abraham. Three times God described Isaac as Abraham’s "only son" (Genesis 22:2, Genesis 22:12, Genesis 22:16). Ishmael and the children of Keturah are disregarded, not being in any degree representatives of the father in the line of divine promise. Isaac alone was the true seed, and the witness of Eliezer concerning him was, "Unto him hath he (Abraham) given all that he hath" (Genesis 24:36). Abraham’s faith and pious character were reproduced in Isaac, so that he was Abraham’s son in the ideal sense of possessing community of nature and character with his father in a manner that "the son of the bondwoman" did not. In the Mount Moriah incident, this communion of interest and voluntary obedience are beautifully seen in Abraham and Isaac; twice we read, "They went both of them together" (Genesis 22:6, Genesis 22:8). Though there were two servants and the ass, Isaac bore the wood for the burnt-offering. Though some twenty-five years of age, he consented to be bound by Abraham and laid upon the altar. The ready obedience of the son is most marked in the history, but under what exceptional

circumstances! Whenever was there such absolute submission demanded of a son? But Abraham’s faith and obedience to God had their facsimile or counterpart in the behaviour of Isaac. And the marvel of Isaac’s obedience is that he was a son, not a servant. There was an identity of nature and character between him and Abraham, which was the cause of his filial submission, and in which he exhibited a like piety to his father.

Jesus Christ the Servant-Son

It was Christ’s eternal Sonship that imparted the incomparable character to His service on earth. In the Godhead there is uniformity of will, and therefore no subjection of One to Another. In Deity, the Son knew no subjection, but on earth, "though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." In the lowly place of subjection which He assumed, the Son chose to receive commandments from the Father and to be obedient to them with infinite dispatch and infinite delight. What obedience could match this in kind or in degree?

Taking upon Him the subject-state by His incarnation, the Son was perfected in all the relations that were proper to His subjection, and He became the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9). As in Deity the will of the Son constantly coincided absolutely with the will of the Father, so a like unanimity was preserved when He became a bondservant. And this display of unvarying obedience to the Father’s glory was made not in a sinless heaven but in a sinful earth, not by an archangel, the most exalted of servants, but by the Son of the Father’s love, in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

However distinguished the service of an angel, it could never be more than the obedience of a servant. But the obedience of Christ was the obedience of One Who had the more excellent name of Son, and Who was under no obligation to obey. His due place in God’s house was that of "Son over His house," His Person giving Him absolute supremacy. Moses, famous lawgiver and leader though he was, rose no higher than a ministering servant in that house (Hebrews 3:5-6). The Son is the Creator of All Things

It is not true that the "sonship of our Lord denotes subjection," except that the Son at the appointed time assumed the place of a Servant. Subsisting ever in the form of God, He took the bondman’s form, becoming obedient even as far as death, the death of the cross (Php 2:5-8). Colossians 1:15-17 definitely attributes the whole work of creation to the Son of the Father’s love, which, of necessity, was accomplished in pre-incarnate Deity. The work of reconciliation (vers. 18-22) is the work of the Son in incarnate Deity. The same Person, the Son of the Father’s love, acts throughout, and yet we are told that Sonship "does not rightly apply to Him in pre-incarnate Deity." Surely, those who make such an assertion do not continue in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24). They claim "new light," but it is only the light of their own fire and of the sparks they themselves have kindled.

"Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 1:9).

Chapter 18

02.00. Studies in the Book of Ruth

Studies in the Book of Ruth by W.J. Hocking

Introductory Part A. — Bethlehem forsaken for Moab Part B. — Back to Bethlehem Part C. — Ruth the Stranger in the Fields of Boaz Part D. — Ruth the Suppliant at the Feet of Boaz Part E. — Boaz becomes the Kinsman-Redeemer Part F. — Joy for Naomi and Fame for Boaz Part G. — A Typical Outline of Israel's Final Restoration Part H. — Ruth as a Vessel of Divine Mercy

02.01. A. — Bethlehem forsaken for Moab

A. — Bethlehem forsaken for Moab

Ruth 1:1-5. On account of famine Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem-Judah for the land of Moab. In the brief narrative no critical comment is made upon the change of residence. This silence indicates that the spiritual significance of the journey of this particular family must be traced by means of light afforded in other scriptures. To seek such enlightenment upon the instruction to be derived from this inspired booklet is the purpose of the present studies.

Famine in the Land of Israel The reference in the opening sentence of the Book to famine in the land is itself suggestive of the degenerate state of the chosen people. In their case, famine was not a mere physical contingency, but a mark of divine displeasure. The land which Jehovah had bestowed upon the children of Israel was "a land that floweth with milk and honey" — milk from well-fed flocks and herds, and honey from luxuriant vegetation. A threat of starvation in such a fertile land implied that the chastisement of God had fallen upon the tribes because they had neglected His worship and transgressed His laws. And that for this reason God withheld rain from heaven they could have learned from the words of Moses (Deuteronomy 11:8-15). At any rate, we read here, "And it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled (judged) that there was a famine in the land" (Ruth 1:1). The physical fact is stated, but not its moral cause. The exact date of this famine cannot be ascertained. It occurred during the long period when "the judges judged"; and this period extended from about the death of Joshua (Joshua 24:29-31) to the introduction of the monarchy, when Israel rejected Jehovah as their King and Saul was chosen by "the voice of the people" to reign over them (1 Samuel 8:7; Hosea 13:11). The previous Book shows that under the judges the religious and civil states of the tribes of Israel became appallingly debased. So long as Joshua was with the people they served Jehovah, but when he and the generation that crossed the Jordan with him were gathered to their fathers "there arose another generation after them, which knew not Jehovah, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baals" (Judges 2:10-11). Throughout "the days when the judges" administered the laws the people departed further and further from the worship of Jehovah and from obedience to His statutes.

Before their entrance into the land, Jehovah by His servant Moses impressed upon the people that in the land itself they should render to Him their constant love and obedience lest the land, fertile though it was, should be stricken with famine (Deuteronomy 11:1-17). In that picturesque passage, Moses described the land before them as a good land of plenty where they should "eat and be full"; Jehovah would in its season supply the indispensable rain, the "early" rain to prepare the soil for autumn sowings, and the "latter" or spring rain to swell the corn for ripening and harvest. But this annual beneficence from heaven would depend upon their own behaviour. They must hearken to Jehovah’s commandments, and love and serve Him with all their heart and soul (Deuteronomy 11:13-14; also Leviticus 26:3-4). In the wilderness, the daily supply of manna from heaven had never once failed in spite of their continual murmurings and disobedience but in the land across

the Jordan a bountiful harvest would be, the reward of their worship, their love, and their obedience to God.

Therefore, said Moses, "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside and serve other gods . . . and Jehovah's wrath kindle against you, and He shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and that the ground yield not its produce, and ye perish quickly from off the good land which Jehovah is giving you" (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). From these and other scriptures we learn that in Canaan famine was an instrument of chastisement used by God for the correction of His people. When they, His elect nation, fell into idolatry and immorality, He shut up the heavens, as in the notable instance during Ahab's reign, when on account of His displeasure there was neither dew nor rain for three years and six months (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). The Flight of the Family

Emigration to a more fruitful country is an obvious method of escape from the rigours of famine. It is, however, not always successful, nor always the right plan to adopt. Elimelech, however, with his wife and his two sons, left the temporarily barren fields of Bethlehem for the more productive fields of Moab (ver. 1). Had Elimelech in his own conscience any justification for this serious step that he took? He may have thought that he had a precedent for it in the lives of his forefathers, who were men of faith. What did they do in like circumstances? When the first recorded famine arose in the land of Canaan (cf. Genesis 26:1), it is written, "Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there" (Genesis 12:10); and these words are echoed in Ruth 1:1. Again, Isaac sought refuge from famine in the land of the Philistines, a land not distant from Canaan like Egypt, but adjoining it like Moab (Genesis 26:1). Further, it was a long and grievous famine that caused Jacob and all his family to go down into Egypt for relief (Genesis 41:56; Genesis 47:4). And Elimelech might have thought that in these patriarchal instances there was surely a parallel to his own case, and a justification for his journey to Moab. Had he not scripture in support of his plan? What more was needed? But surely a further consideration of the history would have taught Elimelech that these incidents were examples not of the integrity but of the laxity of the patriarchs. In these instances, their conduct was to be avoided, not imitated. For what sad effects upon their life of faith and testimony resulted from their ignominious flight from famine! They gained food, but lost their reputation. Both Abram and Isaac prevaricated about their wives and respectively were put to public shame by the reproofs of Pharaoh and Abimelech who evidently regarded them as men whose word could not be trusted. What serious damage was thereby done to their testimony to the living and true God as opposed to the deceitful deities worshipped in the lands where they sought refuge! In Jacob's case, too, how terrible was the sequel to his departure from the land of promise! His seed became bondmen in Egypt, and suffered long and bitterly under the iron hand of Pharaoh's oppression, while God seemed silent and supine.

No; the example of the fathers in this matter was not safe for Elimelech to follow. It was certainly an act of faith, pleasing to God, which brought the patriarchs into the land of promise, but it was an act of merely human sagacity or expediency to leave that land in search of food. In entering Canaan they obeyed the call of God; in leaving it they followed the dictates of their own self-interest, which was to their own discredit as believers in God.

Whether Elimelech observed these danger-signals in the lives of the fathers or not, he took the same risk as they did. He departed from the land upon which Jehovah had promised that His eyes

would rest continually, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). He removed from the land of Judah to the land of Moab; and there he and his two sons died without posterity, and in consequence his inheritance in the land of Israel lapsed.
The Meanings of the Names

Often in Old Testament history and prophecy proper names have an undoubted significance, which affords a key to the moral and spiritual instruction contained in the passages where they occur. In many cases, the meaning is not clearly defined and there is danger of being led astray by a lively imagination which chooses or invents something suitable to itself. In the Book of Ruth, however, the meaning of some names is unquestionable, and this adds clearness and emphasis to the significance of the narrative as a whole.

Elimelech means "God the King" or "God is King." This name is found in scripture only here. With this meaning in mind, it is striking to read in the last verse of the preceding Book (Judges), "In those days there was no king in Israel." Then in the very next verse (Ruth 1:1) we find a designed contrast: Elimelech was a man in Israel who carried about in his name the constant witness that "God is King," though the nation at large disowned the authority of Him Who dwelled between the cherubim in the tabernacle.

However cloudy and dark the day of apostasy may become, we may be sure that God has His torch-bearers. Elimelech was one who bore the light of truth in his name. When Israel denied God’s sovereignty, and "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), this man in Bethlehem silently reminded his townsmen that God was "King in Jeshurun" (Deuteronomy 33:5). In the royal tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) he stood out as an honourable witness that God was the Sovereign Ruler of His redeemed people in spite of the idolatry, anarchy, and individualism that prevailed in their midst. "Elimelech" seemed to be a suitable name for this man in the land of Judah; in the land of Moab it certainly was a misnomer, for he who bore it had forsaken the people of God in order to be there.

Naomi. Elimelech’s wife’s name, like his own, does not occur elsewhere in scripture. Her name appears to mean "pleasantness" or "sweetness," especially that graciousness of manner which is associated with spiritual beauty. The word is used by the psalmist when he writes of beholding the "beauty (pleasantness, graciousness) of Jehovah" (Psalms 27:4), and again, of his desire that this "beauty" may be upon His people (Psalms 90:17). See also Zechariah 11:7, Zechariah 11:10, where the word is again found. Naomi (pleasantness) is also connected with wisdom, for Solomon says, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs 3:17). By name therefore, the gracious, good, and wise Naomi must have been a fitting consort for Elimelech; united they would be a noble and goodly pair, powerful and pleasant in their joint lives.

Mahlon and Chilion. Here again are names occurring nowhere else in scripture. For this reason the exact meaning of both names is obscure; but it is sufficiently clear that a deterioration from the sterling qualities implied in the parental names is indicated. Mahlon has been variously translated; e.g., "great infirmity," "painful," "mild." Chilion may mean "consuming," or "consumption," or "pining." Evidently, the general sense of both names is that weakness and wasting characterised the two sons of Elimelech. There was a recognised declension in the family status.

Bethlehem-Judah In Judges 17:7 and Judges 19:1, two Levites of evil reputation are associated with Bethlehem-Judah; in Ruth, this place is the home of Elimelech, and afterwards that of Boaz and Ruth. This small town or village in the south of Palestine is of exceptional interest throughout scripture, mainly because of its connection with the life of David (it is called "the city of David," Luke 2:4), and afterwards with David's Son and Lord. It is here and in a few other passages named Bethlehem-Judah to distinguish it from another Bethlehem, situated in the north of Palestine, west of Nazareth, and belonging to another tribe, that of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15).

Micah used a different name for the town in Judah. He prophesied that out of "Bethlehem-Ephratah," though "little among the thousands of Judah," He should come forth Who should be the Judge and Ruler of Israel (Micah 5:1-2). Ephrath or Ephratah was Bethlehem's ancient name (Genesis 35:16, Genesis 35:19; Genesis 48:7), which it bore when Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, died, both sons being types of our Lord in His sovereignty and rule.

Bethlehem lies about five or six miles south of Jerusalem, on a mountainous ridge some 2,500 feet high. The vicinity is noted for its productive corn-fields, olive-yards and vineyards, and also its rich pasturage for flocks and herds. This pastoral abundance is indicated by both its names: Ephrath or Ephratah means "fertility," while Bethlehem means "the house of bread." In a land of general plenty, Bethlehem was known by all to be specially favoured of God with a bountiful supply of food.

How then could Elimelech justify his step in leaving the fruitful fields of Bethlehem for the idol-worshipping land of Moab? If God had withheld His rain from heaven because He was not honoured in Bethlehem, was He more honoured in Moab? Surely, faith, instead of fleeing, would have said, As God has given to me and my seed an inheritance in Bethlehem for ever, I will trust Him daily for the sustenance needed by my family, and I will remain here until He bids me depart. After all, the famine gave him an occasion to show by his "works" that he had faith in God (see James 2:17-26); but he was afraid, and his fear brought about his failure. The Land of Moab In the distress of famine, Elimelech from the heights of Bethlehem may have looked eastward across the Dead Sea and have seen thirty or forty miles away the mountains of Moab and among them the peak of Mount Nebo from which Moses not so long before viewed the promised land before his death (Deuteronomy 34:1-5). At any rate, to this neighbouring territory he took his family to find food and shelter, ignoring the evil origin and reputation of the Moabite people whose hospitality he was seeking. "And they came into the country of Moab and continued there" (Ruth 1:2). The two sister-nations, Moab and Ammon, are known as "the children of Lot" (Deuteronomy 2:9), and are of incestuous origination (Genesis 19:37-38). They have always been inveterate and implacable enemies of God's elect nation, and they are included in the coming great confederacy of nations which will be formed under the revived Assyrian power to destroy the children of Israel and blot out their very name from the earth (see the prophecy in Psalms 83:4-8).

Moab displayed this enmity against Israel on the way from Egypt to Canaan. When the travelling people reached the plains of Moab (Numbers 22:1), Balak the king hired Balaam to effect their destruction by his curses (Joshua 24:9-10). This scheme failing through divine guardianship, other means of injury were adopted on the advice of the wicked prophet. The people were induced "to join themselves" to Baal-Peor and to indulge in the lascivious rites of the gods of Moab, thousands of the people dying from the plague that followed. This was a dark page in Israel's history, to which

there are many allusions in the admonitions of scripture (Numbers 31:16; Numbers 25:1-5; Deuteronomy 4:3; Psalms 106:28-30; Hosea 9:10; 1 Corinthians 10:8; Revelation 2:14).

Elimelech could not have been unacquainted with this terrible incident in the recent history of his people. Nevertheless because of famine he went to sojourn among the heathen Moabites who had even refused bread and water to his fathers when they were on their borders. Because of their flagrant enmity God had said to His people, "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:4-6; Nehemiah 13:2); yet Elimelech went there to seek bread for the family.

Misery in Moab

Twice in the Book of Proverbs it is said, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12, Proverbs 16:25). Following his own judgment, Elimelech chose the way which led to Moab to find the food which perisheth, but there he also found his grave. "And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left and her two sons" (Ruth 1:3). The house of the Bethlehemites in Moab became the house of mourning. There Naomi lamented the loss of the husband she loved and reverenced. There Mahlon and Chilion lost for ever the wisdom and strength a father's guardianship had hitherto afforded them. To sojourn in Moab must have seemed to Elimelech the right course to take; but had he first sought to know the will of God? Did he wait to hear God's voice saying to him, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" He was seeking bread, but he should have remembered the newly-written words of Moses, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3). He no doubt found bread in Moab, for, like Bethlehem, it was a place of fruitful fields (Jeremiah 48:31-33) and vineyards (Isaiah 16:8-10), as well as of pasturage for flocks (2 Kings 3:4). But Elimelech had no word from God as his warrant for being in Moab; and he died there. In his independent act, he was a contrast with our Lord in the wilderness of Judea, a hungry dependent Man, but One Who found sufficient food in the word and will of Him Who sent Him (Matthew 4:1-4; cp. John 4:31-34).

Bereavement, however, did not drive the widowed Naomi and her sons back to Bethlehem. They settled down in Moab; and the sons "took them Moabitish wives; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the second Ruth; and they abode there about ten years" (Ruth 1:4). Mahlon and Chilion acted as they pleased and on their own responsibility. If they had come to Moab at their father's bidding, they chose their wives of their own freewill. If their father's intention was to "sojourn" in Moab (Ruth 1:1), they now decided to stay in the land of idolatry indefinitely. Those who take a downward path soon accelerate their pace almost unconsciously.

Marriage with idolatrous nations was forbidden by the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 7:3), and no Moabite was permitted to enter "the congregation of Jehovah for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:3-4). But these two young men of weak piety and stubborn wills married Orpah and Ruth. They abode in Moab about ten years, and both died childless. By the death of the two sons the name and inheritance of Elimelech perished. In this family of Bethlehem the solemn warning was fulfilled which the apostle Paul wrote long afterwards, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap" (Galatians 6:7). "And Mahlon and Chilion died also, both of them, and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband" (Ruth 1:5). Thus Naomi became a childless widow in a strange land!

02.02. B. — Back to Bethlehem

B. — Back to Bethlehem

Ruth 1:6-22.

Naomi "heard in the fields of Moab how that Jehovah had visited His people to give them bread" (Ruth 1:6). True to their respective names, Bethlehem had again become "the house of bread," and Judah "the land of plenty and of praise." Naomi, after so many years, resolved to retrace her steps, and she with her two widowed daughters-in-law "went on the way to return to the land of Judah" (Ruth 1:7). But there is no record that Naomi was repentant toward God concerning her original departure from Bethlehem. Her first thought like that of the miserable prodigal was to go where there was "bread enough and to spare." The Three Widows In leaving Moab, the elder widow felt that the case of her young companions greatly differed from her own. She was an Israelite, and was returning to the land of her birth, of her family inheritance, and of her God. But Orpah and Ruth had no such prospect in Judah. Indeed, they would leave behind in Moab their relatives, their own nation, and their idols. And Naomi felt she ought not to expect them to renounce their natural ties with Moab on her account; she would journey on alone to Bethlehem. Therefore, Naomi advised them each to return "to her mother's house," at the same time invoking the blessing of Jehovah upon both of them for their kindness to her and to the dead (Ruth 1:8-9). The young widows were both deeply affected by Naomi's kind and considerate words, and they wept much as she kissed them, but strongly protested that they were prepared to accompany her to Bethlehem, saying, "We will certainly return with thee to thy people" (Ruth 1:9-10). But Naomi had learned wisdom out of her own experience. She no doubt remembered her late husband's rash decision to go away from "the house of bread" and to seek bread elsewhere, and she recalled its unhappy results. At any rate, she besought her daughters-in-law to make no such hasty choice. They would gain no earthly benefit by following a forlorn and forsaken woman as, alas, she was. They must not expect a second marriage into the house of Israel. Besides, added Naomi mournfully and rather peevishly, "I am in much more bitterness than you; for the hand of Jehovah is gone out against me" (Ruth 1:11-13). No doubt the saddened woman was speaking unselfishly, but viewed as the words of one professing faith in Jehovah, the God of Israel, her witness to the Moabitish women of His unchanging providence and unfailing goodness was feeble, and even false. It was feeble for her after ten years still to be smarting under the bitterness of her own bereavement. It was false of her to declare that the hand of Jehovah was against her. His hand had not led the family to Moab; it was by their own choice that they turned away from the land where His hand would have preserved their souls alive through the days of famine (see Psalms 33:18-19).

Naomi's discouraging words exercised and tested the hearts of the young women; "and they lifted up their voice and wept again," seeking some relief or resource in tears, as women will. But there they stood at the parting of the ways, and decide they must forthwith. Naomi's plain speaking was a stringent trial of their inward motives. Should they forsake their mother-in-law, or their own

mothers? Should they leave the land of Moab for the land of Israel? Should they seek Jehovah, the God of Naomi and her fathers, or should they continue to serve the gods of their own people and of their own childhood? Each decided for herself what to do. "And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave to her." (Ruth 1:14).

Orpah's kiss was an affectionate farewell, coupled with a decent and sincere regard for her husband's mother, but nothing more. Ruth's embrace expressed similar affection and respect, but indicated also, what Orpah lacked, an entire surrender of herself to a future life of faith in the living God. Naomi, however, appeared to have some doubts of the latter's sincerity, and she again advised her to stay in her native land, for she said to Ruth, "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods: return after thy sister-in-law" (Ruth 1:15). But neither sisterly affection nor matronly advice could change her steadfastness. A divine power was secretly, but irresistibly working within her. As it has been said, "If Orpah shows us the feelings of nature, Ruth certainly displays the power of grace."

Ruth's Great Decision

Considering in the light of Ruth's subsequent history her resolute determination to accompany her mother-in-law, it seems certain that her conscience and heart must have been deeply exercised by something of the truth of God which she had seen and heard and believed to be true. Inward anxiety and unrest were now constraining her to forsake her idols and seek the favour of Jehovah, the living God of Israel. But she feared lest Naomi's repeated dissuasions might turn her from her purpose. Accordingly, Ruth's fervent outburst of devotion and determination came swiftly in reply.

"And Ruth said, 'Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after, thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.'" This emphatic declaration she confirmed by a solemn oath — "Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee." The piety, resolution, and enthusiasm of this speech convinced Naomi of the integrity and determination of Ruth. "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking to her. And they two went until they came to Bethlehem" (Ruth 1:16-19). The bold and devout words of Ruth bespoke her career as a genuine disciple of truth. Already in her heart "faith was working through love" (Galatians 5:6). The "good fruit" of her lips was a clear indication that the tree was "good," not "corrupt" (cp. Matthew 7:16-20). Like Abram, the father of all who believe, Ruth was forsaking the land of idols for the land of Jehovah's promise. Indeed, the pious attachment of this young Gentile woman to a sorrow-stricken "mother in Israel" would have been an "ornament of grace" upon even a well-seasoned veteran, while her expressions of intense devotion to Naomi may well be compared with those of Ittai the Gittite to David (2 Samuel 15:21), of Elisha to Elijah (2 Kings 2:3-6), of Simon Peter to our Lord (Luke 22:33; John 13:37). Indeed, by leaving her father and mother for the truth's sake (Ruth 2:11), Ruth bore one of the marks which, the Lord said, distinguished His true disciples (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26).

Let us, before passing on, glance again at Ruth 1:14, where we read that in contrast with the departure of Orpah, Ruth "clave unto her (Naomi)." The word, "clave," denotes Ruth's complete self-surrender in love and loyalty to her new calling. She was yielding herself wholeheartedly and unreservedly to share not merely the temporal fortunes of her mother-in-law, but the worship of Jehovah in the land of His chosen people. To cleave is the term used by God at the beginning of

human history to express the undivided and unchanging affection that a man should maintain for the wife of his choice (Genesis 2:24); this love is so intimate and unifying that by cleaving the "two shall be one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31). Moreover, cleaving is expressive of the loving obedience and worshipping service which should mark the people of God, and six times the children of Israel were exhorted by Moses and by Joshua to cleave unto Jehovah their God (Deuteronomy 10:20; Deuteronomy 11:22; Deuteronomy 13:4; Deuteronomy 30:20; Joshua 22:5; Joshua 23:8). It is significant, therefore, that in recording Ruth's decisive step towards Bethlehem, it is said that she "clave" unto Naomi. Her choice sprang not from a mere whim of her friendly emotions, but from a rooted conviction of her soul. Her eye was upon the God of Israel rather than upon the mother of her dead husband.

Naomi's Tongue Bitter, Hands Empty, Soul Afflicted

After an absence of more than ten years, Naomi returned to Bethlehem, and her appearance there accompanied by Ruth, the Moabite stranger, stirred the interest and curiosity of the townspeople, many of whom probably knew her before the great famine, when her late husband was, as it seems, a person of eminence and influence in the city. Those who recognised Naomi were astonished at the change in her. "And it came to pass, when they came to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?'" (Ruth 1:19). In her reply to the women, Naomi spoke as an unhappy woman, no longer to be known in Bethlehem as Naomi the pleasant but as Mara the bitter. She magnified her own sorrows and trials, and had not one word to say of the goodness of Jehovah in bringing her back safely to His own land and to her own kindred and city. Whatever her testimony for God may have been in the land of Moab, it was very weak when she stood once more on her own doorstep. Thinking still, no doubt, of her triple bereavement, as well as other grievances, she "foolishly" charged the Almighty with dealing bitterly with her, and Jehovah with bringing her home empty-handed and afflicted. She said to the women, "Call me not Naomi — call me Mara; for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah has brought me home again empty. Why do ye call me Naomi, seeing Jehovah has brought me low, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" (Ruth 1:20-21). Such were the strange words of complaint against God uttered by a woman of faith! The beginning of Barley-harvest in Bethlehem But if the heart of Naomi was sombre and sad, there was a melody of gladness in the land where the Almighty was the Shield and Jehovah was the Sun. The fields of Bethlehem were rejoicing in the bounties of the early crops ripening for the harvesters: "For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over, it is gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come" (Song of Solomon 2:11-12). Jehovah was blessing with renewed fruitfulness the land He had chosen out of all other lands to be called His own land.

Barley ripened early, and well in advance of wheat, in Canaan as in Egypt (Exodus 9:31-32). In the sheltered valleys of Bethlehem, barley would usually be ripe and ready for the reaper in the first weeks of Nisan (March-April), which was made the first month of the sacred year for the new-born nation of Israel (see Exodus 12:2). This, too, was the appointed season for the offering to God of the firstfruits of the harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14). And in accordance with the law of Moses, godly Bethlehemites, about the time of Naomi's arrival, would have been bringing their sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest to the priest as a wave offering unto Jehovah. But Naomi had no such offering to bring. She had come back, as she said, "Empty." She confessed that she was the poorest of the poor in Israel.

Nevertheless, backsliding Naomi had returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of a New Year. The month Nisan had its message of hope for her. The deadness of her winter was past; new life and fruitfulness were before her, did she but know it. Mara the bitter, the morose, impoverished, childless widow, was about to find the joy of plenty around her and within her, and once more she would be Naomi the pleasant, in Bethlehem, "the house of bread."

It is ever heaven’s way to make glad returning, repentant prodigals; hence unexpected joys awaited Naomi in Bethlehem. Soon the heart of the bereaved wife and mother would sing for joy (Job 29:13), for Jehovah would give her one who had the right of redemption, so that her inheritance might not be forfeited after all (Ruth 4:14-15). Jehovah, blessed be His name, would also give the disconsolate widow a son (Ruth 4:17), and his name would be famous in Israel. She who came back with empty heart and hands would have them filled with unexpected joys and undeserved blessings. Moreover, she was to find abiding comfort and reward in Ruth the Moabitess who "clave to her" on the borders of Moab, and who proved, as the women of Bethlehem afterwards said (Ruth 4:15), to be better to the childless widow than seven sons.

02.03. C. — Ruth the Stranger in the Fields of Boaz

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Ruth 2:1-23.

Faith brought Naomi the pauper and Ruth the stranger into Bethlehem, Jehovah’s house of bread. Both felt much as the prodigal in the parable did — to tarry in the "far country" of Moab would be to "perish with hunger," while in the land of Naomi’s God there was "bread enough and to spare," food for the soul also as well as for the body. The land of divine promise must be the land of plenty, where the poor are never forgotten, but always fed.

Before the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan, Jehovah through His servant Moses gave them a full code of regulations for their religious and social behaviour when settled there. And along with other duties, the people were enjoined to care for the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7-11), and especially for the widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 24:19). The landowners of Israel were enjoined not to forget the needs of the poor, particularly at harvest-time, but to allow them to share in the bounties bestowed by the God of heaven. A special clause to this effect was attached to Jehovah’s instructions regarding the annual observance of "the feast of weeks," when the tribute of a freewill offering was to be given Him according as He had blessed them (Deuteronomy 16:10). The children of Israel were then to bring with their animal sacrifices "the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering" before Him. But it was added, "Thou shalt not in thy harvest entirely reap the corners of thy field, and the gleaning of thy harvest shalt thou not gather: thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger" (Leviticus 23:20, Leviticus 23:22). See also Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19. A similar combination of giving our thanks to God and our goods to the needy is found in the New Testament (Hebrews 13:15-16); our worship will be incomplete and unacceptable if it lack either the one or the other.

Jehovah desired to develop a merciful spirit in His people. By its exercise they would themselves be blessed, and would obtain still further mercy (Matthew 5:7). The nation should remember the kindness of God to themselves when they were all "strangers" and bondmen in the land of Egypt (Exodus 22:21). Therefore they ought to show their kindness to any "strangers" in their midst by allowing them to glean in their fields and vineyards, taking care that the reapers left something specially for the gleaners. Though the strangers were not of "the seed of Abraham according to the flesh," and though they had taken no part in the ploughing or sowing or reaping, they were not to be stinted in their share of the bounties of God at harvesting-time. This commandment of Jehovah concerning the poor and the stranger was recorded in the statute-book of Israel, and in accordance with its generous terms Naomi and Ruth found their immediate sustenance in Bethlehem, and also divine favours far more surprising and extensive than could have been imagined. Only the transcendent mercy of Jehovah could have brought both these widows into genealogical contact with the promised Messiah of Israel. Their humble entry into Bethlehem in the obedience of their faith was the first step to this unexpected end.

Going out to Glean, Ruth lighted on the Field of Boaz

Prompted by the pinch of poverty, the two women sought relief through the national poor law. It was, however, not Naomi, the elder, a "mother in Israel" by birth and breeding, that took the initiative, but Ruth, the younger, a convert from the worship of idols to the service of Jehovah. As barley harvest had begun, she volunteered, "stranger" though she was in Bethlehem, to glean in the barley-fields. Her mother-in-law agreed.

Now Naomi had rich kinsmen of her husband's, who apparently did not emigrate from Bethlehem on account of the famine as she had done. They stayed at home, were preserved, and had prospered. One especially, named Boaz, had risen to eminence in Bethlehem. "And Naomi had a relation of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz" (Ruth 2:1). But Naomi, though badly in want, had not solicited any favours from her relatives, not even from Boaz. The poor often cling to their pride to the very last.

Nor, as it appears, did Ruth on setting out to glean intend to seek the field of Boaz, her mother-in-law's kinsman. Early in the morning she went forth humbly as a poor stranger to gather up a gleaner's portion of corn wherever opportunity offered, not however, without a firm trust that the God of Israel under Whose wings she had come to take refuge, would guide and protect her. "And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Let me, I pray, go to the field and glean among the ears of corn after (him) in whose sight I shall find favour. And she said to her, Go, my daughter. And she went; and she came and gleaned in the fields after the reapers; and she chanced to light on an allotment of Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech" (Ruth 2:2-3). To outward seeming, Ruth by "chance"' chose the field of Boaz, but to faith it was by God's devising and directing that she went to the field of a pious and gracious man who was her mother-in-law's kinsman by marriage, and in whose eyes she quickly found favour.

Ruth's First Day of Gleaning

Naomi's relation's name, Boaz, signifies "a pillar," or "strength is in him." One of the two pillars or supports in the porch of Solomon's temple was called "Boaz" (1 Kings 7:21). Boaz, the strong man of Bethlehem, is described also as "a mighty man of wealth" (Ruth 2:1). The same phrase is applied to Gideon and to Jephthah, but in these instances it is translated "a mighty man of valour" (Judges 6:12; Judges 11:1), courage and leadership being necessary qualities in their service for God. Here, in reference to Boaz, "wealth" is used as it is in Deuteronomy 8:17-18, where it signifies God-given personal possessions in the land, such as the goodly houses, herds and flocks, silver and gold, mentioned in Ruth 2:12-13. For the godly Israelite "wealth" was a mark of the blessing of Jehovah which "maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow to it" (Proverbs 10:22).

Boaz, then, was a godly man of substance and standing in Bethlehem, whose moral and spiritual character had been strengthened rather than spoiled by His riches. He was courteous, considerate, and generous to the poor. His recorded words and actions both witness to his deep-rooted faith in God; and therein lay the secret of his strength. "And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, Jehovah be with you! And they said to him, Jehovah bless thee!" (Ruth 2:4). As Boaz was wont to do, he took a personal interest in the welfare of all the workers. Observing the newcomer, he made inquiries concerning her of the overseer, who described her as the Moabitish maiden. "And Boaz said to his servant that was set over the

reapers, Whose maiden is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish maiden who came back with Naomi out of the fields of Moab; and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. And she came, and has continued from the morning until now: her sitting in the house has been little as yet" (Ruth 2:5-7). The "house" was a temporary shelter in which the workers might rest awhile from the great heat. As a "stranger," Ruth would no doubt have been timid and shy. Boaz addressed her with friendly words of encouragement and consideration, speaking like an elderly man rather than a master. "And Boaz said to Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from here, but keep here with my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field which is being reaped, and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men not to touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go to the vessels and drink of what the young men draw" (Ruth 2:9-10). This friendly and gracious advice touched the damsel deeply. She felt herself altogether unworthy of such favour. "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou shouldest regard me, seeing I am a foreigner (stranger)?" (Ruth 2:10). For similar acts of prostration to show reverence, according to the Eastern custom, see 1 Samuel 25:23-24; 2 Samuel 1:2. The reply of Boaz showed that he was already acquainted with her devoted attachment to Naomi, giving up her parents and her fatherland to accompany her to Bethlehem; he prayed that Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whose overshadowing protection she had sought, would reward her labour of love. "And Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully shewn to me all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband; and how thou hast left thy father and mother and the land of thy nativity, and art come to a people that thou hast not known heretofore. Jehovah recompense thy work, and let thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:11-12). By these gracious words the lonely "stranger" was cheered and comforted, and her faith in Jehovah encouraged. "And she said, Let me find favour in thine eyes, my lord: for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken kindly to thy handmaid though I am not like one of thy handmaidens" (Ruth 2:13). At mealtime, Boaz showed further favour to the Moabitess. Ruth was allowed to share fully with the rest, and to dip her morsel or sop in the dish of vinegar or sour wine. As she sat among the reapers Boaz himself passed her a bountiful helping of parched or roasted corn, a double portion to mark his favour. "And Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she ate and was sufficed, and reserved some" (Ruth 2:14). Truly blessed are the meek; they "shall eat and be satisfied" (Psalms 22:26). When Ruth resumed her gleaning, Boaz instructed his young men to afford her every facility in gathering up the barley-stalks left scattered on the field when the sheaves were tied. They were also to pull out a few handfuls from the sheaves for her special benefit. "And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and ye shall not reproach her. And ye shall also sometimes draw out for her some ears out of the handfuls and leave them that she may glean, and rebuke her not" (Ruth 2:15-16).

Harvest work continued while the light lasted. Then with a stick Ruth threshed her gleanings, and found that she had about an ephah (three pecks) of barley grain to take home to Naomi. This would be a substantial addition to the household store. "And she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out what she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and came into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned" (Ruth 2:17-18).

Naomi and Ruth’s Evening Talk

It was surely a tired but happy gleaner that returned home that evening to her new home in Bethlehem; for Ruth had on that first day proved for herself how good a thing it was for a poor stranger to trust in the God of Israel, Who "regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward; Who executeth the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, to give him food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). The ephah of barley told the tale of Jehovah’s goodness, while the bread and parched corn from Boaz added a richness to the bounty for the widow and the stranger. "And she took it up, and came into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave to her that which she had reserved after she was sufficed (satisfied)" (Ruth 2:18). The elder woman was evidently affected by these unexpected but undeniable marks of God’s providential care. Only yesterday she had said, "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20); but today Naomi saw that He was dealing very graciously with Mara, as she had called herself. The love of God was lifting the veil of unbelieving complaint from Mara’s heart. And soon Mara the bitter would once again be Naomi the pleasant. "And her mother-in-law said to her, Where hast thou gleaned today? and where hast thou wrought? Blessed be he that did regard thee! And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought today is Boaz" (Ruth 2:19). The name Boaz awakened fresh hopes in the despondent widow woman. Provision for present needs had come through her wealthy relation; might not Jehovah through this rich kinsman also redeem the inheritance forfeited by the death of her husband and sons? Mara’s distrust of the Almighty was disappearing, and making room for Naomi’s confidence and hope in Jehovah. "And Naomi said to her daughter-in law, Blessed be he of Jehovah, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead! And Naomi said to her, The man is near of kin to us, one of those who have the right of our redemption" (Ruth 2:20). See Leviticus 25:25. Being a comparative stranger to the laws of Israel, Ruth had nothing encouraging to say to her mother-in-law in reply, but she did tell her that Boaz had bidden her to continue gleaning in his fields not only throughout the barley-harvest but through the wheat-harvest which would follow. "And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said to me also, Thou shalt keep with my young men until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept with the maidens of Boaz to glean, until the end of the barley-harvest and of the wheat-harvest. And she dwelt with her mother-in-law" (Ruth 2:21-23). The young men of Boaz were his reapers, and the maidens the gleaners. The harvesting of barley and wheat usually extended from early April until late June, a period of about three months. The prospects of food supplies for Naomi and Ruth had brightened; and for the lost inheritance there were now tokens of its redemption on their horizon of hope.

02.04. D. — Ruth the Suppliant at the Feet of Boaz

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Ruth 3:1-18. When David returned ignominiously from the land of the Philistines where he had unwisely sought refuge from Saul (1 Samuel 21:10-15), he wrote Psalms 34:1-22, possibly in the seclusion of the cave of Adullam where he recovered faith in his God. In this song of praise, he commemorates his deliverance and extols the graciousness of Jehovah to the needy and the afflicted, calling upon all those who were in distress and in debt (see 1 Samuel 22:2) to prove Him for themselves. David says, "Taste and see that Jehovah is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him! Fear Jehovah, ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions are in need and suffer hunger; but they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good" (Psalms 34:8-10).

Like David returning from Gath, the city of Goliath, Naomi returning from Moab, the kingdom of Balak, had tasted and seen for her unworthy self that Jehovah is good, and that "none of them that trust in Him shall bear guilt," or "be desolate" (Psalms 34:22). In the abundant provision that Ruth brought home to Naomi from the fields of Boaz, she discerned the "loving-kindness and tender mercies" of the Lord Who had thus so promptly and richly rewarded the confidence of the two lonely widows in Himself. Therefore Naomi encouraged herself in Jehovah. For their present need He had satisfied their mouth with good things; would He not provide for the future also? Might not her faith advance a step further, and trust Him to provide a redeemer for her late husband’s inheritance, which by the death of her two sons was forfeited through the lack of an heir?

Naomi Bids Ruth Seek a Redeemer

Naomi directed her daughter-in-law to make a personal appeal to Boaz, their "near" and wealthy kinsman. In this matter she was actuated by that unselfish spirit of grace, so perfectly manifested in Christ Who "pleased not Himself." She desired favour for Ruth the Moabitess rather than for herself, the wife of the late Elimelech. As she said, her object was to "seek rest" that it might be well with the stranger from Moab in the land of promise and that Ruth might rightfully share her family heritage in the tribe of Judah. Naomi was seeking not her own, but the spiritual interests of her daughter-in-law. So Paul’s constant aim in his service was the spiritual well-being of his children in the faith. He wrote, "I do not seek yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls" (2 Corinthians 12:14-15). Such examples of unselfish devotion demand our respect and our emulation. No doubt the piety and kindness already shown by Boaz to Ruth fostered these fresh hopes in Naomi’s heart, and she counselled the damsel to make her application to him forthwith. "And Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, My daughter shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now, is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he is winnowing barley in the threshing-floor tonight. Wash (bathe) thyself therefore, and anoint thyself, and put thy raiment upon thee, and go down to the floor; make not thyself known to the man until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lies down, that thou

shalt mark the place where he shall have lain down, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thyself down; and he will show thee what thou shalt do" (Ruth 3:1-4). The process of winnowing, that is, of separating the grain from the chaff after the threshing, was usually undertaken in the evening because the necessary winds for carrying away the flimsy grain-husks (Psalms 1:4) sprang up at that time of the day. To guard the winnowed grain from the pilferers, who love darkness rather than light, it was customary for the owner himself to sleep in the open upon the threshing-floor in his usual raiment, with a mantle over his feet for extra covering. It seems to have been common knowledge in Bethlehem that Boaz would follow this practice that night. Naomi therefore advised Ruth to take advantage of this occasion and make a private personal appeal to "Boaz of our kindred", seeking his protection in her friendlessness, and his interest in the recovery of the inheritance of her deceased father-in-law and her husband. Ruth agreed to carry out Naomi's proposal. "And she said to her, All that thou sayest will I do" (Ruth 3:5).

Ruth's Personal Petition to the Kinsman-Redeemer

Naomi's plan, founded upon divine ordinances (Leviticus 25:23-28; Deuteronomy 25:5-10), was made in all good faith, believing that Boaz was the kinsman whose bounden duty it was, according to the law, to undertake the recovery of the lapsed inheritance, and to marry her daughter-in-law, Ruth. She had confidence that Boaz, having shown himself to be a God-fearing man, would not hesitate to accept this responsibility, and also that he would, as she said to Ruth, "show thee what thou shalt do" (Ruth 3:4). "And she went down to the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law had bidden her. And Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was merry, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. Then she went softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid herself down. And it came to pass at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thy handmaid; spread thy skirt (wing) over thy handmaid; for thou hast the right of redemption" (Ruth 3:6-9). At the close of the day, Boaz ate his food with a "merry" heart, that is, with the "joy in harvest" (Isaiah 9:3) that came to him because God had so blessed his ploughing and sowing. "Merry" does not, either here or in Luke 15:24, imply an excess of conviviality. At midnight Boaz was startled to find a woman lying under the mantle covering his feet. This was the moment for Ruth to present her plea. She owned herself to be the unworthy gleaner to whom Boaz had been so kind. She was now seeking his protection as a poor widow and the daughter-in-law of a poor widow. She had come to him because he was their family relative, and had the right of redemption. She cast herself unreservedly upon his mercy and his favour. She knew he had the power to redeem; was not his name Boaz, the strong and wealthy one? She trusted that he was willing as well as able to redeem.

"Spread thy skirt (wing) over thy handmaid" is to be understood not literally but figuratively. Ruth desired his protection. When danger threatens the defenceless brood, the hen gathers her chickens under her wings (Matthew 23:37). When David was fleeing from Saul, he took refuge in the shadow of the wings of his God (Psalms 57:1; see also Psalms 36:7; Psalms 61:4; Psalms 91:4). It may also be recalled that in the harvest field, Boaz had used this very metaphor in welcoming Ruth as a gleaner, saying, "Jehovah recompense thy work, and let thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:12). Did Ruth allude especially to these words of Boaz, when she pleaded, "Spread thy wing over thy

handmaid"? It might well have been so, for the words of her lips expressed the faith of her heart that the "wing" of Boaz might be the agent of the sheltering "wings" of Jehovah.

Ruth Receives the Promise of Redemption

Boaz, with the fear of Jehovah before his eyes, listened attentively to the piteous plea of the destitute woman at his feet. Surely God Who had brought her from Moab to Bethlehem had now led her from Naomi's home to his threshing-floor. Regarding her request as a reasonable and righteous one, Boaz granted what she desired, though he knew what was involved in her petition better perhaps than either she or Naomi did, the fact being that another man had a nearer right than himself to redeem the inheritance. Boaz, however, undertook to see that justice should be done in the matter, and that the inheritance should be redeemed and established upon the firm basis of equity and truth according to the law of Jehovah. If the nearer kinsman should fail to do this he himself would do it. He meant, in any case, to spread his wing of protection over the forlorn damsel, and do for her whatever justice and generosity might require. The reply of Boaz to the request of Ruth was as follows: "And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter! Thou hast shown more kindness at the end than at the first, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; all that thou sayest will I do to thee; for all the gate of my people knows that thou art a woman of worth. And now, truly I am one that has the right of redemption, yet there is one that has the right of redemption who is nearer than I. Stay over tonight, and it shall be in the morning, if he will redeem thee, well — let him redeem; but if he like not to redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as Jehovah liveth. Lie down until the morning" (Ruth 3:10-13). So Ruth who was by birth a stranger from "the covenants of promise" received the promise of inheritance in Immanuel's land, the glory of all lands, the land from which the bounteous blessings of God will eventually flow to the whole earth. By the fulfilment of this promise she would be, as Boaz himself desired for her (Ruth 3:10), blessed of Jehovah and accepted as a daughter of Israel.

Moreover, her faith in Jehovah was exhibited unmistakably by her godly living and general demeanour; so much so that, as Boaz testified, the wise and upright men that sat in the gate of Bethlehem knew that she was "a woman of worth" (Ruth 3:11). Already she had been recognised by the ruling elders as one who excelled in those womanly qualities which imparted worthiness or "virtue" to a housewife in Israel. This term is used elsewhere. Such a one is described by Solomon as "a crown to her husband" (Proverbs 12:4). And the final twenty-two verses of this book of moral wisdom are an acrostic eulogy of "a woman of worth" (Proverbs 31:10-31).

Such then was the domestic character of Ruth before she entered the home of Boaz. By her comely behaviour the humble-minded handmaiden had in the eyes of the elders of the city shown herself worthy to share an inheritance in the midst of Jehovah's people. So the elders of the Jews in Capernaum said to the Lord concerning the Gentile centurion who sought His aid for the healing of his servant, that he was "worthy" (Luke 7:4). The centurion himself said, "I am not worthy." But the Lord showed the people that his good deeds towards the Jews sprang from "great faith" such as He had not found in Israel (Matthew 8:8, Matthew 8:10). In like manner, Ruth was justified before man by her works of "worth" because they sprang from her faith in Jehovah, as also did Abraham's and Rahab's (James 2:21-25).

Ruth Carries the Good News to Naomi

Boaz requested Ruth to remain where she was until the morning, and not to brave the dangers of a midnight journey to her home. The proved piety of the elderly man and the younger woman was an adequate defence of the decorum of this private and peculiar interview Ruth, however, departed from the threshing-floor at the break of day that she might "give no occasion to the adversary in respect of reproach" (1 Timothy 5:14). "And she lay at his feet until the morning; and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the threshing-floor" (Ruth 3:14). But before leaving, Ruth was again made a recipient of the munificence of Boaz, her redeemer by promise. He filled her cloak or overall with six measures of the winnowed barley grain and laid it upon her head to carry home. Thus Boaz crowned her, as it were, with a mark of his goodness and favour, a figure too, we may say, of Jehovah's favour which rests upon the head of those who "keep His covenant" and "remember also His precepts to do them." Such He crowns "with loving-kindness and tender mercies" (Psalms 103:4).

"And he said, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and he went into the city" (Ruth 3:15). The "six measures" of barley which Ruth was carrying to Naomi were equal to two ephahs; this amount was twice that of her own gleaning (Ruth 2:17). It was a "double portion," a sign from Boaz of special favour (Deuteronomy 21:17; 1 Samuel 1:5). The concluding words of Ruth 3:15 in the A.V. are, "and she went into the city." But most revised versions, like the one quoted, change the pronoun to "he," showing that the reference is to Boaz and his departure for Bethlehem and its gate (thus connecting Ruth 3:15, with Ruth 4:1, Ruth 4:16-18 being parenthetical. This reading, "he" instead of "she," is undoubtedly correct.

Ruth reached Naomi's house in the dim light of early dawn. "And she came to her mother-in-law; and she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty to thy mother-in-law. Then she said, Be still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest until he have completed the matter this day" (Ruth 3:16-18). Naomi's first words do not necessarily imply a lack of recognition. The patriarch Isaac addressed both his sons similarly (Genesis 27:18, Genesis 27:32). Also, the term, "my daughter," denoted a friendly greeting rather than actual relationship. It will be noted that Boaz used the same mode of address to Ruth (Ruth 2:8; Ruth 3:10). Ruth quickly unfolded to her mother-in-law the good news that Boaz had given her his promise of redemption, and she also displayed his gift of a double portion of corn, an earnest of that fruitful inheritance which was to come, as well as a mark of his present favour.

Naomi's comment (Ruth 3:18) on this good news is full of faith and hope. She herself had complete confidence in the pious and active beneficence of Boaz. She was sure that what he had promised he would perform without delay — "this day," she said. Ruth, therefore, need not be anxious. Let her "sit still," or "be still." The matter was now entirely in the hands of Boaz, and the strength of the Lord was in him.

Let our readers mark the trust of these women, and take heed to the exhortation of Hebrews 6:11-12; "We desire earnestly that each one of you skew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises."

02.05. E. — Boaz becomes the Kinsman-Redeemer

E. — Boaz becomes the Kinsman-Redeemer

Ruth 4:1-12. In the gate of Bethlehem, Boaz shews himself to be a man full of gracious consideration for the two widows but also of the utmost regard for the righteous requirements of Jehovah’s law in the land of Israel. He arranged that the immediate redemption of Elimelech’s inheritance should be undertaken in public and according to the approved customs of the people. There was, in fact, more involved in it than the provision of sustenance for the impoverished widows. The inheritance was Jehovah’s gift to this family, and should be recovered and secured to them for this reason. In the days of Joshua, the parcel of ground had been bestowed by lot upon Elimelech’s forbears to be held by them and their heirs in perpetuity. Jehovah was the landowner: "the land is Mine" (Leviticus 25:23). Any question affecting the line of succession or a change of occupant should be made on a righteous basis in the eyes of Jehovah. Redemption was a sacred transaction, and not a mere matter of human bargaining. With the double purpose of redemption and marriage in mind, Boaz betook himself to the "gate," which was recognised as an open court of justice where civil and criminal cases were investigated by the aged and wise men of reputation in the city. This form of local government was authorised by Moses and was embodied in his final instructions delivered to the children of Israel on the borders of the land of Canaan (cp. Deuteronomy 16:18-20; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Deuteronomy 25:7-9). The elders of the city were therefore its civil rulers and were "ordained of God" to be such, rewarding and protecting the good and punishing the evil with magisterial authority exercised according to His law (Joshua 20:4; Romans 13:1-4).

Boaz and the Elders in the Gate

Boaz was aware that another man by reason of closer kinship possessed a greater claim than himself to the right of redemption from the leaseholder of the estate to whom presumably Elimelech and Naomi ceded it on their departure to the land of Moab. Unless redeemed the land would remain in possession of the leaseholder or mortgagee until the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25:28). Up to the moment, however, the next-of-kin had taken no steps to redeem the inheritance, neglecting the widows to that extent. But Boaz was for instant action, and he at once raised the question before the lawful authorities, whom he called together in the gate. "And Boaz went up to the gate, and sat down there. And behold, he that had the right of redemption, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. And he said, Thou, such an one, turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit down here. And they sat down" (Ruth 4:1-2).

Bethlehem was situated on a hill, the cornfields being in the valleys and on the slopes. Hence we read that Ruth "went down" from Naomi’s house to the threshing-floor (Ruth 3:6), and that Boaz "went up" from the threshing-floor to the gate of Bethlehem (Ruth 4:1). The gate was a place of public resort, roomy enough for twelve persons to be seated and many townspeople to stand around as spectators. In great cities ample space was provided at the gates for important public

ceremonies. For instance, in a "void" or open space at the entrance of the gate of Samaria two kings were able to sit on their thrones in state, while all the prophets prophesied before them (1 Kings 22:10). The Next-of-kin Disclaims his Right of Redemption In the presence of the elders in the gate, Boaz stated the case of the lapsed inheritance to the next-of-kin (goel). Naomi, the widow of their relative, was desirous that the allotment of land which was her husband's hereditary possession might be redeemed. Boaz pointed out to the goel that on account of his near blood-relationship in the family, the primary right of redemption belonged to him. Would he exercise this right? If not, Boaz himself would redeem the inheritance. "And he said to him that had the right of redemption: Naomi, who is come back out of the country of Moab, sells the allotment that was our brother (kinsman) Elimelech's. And I thought I would apprise thee of it and say, Buy it in the presence of the inhabitants, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem; but if thou wilt not redeem, tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem besides thee; and I am after thee" (Ruth 4:3-4). The "nearer" kinsman-redeemer (goel) was ready to exercise his legal right and to purchase the property. By so doing he would add to his own estate. Altogether, the proposal seemed to him a good bargain. "And he said, I will redeem it" (Ruth 4:4). But apparently he was unaware that the transfer of the allotment to him required that he should also marry Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, Elimelech's son. "And Boaz said, On the day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth 4:5). This compulsory marriage was in accordance with the provision made in Jehovah's law (Deuteronomy 25:6), in order that the family name might continue with the family freehold, even though its head died without heir, as had been the case of both Elimelech and his two sons. And it was the will of Jehovah that the inheritance of each family of the righteous people should be its perpetual possession (Leviticus 25:23). The "nearer" goel, however, was not prepared to carry out the latter part of the bargain by taking Ruth to wife and preserving the name of the dead to the inheritance. He at once revoked his former decision. "And he that had the right of redemption said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou for thyself what I should redeem, for I cannot redeem it" (Ruth 4:6). By this declaration in the presence of the elders of Bethlehem he who had the prior right of redemption publicly surrendered this right to Boaz, and the way was opened for the latter to fulfil the generous purpose of his heart.

Boaz had stated clearly what was the position respectively of the two widows in regard to the inheritance. He said (1) that Naomi, in the eyes of the law, was the seller of the property, although it had, no doubt, been leased or mortgaged in the days of the famine to its present occupier. And as soon as the goel redeemed the inheritance, Naomi would receive its value for her own immediate use and enjoyment. He said also (2) that Ruth, not being a daughter of Elimelech, had no title to the property under the special "statute of judgment" applying to daughters (Numbers 27:6-11). But as the widow of Mahlon, she had a recognised place in the family. Moreover, seeing that her sister Orpah, the wife of her husband's brother, Chilion, remained in her own country, Ruth was the only one from whom, by suitable marriage, an heir might be expected to Elimelech's inheritance. These two facts will be found to be of importance when the typical aspect of the narrative is being considered (see pp. 60-69, section G). The "nearer" goel had declined to marry Ruth, "lest," he said, "I mar mine own inheritance." He thought that by his marriage with the Moabitess, he would bring upon his family the stigma of a "stranger." Moreover, he would be taking money from his own inheritance to redeem another's, and so he would "mar" it to that

extent. He suggested therefore that Boaz had better perform the part of a kinsman-redeemer (goel). In fact, the law in Israel had proved its own impotence to redeem the poor and the stranger, and it stood aside that grace and truth in the person of Boaz might act for the blessing of Naomi and Ruth. This verbal refusal by the goel to redeem the inheritance was confirmed publicly and attested lawfully according to ancient custom by handing to Boaz one of his sandals, thereby signifying that he surrendered to Boaz his claim upon the whole of the inheritance and every part of it down to a foot's breadth. A foot-breadth was a figure of the minimum holding of land a man might possess as an inheritance (see Deuteronomy 2:5; Acts 7:5). Also, receiving the sandal was an earnest of receiving the whole inheritance in due course. "Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redemption and concerning exchange, to confirm the whole matter: a man drew off his sandal, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was the mode of attestation in Israel. And he that had had the right of redemption said to Boaz, Buy for thyself; and he drew off his sandal" (Ruth 4:7-8). As the goel who had the legal right of redemption had decided not to make the proposed purchase and had formally renounced his right in favour of Boaz who had made no secret of his readiness to undertake the cause of Naomi and Ruth, everything was left in his willing hands. Neither of the two women appeared at the ceremony. They were persuaded that in Boaz God had raised up a redeemer (goel) for them. Both they and Boaz trusted in Jehovah Who "executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (Psalms 103:6). Acting in the fear of Jehovah and as His servant, Boaz thereupon redeemed the inheritance and married Ruth, for the two acts were inseparable in the circumstances of this twofold redemption.

Boaz becomes the Redeemer for Naomi and Ruth

Accordingly, Boaz purchased all the property that had belonged to Elimelech and his two sons, and further he took Ruth to wife so that the inheritance might not become void and the name of the deceased disappear from among his family and his tribe. This beneficent act Boaz announced that day to the elders and people assembled in the gate. "And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi; moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day" (Ruth 4:9). As will be seen from the narrative of the proceedings in the gate of Bethlehem, the redemption was twofold, comprehending (1) the purchase from Naomi of all that belonged to her husband and her two sons, the three men having died in the land of Moab, and (2) the "purchase" of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, to be his wife. Thus, both widows benefited by the transaction: (1) Naomi received from Boaz the value of the inheritance as a means of subsistence; she who had been dependent upon Ruth's gleanings in the barley-fields was now comparatively "rich and increased with goods"; while (2) Ruth the "stranger" became wife of Boaz the Bethlehemite, the "mighty man of wealth." Boaz had acknowledged himself to be "brother" in the broad sense of near relationship to the deceased Elimelech (Ruth 4:3), and therefore he had accepted and fulfilled a brother's obligation under the law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 to marry the widowed Ruth and raise up seed for the continuance of Elimelech's name and inheritance in the tribe of Judah and the land of Israel. The elders and the people who witnessed the "act and deed" of Boaz showed neither envy nor jealousy, but rather expressed their congratulations and pious wishes that the special favour of Jehovah might crown the happy event.

"And all the people that were in the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that cometh into thy house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and acquire power in Ephratah, and make thyself a name in Bethlehem; and let thy house become like the house of Pherez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman" (Ruth 4:11-12). The united desire of the assembly in the gate was that Jehovah would grant His blessing (1) to Ruth (2) to Boaz himself, and (3) to his house. Their desire (1) was for the childless young widow that she might now be fruitful like Rachel and Leah from whose sons came the eight principal tribes of the nation of Israel. Rachel, the much-loved wife of Jacob, and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, died in childbearing, and was buried near "Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Genesis 35:19). It may be for this reason that the citizens of Bethlehem mentioned her name before that of her elder sister, Leah.

They desired (2) for Boaz that he who was already a man of substance might through the redeemed inheritance acquire further power and possess a still more famous and illustrious name in Bethlehem. This prayerful hope was gloriously and supremely answered, for by this marriage Boaz became ancestor of Israel’s Messiah Who in due time was born in Bethlehem, little though it was "among the thousands of Judah" (Micah 5:2).

Further, their desire (3) was that the house or family of Boaz might be numerous and influential in the tribe of Judah, like the house of Pherez. Pherez (Pharez in the A.V.) was the second son of Judah, and twin-brother of Zerah or Zarah. His two sons and their families are mentioned in the census of the children of Israel taken in the plains of Moab near Jericho (Numbers 26:20-21). He was an ancestor of Boaz (Ruth 4:18-21), and Jashobean, one of his descendants, was "chief of all the captains of the host," commanding 24,000 men selected for service in the court of king David during the month Nisan (1 Chronicles 27:2-3).

Surely we cannot but admire the unjealous spirit and kindly grace that animated the townsmen of Bethlehem when they knew that Ruth the young Moabitess was entering the home of their respected elder, Boaz, as his wife. The law had said, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah; even their tenth generation shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah for ever. . . . Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). But all the elders and the people in the gate rose above the austerities of the law of Sinai and sought the peace and the prosperity of the new household in their bridal blessing, naming first the poor Moabitess and then the wealthy Bethlehemite. It was indeed a glimmering of that true Light which, coming into the world, would lighten every man, Israelite and Gentile alike (John 1:9). The words of the Bethlehemites were of greater significance than they themselves knew, for they contained a latent prophecy of "Jesus Who is called Christ." His genealogy from Abraham appears at the beginning of the New Testament in forty-two generations, and the tenth of those recorded is "Boaz begat Obed of Ruth" (Matthew 1:1-17). And Ruth’s name is thus written in the First Gospel because she by faith forsook the idols of Moab and sought sanctuary in Bethlehem where the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jehovah of Israel, was known and worshipped.

02.06. F. — Joy for Naomi and Fame for Boaz

F. — Joy for Naomi and Fame for Boaz

Ruth 4:13-22. The close of the brief narrative in the Book of Ruth records the joy that came to Bethlehem through the marriage of Boaz the goel and Ruth. The blessing of Jehovah upon this somewhat singular union was made manifest by the gift of a son to the elderly husband and the barren widow. The women of the town with pious neighbourliness united to bless the God of Israel Who had raised up an heir to the inheritance, long lying in abeyance but now redeemed. By the birth of Obed, Naomi’s sad heart was filled with joy, and Boaz acquired the fame of becoming a progenitor of Abraham’s Seed of promise and of David’s Son and Lord. The Heir born for Naomi

Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, being the "seller," had the primary interest in the redemption of her husband’s inheritance in Bethlehem, as Boaz publicly acknowledged when negotiating its purchase (Ruth 4:5). When the transfer of the property to Boaz had been completed, she then ardently desired to see with her own eyes an heir born to Boaz and Ruth, so that her husband’s name might thereby be preserved in his tribe, and the main object of the redemption be attained (for the anxiety of wives and mothers in Israel on this score, cp. the words of the widow of Tekoah, 2 Samuel 14:5-7). Naomi’s desire for a family heir was granted, and her faith in Jehovah rewarded by the gift of a grandson. "And Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bore a son" (Ruth 4:13). The women of the neighbourhood also recognised how signally Jehovah had wrought in the case, and with piety and intelligent insight they expressed their sympathy and delight to the elderly Naomi rather than to Ruth herself. "And the women said to Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah Who hath not left thee this day without one that has the right of redemption (goel) and may his name be famous in Israel! And he shall be to thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourishes of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law who loves thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, has borne him" (Ruth 4:14-15).

Evidently, these women were not idle, curious, chattering gossips, but godly sober-minded matrons with the fear of God before their eyes. They were able to discern that Jehovah had a purpose before Him in which this exceptional marriage and birth was involved. They no doubt remembered the outstanding case of Abraham and Sarah, to whom Isaac, the child of Jehovah’s promise and plan for blessing to all the nations of the earth, was marvelously given. Perhaps they also recalled Amram and Jochebed and their child Moses; and again, Manoah and his wife and their child Samson. What blessings those children were to their parents! What honour those parents subsequently received through their children whose names became "famous in Israel," because God had "raised them up" and chosen them from birth for His special service! At any rate, the women, consciously or unconsciously, framed their congratulations to Naomi in the spirit of Jehovah’s past dealings with the "fathers" of Israel. They told Naomi that in this baby boy Jehovah had given her the goel she had hitherto lacked, and He had thus made her inheritance secure, not only for the present but for the future also.

Moreover, the women seem to have had in mind Naomi’s words of complaint on her return from Moab to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:20-21); she then said that she went away full (with a husband and two sons), and had returned empty (with neither a husband nor a son). But Jehovah Whom she had blamed had regarded her "low estate," and had dealt not "bitterly" but bountifully with her. Ruth, the wife of the wealthy Boaz, had now become a mother, and in the newly-born infant Naomi saw the goel of her husband’s inheritance for the coming years. The little grandson would be the "restorer of her life." In him, her dying family-possessions were given a living hope again. Ruth’s son had brought nourishment to Naomi’s old age.

Further, the women reminded Naomi of the great treasure she had in the mother of the young child. In Ruth she had found "the comfort of love" in the loneliness of her treble bereavement. Ruth had loved her when she was Naomi the pleasant, and she still loved and clung to her when she was Mara the bitter widow. Was Naomi still grieving that she had lost her two sons in Moab? Why, they said, Ruth herself "is better to thee than seven sons." Has she not borne to thee a grandson, the son of Boaz? To be the mother of seven or more sons was esteemed a signal honour in family life (see 1, Genesis 46:25; 2 Samuel 1:8; 2 Samuel 2:5; Job 1:2; Job 42:13; 1 Chronicles 3:24; Jeremiah 15:9). So the wise women of Bethlehem bade Naomi to be glad in the Lord and to rejoice; the hour of sorrow had passed, and "a man" had been born into the world, whose name should be famous among the posterity of Abraham. The Motherly Grandmother The long pent-up maternal emotions of Naomi were aroused towards the child of Ruth. She took an intense interest in the babe, and was ready to devote her energies and experience to its upbringing in the ways of the Lord, as "grandmother Lois" seems to have done with Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). "And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it" (Ruth 4:16). "Nurse" or "foster-parent" is used in the general sense of one who is "instructor" and "protector." Moses, speaking to Jehovah, uses it to describe his office of leadership of Israel in the wilderness: ". . . Thou sayest to me, Carry them in thy bosom, as the nursing-father beareth the suckling, unto the land . . ." (Numbers 11:12). See also Isaiah 49:23. The interest of the neighbouring women-folk was so effusive that, like the neighbours of Elisabeth in later days (Luke 1:58-59), they undertook to select a name for the child, whom they regarded as Naomi’s because of its connection with the redemption of the inheritance which stood in her name. "And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi. And they called his name Obed (that is, worshipper, or servant). He is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:17). The neighbours’ choice of a name was accepted by Naomi and the parents of the child, and he was called Obed. Worship and service Godward seem both to be embodied in the meaning of this name, and the two qualities sum up the required attitude of man to God. Our Lord referred to this essential combination when resisting the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. Quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, He said to the devil, "It is written, Thou shalt do homage to (worship) the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). The Lord Jesus had taken "the form of a servant," and as such He glorified God to the uttermost; for He was Jehovah’s Beloved Servant, of Whom the prophets of Israel bore ample witness.

Obed (servant), the son of wealthy Boaz, by his name, at any rate, and perhaps also by an obedient and dedicated life of piety bore a quiet witness, not only to his coming grandson David who "served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36), but to David’s Son and David’s Lord, Whose service to God is unequalled and incomparable. The scripture record shows that in

Obed’s posterity his name became "famous in Israel"; for besides this brief record in Ruth, his name occurs nowhere else but in 1 Chronicles 2:12, as the grandfather of David, and in Matthew 1:5 and Luke 3:32 as the ancestor of the Messiah of Israel. But what illustrious honour for the son of a Moabitess is this association with the Anointed of Jehovah in His pedigree! The Genealogical Appendix The brief narrative in this Book shows how, through the providential over-ruling of Jehovah, Ruth the Moabitess became naturalized in Bethlehem-Judah in the land of Israel. The narrative ends with the statement that Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, "is the father of Jesse, the father of David," this brief sentence expressing the main object of the record. But a fuller genealogy is added, which extends David’s pedigree backwards as far as Pherez, the son of Judah. "Now these are the generations of Pherez. Pherez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salma, and Salma begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed, and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David" (Ruth 4:18-22). This table of lineage unaccompanied by comment is of importance, forming as it does plain proof of the descent of David from the tribe of Judah, to which tribe the sceptre and the lawgiver in Israel belonged, according to the inspired promise and prophecy of Jacob on his deathbed (Genesis 49:1-33). The evidence afforded by this short list of names is sufficient in itself to invalidate all rival claims to royalty either by the tribe of Ephraim or by the tribe of Benjamin. It therefore connects the Book of Ruth with the histories of king Saul of Gibeah in Benjamin and king David of Bethlehem in Judah, which follow in the Books of Samuel. The period covered by the table extends from the calling of the Israelites out of Egypt to be Jehovah’s people and nation to the time when Jehovah raised up David to reign over them as His king. The list contains ten generations, and these may be divided into two groups of five. The first five names — Pherez to Nahshon — are connected mainly with Israel when in Egypt and in the wilderness; the second — Salmon to David — with Israel in the land up to the time when monarchy was established under God’s chosen king. The pedigree shows the distinct line of constitutional royalty promised to the nation. The names given in it are not always those of the eldest in the family. David himself, for instance, was the seventh son of Jesse (1 Chronicles 2:15). The line of descent from Pherez was decreed to end with the Messiah, and it was therefore continuously under the superintendence of Jehovah. Elimelech’s name does not appear in the list, but that of Boaz, the son of Salmon. This selection shows the religious value attached to the marriage of Ruth and the redemption of the inheritance, of which perhaps the happy couple themselves were entirely unaware.

Some historical items connected with the names in this list may be noted. Pherez (Perez), the son of Judah and Tamar is always given precedence over his twin-brother Zarah or Zerah, so that he possessed the right of primogeniture. The family of Pherez (Numbers 26:20) held highest rank in the tribe of Judah in David’s reign (1 Chronicles 27:3), and seems to have been distinguished by its fertility and virility. This rapid increase of the family explains the allusion to "the house of Pherez" by the people at the marriage of Boaz (Ruth 4:12). The list in Ruth begins with Pherez, and not with his father, Judah, who died prior to the time of the Exodus, which was the beginning of national life for the children of Israel. Hezron was the firstborn of Pherez. Ram is sometimes called Aram (Matthew 1:3). Amminadab was the father of Elisheba, who became the wife of Aaron, brother of Moses, and first of the hereditary high-priests of Israel (Exodus 6:23). Nahshon (Naason) was brother-in-law of Aaron (Exodus 6:23), and prince or head of the tribe of Judah (Numbers 1:7; Numbers 2:3; 1 Chronicles 2:10). Salmon (Salma), son of Nahshon, married Rahab the harlot, and was the father of Boaz (Matthew 1:5). Salmon was probably one of the two men

whom Joshua sent to Jericho and the neighbourhood secretly, and who lodged in Rahab’s house (Joshua ii). Obed has been already noticed. Jesse the Bethlehemite (1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 1:18; 1 Samuel 17:58) had eight sons (1 Samuel 16:10-11; 1 Samuel 17:12). Jesse is described as "that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah," and "was old in the days of Saul; advanced in years among men" (1 Samuel 17:12). He was a wealthy man, but his great distinction in the nation seems to have been that he was the father of David, his youngest son, who rose to the throne of Israel, having been chosen by Jehovah to be the ruler of His people.

G. — A Typical Outline of Israel’s Final Restoration The brief and simple narrative in the Book of Ruth obviously contains many weighty lessons of that moral goodness in the personal life which in all ages has been inseparable from a fear of God in the heart. These profitable lessons rest upon the surface of the narrative and provide much spiritual food within easy reach of the diligent gleaner. But besides the didactic value of the history as an object-lesson in piety for all time, there is evidence of its prophetical value as a brief sketch of a particular phase in the national history of the children of Israel as Jehovah’s chosen people during the period of their future restoration. The list of names from Pherez to David at the end of the Book suggests that something more is involved in the narrative than the interest and instruction of a family episode. This period (Ruth 4:18-22) covers the rise of the nation from the squalor of slavery in Egypt to the glory and riches of world-eminence in Canaan with David on the throne. Not that the universal fame of the Davidic kingdom is in any way indicated in the Book of Ruth, where we find only his name and not his title. Indeed, in the divine foreshadowings of scripture, principles are often foreshown, rather than the "very image" of the coming events in detail and sequence. Accordingly, while there seems to be no direct reference to the establishment of the millennial kingdom in power and glory on the earth, there are pointers to the moral features of the nation at the time of its final redemption and its full possession of its allotted inheritance, attached as this climax is to the name of David in so many well-known prophecies.

These historical analogies have their instructive value. And when viewed by the light of prophetic scripture it will be seen that the personal events recorded in this Book depict on a miniature scale (1) the nation’s spiritual declension and moral departure from Jehovah and (2) its ultimate restoration to His favour and blessing through the intervention of a Kinsman-Redeemer (goel). These broad prophetic features, relating mainly to the falling away and to the ultimate uprising of the favoured nation, may be traced in the historical notices given in this Book of four of the few persons mentioned by name, viz., Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. The Four Principal Persons In the homely history of this Bethlehem family, the names of four of the persons stand out most conspicuously: (1) Elimelech; (2) Naomi; (3) Ruth; (4) Boaz. Each of these was closely connected with the family inheritance which was in peril of forfeiture until it was finally redeemed by Boaz the kinsman-redeemer (goel). In the events recorded of these persons striking resemblances may be discovered to certain outstanding characteristics of the national history taken as a whole. The chosen people and their inheritance have passed and will pass through similar stages of decline and revival until the day when their Goel will appear and their inheritance will be secured for ever by His redemption. Soon after settlement in the land under Joshua, Israel, through lack of the faith which their father Abraham had, departed from the unique place of privilege and testimony bestowed upon them by the favour of Jehovah; and consequently the nation lost possession of the inheritance which by promise was theirs for ever. At length, the inheritance of the sons of Jacob

will be restored, not, however, until the people of Israel in the obedience of faith return to their own land, and find their Kinsman-Redeemer in the Messiah Whom they once guiltily despised, rejected, and crucified, but Who is waiting to be gracious unto them as Jehovah’s exalted Servant.

(1) Elimelech by leaving Bethlehem-Judah to seek bread in the idolatrous land of Moab represents the nation of Israel who from the days of the judges showed their "evil heart of unbelief in departing, from the living God," and serving the false gods of other nations. For a temporal advantage, Elimelech, despising his birthright, forsook the inheritance divided by lot to his family by Eleazar the priest and by Joshua the captain of Jehovah’s victorious hosts (Joshua 19:51). In thus turning his back upon the land of Israel, he was abandoning the worship of Jehovah at His tabernacle in Shiloh. In short, Elimelech’s act was an open denial of his confidence in the faithfulness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when a time of famine and hardship fell upon His people. This act of religious disloyalty and declension by Elimelech and his family symbolized the more extensive and flagrant failure of Jehovah’s chosen nation to worship and serve Jehovah only and, whatever the cost to themselves, to avoid all intercourse with the idol-worshipping nations around them. But at the beginning of their national career, the children of Israel disregarded the divine admonitions, and mingled again and again with other peoples to obtain some temporal benefit. In a time of famine they forgot Him Who in the barren desert "satisfied them with the bread of heaven" (Psalms 105:40). They "despised the pleasant land" even before they reached it (Psalms 106:24). Unmindful of the "spiritual Rock that followed them" in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4), their unbelief angered Jehovah at the waters of strife (Psalms 106:32). Indeed, Jehovah’s charge against the nation a thousand years later was "My people . . . have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, to hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). What profit did backsliding Elimelech gain in the land of Moab? And Jehovah said of apostate Israel in that same prophecy, "My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit" (Jeremiah 2:11).

(2) Naomi by her condition of widowhood, childlessness, and poverty, represents the nation of Israel in the series of manifold desolations, afflictions, and infirmities which befell them because they persistently forsook God their Saviour and disobeyed His holy laws and statutes. In the land of Moab, Naomi the pleasant became even in her own estimation Mara the bitter; her "coal was quenched"; her family name was "ready to perish"; she was bereft of all earthly hope.

What an impressive likeness there is between the nation of Israel homeless in Gentile lands and the widow Naomi friendless in the land of Moab! The figure of widowhood, that is, the loss of divine ownership, protection, and supporting care, is used by the Holy Spirit in the prophecies to depict the religious and moral destitution of the people of Israel because of their public association with the false gods of the nations. Thus, by one of the earliest of the prophets, Jehovah renounced all relationship with His people because of their unfaithfulness to Him, saying, "She is not My wife, neither am I her Husband" (Hosea 2:2). Jeremiah, in describing the desolation of Jerusalem when Jehovah permitted its destruction by the Chaldeans, begins his elegy by exclaiming, "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! She that was great among the nations is become as a widow" (Lamentations 1:1). The spiritual destitution which will continue for "many days" to be the lot of the nation because of its unfaithfulness to Jehovah is plainly declared by Hosea; for he says, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without statute, and without ephod and teraphim" (Hosea 3:4). Again in prophetic

language, the "widowed" people are declared to be "Forsaken," and their land "Desolate" (Isaiah 52:4); but full deliverance of the nation from the Naomi-state will eventually come, and the ancient promise of redemption will be fulfilled: "Thy Maker is thy Husband: Jehovah of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer (goel), the Holy One of Israel . . . Jehovah hath called thee as a woman (wife) forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth that hath been refused (or, when rejected), saith thy God" (Isaiah 54:5-6; Isaiah 49:14). As it was with Naomi, so will it be in a coming day with the penitent daughter of Zion: Jehovah will give her beauty for ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3). And the prophetic words of the Psalmist will be fulfilled: "He maketh the barren woman keep house, as a joyful mother of sons. Hallelujah" (Psalms 113:9).

(3) Ruth by her condition of widowhood, childlessness, and poverty represents, like Naomi, the forlorn and forsaken state of the people of Israel, due to their incorrigible backsliding. But while there is a close resemblance in their widowed condition, there is also an obvious contrast between the two women. Unlike Naomi, Ruth was a Moabite stranger, and not an Israelite by birth like her mother-in-law. For this reason, many have assumed, somewhat hastily, that in Ruth’s remarkable story there can be no designed allusion to the people of Israel. How can we expect, it is asked, that divine mercy to a Gentile widow should portray divine mercy to Israel, the chosen race? The truth is, however, that this very difficulty due to Ruth’s foreign nationality provides the clue to the correct understanding of the prophetic bearing of the history. Ruth represents Israel not as the nation distinguished from and elevated above all other nations by Jehovah’s choice and calling and redemption, but Israel as the nation degraded from this position of eminence because of her religious and social apostasy, a degradation which became evident to the eyes of the whole world from the times of the Assyrian and Chaldean captivities. At this stage of its national history, Israel, by divine chastisement, lost its political primacy among the nations of the earth. It sank to the level of the Gentile nations, and is so regarded in God’s present government of the world. Indeed, the first among the peoples of the earth has become the last and the least.

Here Ruth the Gentile rather than Naomi the Israelite more fittingly represents the chosen people. In their degraded status the resemblance between the Moabitish damsel and the nation begins, and in her progress from Moab to Bethlehem and then to the house of Boaz may be seen a dim but discernible outline of the ultimate recovery of Israel from its present quasi-Gentile state and of its final possession of the inheritance through Jehovah of hosts, the Redeemer (Goel) of His people. This lapse of Israel from its position of national nearness to Jehovah through its inveterate wickedness, followed by its consequent loss of this position through the judgment of Jehovah, is plainly indicated in the scriptures. The merging of the people among the mass of the Gentiles is, for instance, predicted by Hosea in a well-known passage. Because of their continual rebellion against Jehovah, He dissociated Himself from them, and gave them the name, "Lo-ammi," which signifies, "Ye are not My people, and I will not be for you" (Hosea 1:9). From their deliverance out of Egypt to their captivity under Gentile rule, the children of Israel had been distinctively His own peculiar people, but no longer were they so regarded by Him. Jehovah hid His face of favour from them and withdrew from them His protecting arm. They were cast back into the sea of nations out of which He had drawn them. So applicable is this figure of Israel being a national castaway to the loss of religious relationship to Jehovah that when He bade a later prophet, Jeremiah, to take the cup of His wrath to all the Gentile nations, the one that heads the list is Judah, for by her sinful

backsliding she had forfeited the special favour of God, and in His righteous government of the earth she was treated as one of the peoples that knew Him not (Jeremiah 25:15-18). And in Daniel's day the "times of the Gentiles" had begun, and heathen rulers were reigning in Jerusalem, where once the house of David held sway. This judicial abandonment of the chosen people by their God became even more evident in the earth after they had wantonly rejected and crucified their Messiah, refusing, as they did, to own Him as Jehovah's promised Servant and King on earth and also as the risen and glorified Christ on high. Hence the "natural branches" of the olive tree of promise were broken off (Romans 11:1-36). They had smitten "the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek . . . therefore," it was said, "will He give them up" (Micah 5:1-3). This divine ban upon the nation, begun in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New, continues. God's earthly people are still disinherited, and are still wandering among the Gentiles, with no national nor political status owned upon earth, and with no religious worship owned in heaven.

Ruth in Moab, then, represents this anomalous religious and political state to which the nation of Israel has descended — which will continue until the repentant remnant of the dispersed people return in faith to their own land, and in like faith commit themselves to the kind offices of their Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel). Further, Ruth in Bethlehem-Judah, more than Naomi, represents in particular the pious remnant of the Jews, who in due course will be the first to seek the feet and then to see the face of their long-rejected Redeemer (Goel); they will be "bought from men as first-fruits to God and the Lamb" (see Revelation 14:1-5). Also, Ruth corresponds in great measure with the figurative term, Ruhamah (meaning "having obtained mercy"), applied by the prophet Hosea to the restored remnant of Israel which will again become Jehovah's people (Ammi); (cp. Hosea 1:6-9; Hosea 2:1, Hosea 2:23).

(4) Boaz, the redeeming kinsman of Bethlehem, the city of David, is undoubtedly a typical representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel) of Jehovah's earthly people, Israel. In scripture, redemption has more than one phase. It may be, and often is, effected by blood, but in the Book of Ruth sacrifice is not even mentioned. It may be by destroying the foe that holds another in bondage, but neither is this phase to be found in the narrative. It may also be the deliverance effected by the goel's payment of the debt involved, which is what took place in this case. Boaz exercised his "right of redemption" by purchasing the inheritance, supplementing his generosity by marrying Ruth, the Gentile widow who had professed the faith of Abraham. The nation of Israel was redeemed from Egypt both by purchase and by power (Exodus 15:6, Exodus 15:13, Exodus 15:16). As their Goel, Jehovah brought them out of bondage with His "stretched out arm and with great judgments" (Exodus 6:6). And when, centuries later, the nation was carried into captivity, first by Assyria and then by Chaldea, Jehovah repeatedly sent them promises of His deliverance by redemption, calling Himself, "Jehovah, thy Redeemer (Goel)," with other titles added such as "the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 47:4; Isaiah 48:17; Isaiah 49:7, Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah 54:8; Isaiah 60:16). In these and other prophecies, Jehovah reminds His earthly people that He possesses the sole "right of (their) redemption." At the appointed time, He will by His exalted Servant (Isaiah 52:13-15) redeem the nation for ever from their thraldom to Gentile supremacy, and restore them to "the mountain" of His inheritance, where He made His own dwelling and where He "planted" them at the first (Exodus 15:17). The narrative records that the concern of Boaz the redeemer with Naomi's inheritance was (1) by purchase to free it from its encumbrance, and (2) by marrying Ruth

the widow to ensure its continuance in the family through lawful heirs until the glorious days of the Davidic kingdom. In these two particulars, Boaz dimly foreshadowed Christ Jesus and His redeeming work on behalf of the people of Israel, whereby He will (1) restore to them the land Jehovah gave them for a perpetual inheritance (Deuteronomy 4:21; Psalms 105:11), and (2) provide a succession of undying heirs to that earthly kingdom by fulfilling Jehovah’s promise, "I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah a possessor of My mountains" (Isaiah 65:9; Isaiah 54:1; Isaiah 66:8). Then the Lord Jesus Himself "shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). And when, as "the Lord God of Israel," He shall have "visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68), He then will manifest Himself throughout the earth as the true Boaz, the Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel) of Israel and its inheritance.

Another feature in the typical character of Boaz should be observed: he foreshadows the Messiah in His exaltation rather than in His humiliation. In the scriptures, the sufferings of Christ are distinguished from His acquired glories, which come after the sufferings (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). Now, Boaz, the strong and wealthy goel, represents Christ, not in His vicarious sufferings, but in His risen power and ascended glories, not in His death, but in His life beyond death. In the Boaz character Christ Jesus is the Branch, the Son of man, Whom Jehovah made "strong" for Himself (Psalms 80:15, Psalms 80:17). He is the Mighty One upon Whom Jehovah has "laid help" for His people (Psalms 89:19). The Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel) of Israel and Judah is "strong; Jehovah of hosts is His name" (Jeremiah 50:34). He is the "Mighty One of Jacob" (Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 60:16). And when "the year of His redeemed is come" He will appear "travelling in the greatness of His strength," "mighty to save". He will then vanquish the enemies of His people and "bring down their strength (blood) to the earth" (Isaiah 63:1, Isaiah 63:4, Isaiah 63:6). Thus, the redemption of Israel’s earthly inheritance will take place when, and not before, their Goel destroys every foe, and subdues all things to Himself.

Boaz, however, redeemed the inheritance by purchase, and not by destructive power. His wealth enabled him to pay what was demanded for its recovery. The price paid is not disclosed, but its amount amply met every righteous claim of the creditor. And, as the New Testament reveals, it was by the immeasurable value and efficacy of His sacrificial offering that Christ Jesus "obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). But another eloquent feature of the transaction is its finality. Boaz completed the redemption of the inheritance by marrying Ruth. In this act also, Boaz is a type of Israel’s Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel); for in the prophecies, marriage occurs as a figure of Jehovah’s final restoration of His earthy people to a state of perennial joy and prosperity. The "reproach of widowhood" is taken away from the nation, and she rejoices as a bride with the Bridegroom, then known as "Jehovah, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 54:4-5). By comparing, for instance, Isaiah 53:1-12 with Isaiah 54:1-17, it will be seen that the future confession of the remnant of Israel of their atrocious guilt in rejecting their Messiah is first foretold; and that this prophecy is immediately followed (Isaiah 54:1-17) by one announcing the reception of the nation into the intimate favour of Jehovah. For a long span of centuries, Israel had languished in the widowed state of Naomi and Ruth, but now this mourning and privation should be exchanged for marriage felicities with Jehovah, her Goel. "Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy Husband: Jehovah of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer (Goel), the Holy One of Israel" (Ruth 4:4-5). The blessedness of Zion in the day of her future redemption is portrayed under the

impressive figure of marriage in another of Isaiah's prophecies. Israel will in a coming time be delivered from her forsaken and desolate condition. Jehovah-Messiah will then be her Bridegroom, and she will be His earthly bride. Even the land of her inheritance will be "married." The Spirit of Christ in the prophet says, "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah will name. . . . Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called, My delight is in her (Hephzibah), and thy land, Married (Beulah); for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married . . . with the joy of the bridegroom over the bride shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:2-5). In this vivid language, Isaiah depicts the contrast between Israel's forsaken (Naomi) condition and the millennial joys which the Kinsman-Redeemer (Goel) will share with Zion and Jerusalem in Immanuel's land (as Boaz did with Ruth in Bethlehem).

H. — Ruth as a Vessel of Divine Mercy

"Hear, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen the poor as to the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5). In the last paper it was shown that the brief history of Ruth presents a typical illustration of the future restoration (redemption) of the Jewish people from their present scattered and apostate condition among the Gentiles in order that they may share the blessings and glories of the coming millennial kingdom under the rule of their Redeemer (Goel). But this history has an individual as well as a national bearing, and we may profitably trace how graciously the sovereign mercy of God wrought in establishing and exalting Ruth the Moabite stranger to a place of distinction within "the commonwealth of Israel." Her case is a striking instance in Old Testament times of divine mercy exercised outside the limits of Israel, that nation which Jehovah chose out of all others to be His own peculiar people. The fruitful branches of His goodness ran over the wall. The river of His mercy overflowed its banks. In this impressive example, Jehovah acted according to His own right to show favour where, when, and how He pleased; as He said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15).

According to His own sovereign prerogative, therefore, Jehovah had mercy upon Ruth the Moabitess, daughter of an accursed race, and He saved her from the delusions and horrors of idolatry to mingle rightfully and acceptably with the worshippers of Himself, the only true and living God. On this account, Ruth stands in those dark days of apostasy when "the judges ruled" in Israel a bright and shining vessel of the abounding mercy of God, chosen by Him from among the Gentiles. The Moabitess is not unlike another outstanding example in a later day who described himself as the chief of sinners to whom "mercy" was shown (1 Timothy 1:15-16), and of whom the Lord said, "this man is an elect vessel unto Me" (Acts 9:15). Thus Ruth of Moab and Saul of Tarsus were alike "vessels of mercy which He had before prepared for glory" (Romans 9:23-24). Indeed, all of us who believe can say in the words of the apostle, "According to His own mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

Mercy and Glory In the purposes of God regarding man, His mercy is the forerunner of His glory. The vessels which He fills to overflowing with divine mercy will eventually glow resplendently with divine glory. Mercy first supports the weak and erring traveller through the desert wastes of a sinful world and then ushers him into the glittering scenes of glory with Christ in the Father's house on high. At the throne of grace, therefore, where we receive mercy in the time of our need, we may

always lift up our eyes of faith and exult in the sure hope of the glory of God.

Often in the scripture record, the divine act of signal mercy is tinged with gleams of a glory to come as its appointed sequel. This is notably the case in the Book of Ruth. The story of divine mercy to the widowed Moabitess closes with the name of David, the glory of whose kingdom was soon to break forth from Mount Zion, a harbinger of the more brilliant earthly kingdom of David's Son and Lord which is to spread to the ends of the earth.

Mercy and Grace

These two familiar words of Scripture are allied in meaning, but are distinct in use and application. God acts in mercy towards men, having in view their need and infirmity, their misery and suffering due to their presence in an evil world. Moved by compassion, the good Samaritan showed "mercy" to the wounded and destitute Jew (Luke 10:37). On the other hand, grace is the activity of God's love towards wicked and rebellious men, as we read, "Where sin abounded grace has overabounded" (Romans 5:20). The mercy of God can be traced throughout the scriptures, but the grace of God is revealed fully in the New Testament, for it could only thus be made known by Jesus Christ Who Himself was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, John 1:17). In Him, the grace of God appeared, bringing salvation for all men (Titus 2:11).

Grace then is for the guilty, and mercy is for the miserable. This distinction has also been expressed in these words: "Grace is that energy and outflow of divine goodness which rises above men's evil and ruin, and loves notwithstanding all"; while mercy is "God's pitiful consideration for individual weakness, need, or danger." The two words, grace and mercy, are beautifully combined and distinguished in an inspired description of what our Saviour God has done for Christian believers. The apostle Paul writes, "We were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error. . . . But when the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared . . . according to His own mercy He saved us . . . that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:3-7).

Ruth's Need of Mercy For what special reason did Ruth need God's mercy? Her personal character appears to have been irreproachable. It is nowhere said that she was guilty of open immorality like so many of her countrywomen in the days of Balak and Balaam (Numbers 25:1-5). And as scripture records no stain upon her womanly conduct we may assume there was none, since the Spirit of God neither conceals nor excuses the flagrant sins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses, David, and Solomon, and of others in the line of faith. Moreover, it may be added that Ruth is one of four women, appearing in the genealogical table of male descent from Abraham to Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:3, Matthew 1:5-6). Her three associates, Tamar, Rahab, and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), were all women of ill fame, nevertheless the four are recorded without comment in the line of Messiah's descent, shining there like stars of glory in the firmament of Jehovah's mercy. Of the four women, however, Ruth, because of her untainted history, is a striking contrast. Was then Ruth without defect in the sight of God? Was she so entirely without spot or blemish as to be a worthy object of the special favour of God and to become the chosen wife of a pious "prince" of the house of Judah? Alas, no: for "all have sinned," whether they are "under the law" as Israelites, or "without law" as Moabites and all other Gentiles. All mankind alike stood in equal need of divine mercy.

Ruth especially was disqualified by the law of Jehovah, for she was under its ban which rested specifically upon the whole of her people. She belonged to "the children of Lot," and she bore the stigma of the incestuous origin of that race. Her birth excluded her from the worshippers of Jehovah in Shiloh. Her marriage with Mahlon, the second son of Elimelech, did not remove nor lessen her disqualification, for by the ordinance of Moses the marriage was illegal. The instructions relevant to her case were to be valid "for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). Ruth, therefore, was permanently barred by birth from entering "the congregation of Jehovah," the circle of His special earthly blessing.

Thus the Moabitess was under the condemnation of the law of Jehovah. Nevertheless, though He could not righteously receive her according to His own law, He graciously accepted her according to His own mercy; and according to the riches of His coming glory by Christ Jesus He also gave her an honourable place in the royal archives of the Son of God Who as to the flesh came at the appointed time of the seed of her great-grandson, David (Romans 1:2-4).

Ruth Cleaving to Naomi (Ruth 1:1-22)

Having observed how the mercy of Jehovah filled this chosen vessel to overflowing, it will be interesting and instructive to note the characteristic features of the vessel itself. What spiritual qualities appear in Ruth’s conduct? Wherever and whenever the Spirit of God forms a soul for the reception of the gift of God the outline of His handiwork may be traced. And some features of the heavenly pattern are plain enough in the history of Ruth’s sayings and doings. Take the first chapter. Is not her faith in God plainly outlined here? By her outspoken and uncompromising decision to accompany Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17), Ruth showed what was working deep down in her heart. She believed that Jehovah was God in Israel, and with her mouth she openly confessed that Naomi’s God was her God, thus fulfilling the two conditions of the righteousness of faith, concerning which Paul speaks in Romans 10:9-10.

Ruth’s intense devotion to Naomi arose not only because she was the mother of Mahlon, her deceased husband, but because she was a representative of that people redeemed by Jehovah out of Egypt and established by Him in the land of Canaan. Accordingly, she boldly declared that henceforward neither in life nor in death would she be separated from Naomi and Naomi’s God. "Whither thou goest I will go .. . where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried," said the young widow. By this surrender of her kindred and nation, Ruth displayed the faith in her heart. She showed the genuineness of her faith by her works, as each believer is expected to do (James 2:17-18). Her choice of the unknown road to Bethlehem, against the advice of Naomi, proved that her faith was like the uncompromising faith of Abraham, "the father of all them that believe," who at the call of God "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Romans 4:11; Hebrews 11:8). Happy was it for Ruth that she fixed her eyes upon "things not seen as yet" by her in the land of Israel, the dwelling-place of Jehovah. Otherwise, the "things seen" might reasonably have deterred a thoughtful woman like Ruth from renouncing her people, and her religion. Doubts and difficulties might easily have arisen to hinder her. How could Canaan be called Jehovah’s land when so many of the aboriginal inhabitants continued to dwell there (Judges 1:1-36)? Had not the Israelites forsaken Jehovah to serve the gods of the Canaanites (Judges 2:11-13)? Did not Eglon, the king of her own land of Moab, rule over the children of Israel recently for eighteen years (Judges 3:14)? And had not the very woman she was about to follow to Bethlehem fled from that so-called "house

of bread," not believing that Jehovah could or would feed her family in a famine?

These were hard facts, and notoriously "facts are stubborn things." But Ruth was not turned aside by "things seen." Like Moses who by faith left Egypt, "seeing Him Who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27), Ruth by faith left Moab, saying to Naomi, "Thy God shall be my God." She acted in the same spirit of faith as the Lord's disciples, of whom Peter said to his Master, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee" (Luke 18:28). In self-denying trust, they clave to the Lord Jesus. This self-renouncing quality is the usual family likeness in the children of faith. And the Moabitish maiden clave to Naomi as we read, "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave to her" (Ruth 1:14).

Ruth Gleaning for Food (Ruth 2:1-23) When Ruth was settled in Bethlehem with Naomi, her first occupation was to glean in the harvest fields for their daily sustenance. As was customary in that land, the ears of corn she gathered would become her own. During the labour of collecting them Ruth became known to Boaz, whose bounty was her bread. From him she also received exceptional favours, though she appeared in his presence as only "the Moabitish maiden who came back with Naomi out of the fields of Moab" (Ruth 4:6). There was much disparity between the master and the maiden. Boaz was "the mighty man of wealth in Israel"; Ruth was only a poor widowed woman of a banned race. But though she lacked any rightful claim, she was made free of the rich man's fields, where she gathered "bread enough and to spare" for many days. Her daily sustenance was thus made secure by the kindness of the prosperous Boaz. In this liberal supply of necessary food for Ruth, we may discern an analogy with the abundant supply of spiritual food for the believer, of which the New Testament gives such ample assurance. Christ is the Bread of life for all who come to Him in faith, as He Himself said, "I am the Bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst at any time" (John 6:35).

Thus, Christ is the continuous support of that new spiritual life which He bestows upon all who believe on Him. To believe on Christ is to "hear His voice," and the Son of God quickens or gives life to those who hear Him (John 5:25). This life needs to be supported by a supply of suitable food. Christ is the Bread of that life. For the maintenance of spiritual life there must be a continuous appropriation by faith of Who Christ is, and of what Christ has done. Day by day, this ration of manna must be diligently collected. Daily, the ripened and reaped corn must be gleaned personally. This gathering is the believer's daily labour. The Lord said, "Work constantly (this is implied in the form of the Greek verb) . . . for the food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27). Seeking such spiritual nourishment should be the primary and habitual activity of every believer. Each one should imitate Ruth, and, as she said, "go to the field and glean among the ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find favour" (Ruth 2:2).

Ruth at her Redeemer's Feet (Ruth 3:1-18)

Apart from food, Ruth's main concern was to obtain a permanent place among Jehovah's redeemed people. And in the matter of her redemption, the Moabitish widow cast herself unreservedly upon the mercy of Boaz. Her words to him were few. She had implicit confidence that his goodness, his wisdom, his strength, his interest, would all be forthcoming on her behalf. She said, "I am Ruth . . . thou hast the right of redemption (goel)" (Ruth 3:9). Her one spoken desire was to be immediately "under his wing." As to her future, she was content to remain entirely dependent upon his mercy. She believed, and she was not made ashamed, for at once she

received from Boaz words of encouragement, of assurance, and of hope: "all that thou sayest will I do," were the satisfying words of her redeemer. At the feet of Boaz, she first learned the lesson of absolute trust in him for whatever blessing her redemption might bring to her. The incident is fruitful in lessons of great spiritual value for believers of every age. We point now to one only of them. Ruth's lowly attitude before her goel is an example for us all. It is the humble-minded who are taught the will and the ways of the Lord, what He has already done, and what He will yet do. In the sphere of spiritual redemption, lowliness is the prelude to exaltation. Christ "in Whom we have redemption" and "in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance," humbled (emptied) Himself. And He said to His disciples, "Whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens"; and He also said, "Whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 18:4; Matthew 23:12). Clearly, self-effacement before the Lord is of great value in His eyes. James wrote, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He shall exalt you" (James 4:10). To the meek and lowly in heart, He will by His Spirit impart the marvels of their redemption and the glories of their inheritance.

Ruth's Share in the Harvest of Redemption (Ruth 4:1-22) In merciful loving-kindness, Boaz undertook the case of Ruth and made himself responsible for her deliverance. All the benefits she ultimately received were his gracious endowment. She herself was helpless in the matter. The redemption of the inheritance was the work of the goel exclusively. Ruth is then no longer seen gleaning the few "handfuls of purpose" let fall for her, but gathering in the golden sheaves of redeeming mercy. No longer is she an indigent "stranger" in the goodliest of all lands, but a sharer of the wealth and dignity of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, who had with the inheritance purchased her to be his wife, and a partner of his princely power in Bethlehem.

Thus, through the mercy of the Lord, Ruth in the end reaped a twofold blessing in Bethlehem. First (1) she herself was redeemed and wedded by Boaz who had said, "Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife" (ver. 10). Moreover, (2) Ruth the wife of Boaz shared the whole of the inheritance which he had acquired by purchase, as he said, "I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi" (Ruth 4:9). So that Ruth (1) immediately shared with Boaz the possession of the inheritance in Bethlehem, and (2) prospectively shared with him honourable mention in the ancestry of David and of Jesus Christ, Israel's King and Redeemer (Matthew 1:5). In this twofold manner of sharing the results of redemption, Ruth to some extent illustrates the blessings of redemption made known in the New Testament for Christian believers. In Christ Jesus, the types and shadows are fulfilled, and in Him greater glories still are revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Redemption in Christ Jesus In the Old Testament redemption is connected with earthly deliverance, while in the New Testament, owing to the atonement of Christ, and His present rejection by the Jewish people, redemption is shown to be heavenly and eternal in its scope. A special picture of redemption is contained in the Book of Exodus which describes the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. There were two stages in their deliverance; (1) through the blood of the passover lamb the people were protected by Jehovah in the hour of His judgment upon that land, and (2) through the power of His right arm at the Red Sea, they were delivered from their oppressors. So soon as their enemies were destroyed their deliverance was complete. Then Moses sang the song to Jehovah, "Thou by Thy mercy hast led forth the people that Thou hast redeemed" (Exodus 15:13).

Figuratively, the slain lamb sets forth Christ sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7), Whose blood screened us from the penalty of our sins, and secured our forgiveness. In like manner, the passage through the Red Sea sets forth the perfection of God’s salvation in Christ Jesus. By His death and resurrection, the believer receives entire deliverance from all that was against him, the devil and his power being for ever annulled (Hebrews 2:14-15). Thus, redemption for the believer rests upon the broad basis of the death and resurrection of Christ — His blood and His power. In the New Testament, though Christ is not therein named as the Redeemer, our redemption is inseparably associated with Christ Himself and the one sacrifice He made of Himself for sins (Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 10:12). He "by His own blood has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). Seated there, Christ comprehends in Himself redemption in its widest scope and minutest detail. Our redemption is secured to us by personal contact through faith in Christ Jesus, Who "has been made to us . . . redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). We are all "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). This blessing includes the forgiveness of our sins, for in Him "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). Moreover, He has purchased us for Himself, for "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:13-14).

We learn further that the redemption in Christ Jesus is according to the foreknowledge of God, being now manifested to us in Him. Peter writes, "Ye have been redeemed . . . by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but Who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes" (1 Peter 1:18-21). But being even now redeemed by blood, redemption by Christ’s power has still to he completed with regard to us. By "the working of the power" whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will at His coming transform our bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory like His own (Php 3:20-21). The indwelling Holy Spirit is the seal given of God to believers unto this "day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit is also "the earnest of our inheritance (up) to the redemption of the acquired possession" (Ephesians 1:14). This particular result of redemption is future, and we are now "awaiting adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

Adoption or sonship is yet another fruit of the redemption in Christ Jesus (Galatians 4:5). We are made children of God by new birth, but sons of God by divine favour. Sonship implies dignity and heirship. We are not servants under bondage, but sons and heirs of God through Christ (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). By the grace of God, He "marked us out beforehand for adoption (sonship) through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Ephesians 1:5). We have already received the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15). This sonship of which we are conscious when "we cry, Abba Father," will be publicly acknowledged by God when His "many sons" are brought to glory (Hebrews 2:10). At that time of "the manifestation of the sons of God" the whole universe will be brought "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21), when we shall be "sharing the portion of the saints in light" for which we are already made fit (Colossians 1:12).

Such are a few of the wonders of the redemption by the blood and power of Christ Jesus revealed in the New Testament for the enlightenment, edification, and comfort of present-day believers whom God has made "objects of mercy" (Romans 11:31). We may well exclaim with the apostle,

"O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). THE END

Chapter 25

03.00. Christ and His Church

Christ and His Church — Eight Addresses at Wildfell Hall, London.

Lecture 1 — Christ and the Building of His Church Lecture 2 — Christ and the Communion Service of His Church Lecture 3 — Christ and the Various Members of His Body Lecture 5 — The Church at Pentecost Lecture 6 — The Church Growing and Multiplying Lecture 7 — The Church in Decay and Disorder Lecture 8 — The Church and the Lord’s Supper

03.01. Christ and the Building of His Church

Christ and the Building of His Church (Read Matthew 16:13-20; Acts 2:37-41, Acts 2:47) In this chapter, Matthew 16:1-28, we have the first reference to the church of Christ; and it comes in here very definitely and distinctly as something fresh and new in the ways of God, while its special character rests upon this — that the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected by His earthly people to whom He came. He had made Himself known to the Jews as the One Who was promised of old. He had proved by many wonders and signs that He was the Sent One of Jehovah, but the heart of God's earthly people had no care for their Deliverer. He was not one that pleased them, nor did they think that He would ever please them, and consequently they rejected Him. It appeared, therefore, that God's purposes for blessing to this world had received a check from those whom we might suppose would be the very last to have hindered the workings of God for their blessing. If there was any nation that had received favours from God it was the nation of Israel, and yet they were the ones who stood out against the Messiah, and refused Him.

It is at this point in the Gospel that we have the first intimation that God would not be thwarted in His purpose, and that the meek and lowly Man of Nazareth had still something before His heart, something that His hands would accomplish. If the national assembly of Jehovah refused Him, He would nevertheless have His own special company; and the assembly He would build would be invincible and impregnable. The forces of hostility by man and by the unseen world should not prevail against His church. But it is of the utmost significance that the declaration of the Lord Jesus with regard to the foundation of His church was announced at that juncture in the life-service of our Lord Jesus Christ when it was clear to Him, as it was clear to His Father in heaven, that Israel would not have Him; and therefore it was that He said to Peter, "I will build My church."

Moreover, the announcement was associated with the confession of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God. It would be instructive to go through the whole Gospel of Matthew up to this point and see how the enmity of the hearts of God's people against the Lord Jesus grew from day to day, as it were. His gracious ministry produced no yielding effect upon their hearts. There was no softening; their hearts only grew harder. There is, however, enough in this chapter itself to show us what was really working in the hearts of these persons.

Seeking a Sign The chapter opens with the fact that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to the Lord, and, not for the first time, asked Him for a sign from heaven. If you ponder for a moment you will see to what heights their unbelief had reached; for was not the Lord Jesus Christ Himself God's appointed sign that His promises made in the Old Testament were fulfilled? When the announcement of His birth was made over the plains of Bethlehem, what was the heavenly message to the shepherds? They were to go to the manger, and, said the angel, "This is the sign to you" — the sign of the Messiah according to the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz (Isaiah 7:14) — "ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes." That blessed, holy Babe, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin; was God's Son from heaven, and the time for the promised blessing had now come. The Deliverer Himself was present, and the man who had faith in his heart looked at

the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and by his faith saw the Saviour. Simeon said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He saw God’s side of it. Years passed; the Lord Jesus grew to manhood; He came forth from Nazareth to fulfil His ministry. The Father from heaven said at the banks of Jordan, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." The Lord Jesus, by His marvellous humility as well as by the wonders of His power, showed that He was God’s Servant, there to bless them by saving them from their sins (Acts 3:26, R.V.). He Himself was the "sign" predicted by Isaiah.

Now the leaders of the people come to Him, and say, "Show us a sign from heaven." What did their request mean? That they disbelieved all that up to that point the Lord had shown Himself to be. They still wanted a sign from heaven, and the Lord told them that no sign should be given them except that of the prophet Jonah. As Jonah disappeared from Israel and went to the Gentiles, so the Lord Jesus Christ would vanish from the ken of His natural earthly people. He would go into heaven; He would preach the gospel to the Gentiles also; and the Jews would see Him no more until they said, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah."

It is thus shown in the chapter that the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected in the hearts of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. There that poisonous leaven of disbelief was working. Their teaching was vitiated by their denial of the Christ, the Son of the living God. What they taught the people was something to poison and destroy their souls. Why? Because they disbelieved the Messiah. They refused to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had come to them that they might have life.

Now, friends, let us never forget that the great touch-stone of the ministry of truth is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The man who is not faithful to the glory and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may speak words intended to do you good, and edify your souls, but if they contain what is derogatory to His Holy Name, however profound his teaching may be, however powerful and passionate his speech, however clever and attractive his sentences, they will be but as leaven to your souls, communicating the corruption of evil to your heart. "Beware", the Lord said, "of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." They hated and despised Him, and made up their minds that He must die; they would not have Him to reign over them.

Popular Ideas But there were others who would not receive Him as the Christ; and the Lord spoke to His disciples, asking them what was the popular opinion about Himself. What did men in general say about Him? What did they say about Him in the streets and in the market-places? What was the opinion of the common people — those who "heard Him gladly"? They said something about Him not evil, not positively dishonouring to His name, and yet in essence they, too, detracted from His glory. Some said, He was John the Baptist, some that He was Elias, Jeremias, one of the prophets perhaps; but they evidently thought He was a good man, a man who would bring them some words from God. The Lord does not in this narrative condemn this luke-warmness, but such vague opinions would not do for His church, for His assembly; He does not accept these popular notions. The good seed of the word of the kingdom had been sown, and what had that soil produced? Not the fruit of righteousness and holiness, of sound, wholesome words that spoke well of Christ. They only said, "John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." The fruit was evil fruit. The good seed of His sowing had not been everywhere fruitful, because of the badness of the soil. There was no reception in the heart of the people for the person of the Lord Jesus

Christ, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Oh, beloved friends, cannot you in these questions of the Lord see this blessed Teacher come from God, looking round amongst men; and what is He searching for? Hearts that love Him, hearts that have received the knowledge of Himself as the Sent One from God. And will it satisfy His loving heart if a man says of Him that He is but one of the prophets? Has He come all the way from heaven to receive only that from men? And does He not also look today into our hearts? Is not His heart towards us, seeking to know from us what we think of Him? It is not what doctrines we hold, it is not what creed we confess, but what love, what allegiance of heart there is for Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ stands today as He stood of old on the borders of Caesarea Philippi, the rejected Man. He was the Sent One from God, but man had no heart for Him. And as He asked for hearts, so He asks still. What is your response, and what is mine, to the seeking of the Lord Jesus Christ? The Son of the Living God The Lord then turned to His own disciples, His apostles, those who had companied with Him in the days of His ministry, who had learned, but so slowly and dully, that He was being rejected. Now the Lord put the question to them that they might confess with their mouths what was in their hearts concerning Him. "Who say ye that I am?" It was a personal challenge. The word of the Lord Jesus Christ came direct to their hearts, bringing them face to face with Himself. "What do you think of Me?" And Peter answered. Peter was often the foremost with his tongue, but here he speaks, not because he was an impulsive man, not because his affections, as it were, were so near his mouth and so ready to be expressed in words; but he speaks because of a constraining power within him. He has received a revelation from the Father in heaven concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his Teacher and Lord. The Lord tells us this, but otherwise we need not have doubted it.. For what human heart could conceive rightly of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? What human eyes could look upon that Man of sorrows Who was acquainted with grief, and say, "There is the Son of God — the Son of the living God"? It was not the discernment of flesh and blood. The wise men, the noble men of the world, all failed to make such a confession. The wisdom of the world was nonplussed when they saw Jesus Christ. They could not see the glory of God’s Son in that lowly Man. And I call upon you for faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ now. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ has been declared in this world for centuries, and men have professed some sort of outward allegiance to that name, but where are the hearts that are absolutely true to Christ in His person and in His glory? Who are they that believe from the very bottom of their hearts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? This confession was not a deduction of logic; it was not something that sprang from Peter’s own mind or Peter’s own feelings, but it was an utterance absolutely true, and appropriate to the occasion because the Father in heaven had made it known to the apostle.

We do not know, but it is not at all likely that Peter was at the Jordan when from heaven came the voice of the Father, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." That was a voice specially for John, because John said himself, "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He Who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw — and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:31-34). But the declaration by Peter was a special and definite revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory as not only the Sent One, the Christ, the Anointed One, but the Son of the living God. It is needful in a day of rejection that there shall be witnesses to the essential glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God always finds them. He found one here; He

found Peter, and revealed to him the truth concerning His Son. What is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed by the Father to babes (Matthew 11:25). And is it not so today? The spirit of Antichrist is even now abroad; it is common for men in Christendom to deny that Jesus is the Christ, though John says definitely that such a one is a liar. Moreover, there is not only the denial that Jesus is the Anointed of God, but men also deny the Father and the Son. This spirit of error, the spirit of Antichrist, is now working amongst men (John 2:18-22). By and by, on the removal of the church, that habitation of the Holy Spirit and bulwark against the spirit of foul and poisonous error, the salt of the earth having gone, then the great evil of antichristian doctrine will spread unhinderedly over the hearts of men, and how terrible and appalling the state of the world will be! How quickly the corruption will spread when the salt is removed! Let us beware of anything in our hearts or associations that is derogatory to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is worthy of the confession Peter gave, that typical churchman, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And let me say that this typical confession is not something that we are called to say to one another. I might say to you — and I might be a deceiver — I might say to you, "I believe in the Christ, the Son of the living God," and in my deceitful heart and mind, I might have reserved some thought, some prejudice, some bias against the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that you would not perceive. What we say to one another, we are rightly judged by, because we are counselled to judge one another by words and actions. But Peter's statement was made to the Lord Jesus Christ. And He looks for a similar acknowledgment from you now. He seeks that you should, from your heart, in His presence, looking Him in the face, say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is a poor thing to have a creed in one's memory, and to make the confession of our belief a mere memorized recital of good words, sound words, however right and proper the formulas may be. No, when you come into the church where Christ is All-and-in-all, you have to do with Him; you have to do with Him Who is the Truth, and He wants the truth from you. He desires "truth in the inward parts." Let us therefore challenge ourselves whether we can say to Him, "Oh, Lord, I know very little, but I do believe in my very soul that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the way to be blessed in the eyes of the Lord. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." Oh, how good and sweet the apostle's words were to our Lord, when men were saying, "Show us a sign from heaven. Show us something we can rest upon, something really from heaven." That wicked and adulterous generation had made up their minds to slaughter Him, and their murderous intent was before the eyes of the Lord Jesus. While those who were led by the leaders thought He was someone good, a man such as there had been many a time before in the Jewish history, in truth there is but one good man, and He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Peter said, "Thou, Jesus of Nazareth, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There came thus to the Lord Jesus Christ a refreshing draught in His service. He had not laboured altogether in vain. He had not spent His strength entirely for naught. Here was some fruit that was sweet to His taste. This man had made this noble and true confession in the ears of others as well as in the ears of the Lord Himself. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Is it not beautiful to see the care of the Father, if I may venture to use the word, for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." He knew the worth of His blessed Son, and

He saw men in this world turn away from that Son; and so He opened the eyes and heart and lips of this man to speak faithfully and to speak the truth concerning His Sent One. And so in his confession of Christ Simon was truly a blessed man, favoured of God the Father. The New Building But the Lord Himself had something now to say: "I also say unto thee." We have the Father's testimony to Peter concerning the Son, and we also have the Son's saying to Peter concerning the church: "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it."

What was the rock upon which He would build His church? "Thou art Peter", he said. The explanation has often been made that Peter was but a stone in the edifice, as his new name means, and he could not be the foundation of solid rock on which the church would be built. The rock was the truth of the confession that Christ is the Son of the living God. The Lord now gives Simon his new name, that spiritual name that He had conferred upon him at His first interview with him. His new name was Peter. It is the name which was his in his relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man learns the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ he enters a new world entirely, and becomes a new person, and the Lord gave the new name to Simon Bar-jona to signify the new place that he had taken as His confessor. Peter or Cephas was his new name from the first (John 1:42); now he had spoken in the character of that name.

Peter had given utterance to what the Father had communicated to him about His Son, the truth of His Person. But the world and the Jewish nation stood apart from this revelation by denying this truth. They were opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ. They would not have Him. He was the Stone which the builders rejected. But the Father had revealed to Peter another foundation altogether, which was of the nature of solid rock, something which could not be overthrown by floods and tempests and storms and man's evil devices.. It would stand firm and true for ever. Why so? Everything connected with the old dispensation, with the Jewish nation, with the earthly promises, had hitherto (so far as could be seen outwardly) rested upon man — man's faithfulness and man's steadiness and man's reliability; and hitherto all had failed.

Find from the Old Testament something upon which failure is not written. From Genesis to Malachi the whole testimony of Israel is a complete failure. Everything set up for trial broke down absolutely; and the Jewish nation, which was called into its special position for the particular purpose of upholding the paramount claim of the Holy Name of God as the sole Person to be worshipped, had fallen into gross idolatry, and abused the privileged position that God had given it. The New Foundation But the Lord Jesus Christ says here to Peter, "There is now a new foundation, a solid rock"; and that rock is the Father's revelation that He has sent somebody upon Whom He can rely; and that someone is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of the living God. All the disciples on the Lake of Gennesaret, in an earlier chapter, confessed Him as the Son of God, and so subsequently did Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus. These confessed Him as the Son of God, as the Jewish remnant will do by-and-by, having been taught to do so in the Old Testament (Ps. 2:7); but here was something significant — the Son of the living God. His was a life over which no power, no living power, could prevail. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against this foundation, because the foundation is the Son of the living God.

I think that I am perhaps saying things quite familiar to most of us here, but while they may be familiar even to all, have we all grasped and truly grasped the full significance of this truth? We

learn from this verse that the church of God, which has such a perplexing appearance as we look upon its outward testimony in the world, rests upon this solid foundation, Christ Himself, the Son of the living God.

Here we can find perfect satisfaction. There are many people who are afraid lest this Ark of God should come to grief; and they put out their hands, to steady it. But the church of God is safe and secure for one sole and sufficient reason, and that is because it depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ in His personal glory; and nothing can triumph over Him. It is for you and me, who are associated with that church, to confess Him with our hearts and with our lips, and to let the truth marking our actions and our associations be that we know and believe the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"Upon this rock", the Lord says, "I will build My church." He would do it; it was then a future thing. But beforehand He makes the announcement, and He makes the announcement in associations of the Gospel history that we do well to mark. There is an indication that events in His ministry had come to a climax; and consequently the Lord said, "I will build My church," to His faithful disciple, the one who was ready to scent danger whenever it was coming, and put out his sword when anything was against his Master. It was on the confession through Peter’s mouth that the truth was made clear as to the formation of the church; and further, that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it. This feature of the church when compared with God’s earthly kingdom is quite new. Where is David, the man after God’s own heart, in his glory? His sepulchre is with us today; the gates of Hades had prevailed over the king. Solomon in all his glory and wisdom, where is he? His sepulchre also is with us today; the gates of Hades had prevailed. All the great ones of the Old Testament had passed away. The kingdom of Israel as it appeared in its glory had passed away; the gates of the grave had triumphed over even the faithful ones of Old Testament times. But with regard to the church, the Lord declared it should not be so; and that for a very simple reason, which is made clear later on. It was because of the peculiar glory and blessing that belong to the church of Christ in virtue of its foundation upon His death and resurrection. This special privilege does not depend upon the length of our lives in this world. It does not depend upon our living even for a thousand years or more. "The gates of hell" can do nothing to frustrate the peculiar blessing of the church of Christ, because the hopes of the church are heavenly, and the glorious fruition of every purpose connected with the church is in heaven, which is utterly beyond the domain of death and Hades.

Christ’s Church So the heavenly character of the church of Christ is contained here in embryonic phrase. The Lord was going to build His church, His own peculiar church. He had spoken before in the way of parable (Matt. xiii) of that which was peculiar or special to Him. The pearl has to be His own pearl; He will sell all so that the treasure in the field may be His; and the bride, a later figure of the church, was to be His bride. Here He says, "I will build My church." And in the fact of being personally possessed by Christ we have an inexpressibly beautiful and touching feature of the church. The church of Christ is the object and scene, if I may use the word, of the display of Christ’s affections, the exercise of His love, of His brooding love over His church: "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." In the hour of His rejection, the Lord turns, as it were, to that which was to be His, His very own, His peculiar treasure: "I will build My church." Israel may be taken away from Him. The earthly inheritance may not come, but "I love My church, and the first thing that I will do, the first object that I will bring into My glory when the time comes shall be My

church, the church which I will build." The building was soon begun. The building is still going on. The building presently will be completed; and then the church will stand before the Lord in its beauty, a beauty of which the world does not dream, a beauty that the world cannot appreciate, and a beauty that only Christ can know. It is the Bridegroom Who knows the beauty of the bride. It is Christ Who will know and enjoy the beauty of the church, and so will every one around Him in the day of glory.

"I will build My church. I will build upon this foundation those that confess Me; those who will say, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' when the world is against Me, when the religious world and the professing church are against Me; those who are not ashamed to own Me before men — they shall constitute My church, which shall be for Me and with Me in the day of My glory." The Lord also said, particularly to Peter with regard. to the kingdom of heaven, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven", and so on. The promise meant that administration in earthly things was committed to him. The Lord goes back to the term, "kingdom of heaven", and Peter was to bind and loose in earthly matters. We find in the Acts that he did so personally in Jerusalem and Caesarea.

Pentecostal Building

Let us now look very briefly at the verses read in the Acts. There we see that the Lord had gone on high, and that having ascended into heaven, He had sent down the Holy Spirit. It was known in Jerusalem by things that men saw and heard that there had been this spiritual visitation from God. The Holy Spirit Himself had come, and men were speaking by His power, and men knew that it was the power of the Holy Spirit, not because of the sound of a rushing mighty wind that they heard, not because they saw tongues of fire sit on this one and that one, but they knew the Holy Spirit was speaking to them because the words of Peter entered their hearts and consciences and gave them to feel that they were guilty men. And who could break down the human will that had so stubbornly set itself to resist the Lord Jesus Christ and to crucify and slay Him? There was no power but one; it was the power of the Holy Spirit. It came as a fire, and it melted, as it were, the iron barriers of unbelief raised against our Lord Jesus Christ; and men felt that it was verily true that Jesus Christ Whom they crucified had now been exalted at the right hand of God. He was there in heaven, and this thing in Jerusalem was His doing by the Holy Spirit.

It was at the first a limited company that received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but Peter spoke in the temple-courts, and his words had effect. Many believed and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they were brought out of that "untoward generation"; and the result of his preaching was that to the little company of believers there were added three thousand souls in one day. The Lord was building His church, as He had said to Peter He would do.

You do not find a parallel in the past history of Jerusalem. You do not find a sudden influx of thousands into the nation of Israel. There was nothing like this that went outside the earthly people and brought a company of strangers into their midst. But the very first act of the Holy Spirit was to work in men's hearts, and three thousand, many times the number of the original company, were added to their number. This addition was not due to the striking eloquence of Peter or to anything particularly powerful or attractive in the company of the professors of the Lord Jesus Christ; it was entirely due to the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted Christ, the Son of the living God, had sent down the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Himself by that Spirit was working there

in Jerusalem, where He had been crucified, and calling out from those crowds of His betrayers and murderers those who should form His church. Oh, what grace on His part! What love! Again, beloved friends, we see, as it were, those tears when He looked upon the guilty city, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not Here the Lord gathers three thousand by the power of His Holy Spirit into that new assembly which He was forming. The work was to begin there by the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins (Luke 24:47), for this was the way in which He began building the new habitation of God through the Spirit.

We do not get the definite word "church" in this chapter, except in our Authorized Version. This actual designation should not be there, but the word occurs soon after (Acts 5:11).

What we find here is that these people who were converted and baptised were brought together. They formed a new company, and were thereby separated altogether from everyone else in Jerusalem. The feature that distinguished them was fidelity and allegiance to the Christ, Who was crucified in Jerusalem and Who was now exalted in glory. They became part of the church. They were built into that spiritual edifice in this world upon which the Lord still has His eye, and which He is still constructing. He is the Master-Workman; he is the Architect, the Designer; but He is the great Workman, Who never rests. His disciples went forth, and preached everywhere, but the Lord was working with them (Mark 16:20). And here at the end of this chapter we read that the Lord added daily such as should be saved.

Still Being Built

Beloved friends, this work is going on still. The church is being formed, but the great secret that we must hold fast is that it is the Lord Who is building. It is His work. There is no human power able to do it; no skillful preacher can bring persons into that church. It is the Lord’s own work. It is He Who calls, for the church, as the original word, ecclesia, implies, is composed of the "called-out" ones. His voice reaches this one and another one; there is a response, and they come, not only to Him, but also to one another. They are brought into a new union, a new association which has living connection with the Son of the living God. Do you appreciate and value this truth?

Oh, if we could really lay hold of it as something that is so solidly true that nothing can alter it! No power of error or deceit can undo what the Lord does. If one is brought into His church in this world, that one will be in His church in glory, that one will share the love and glory of Christ in the day when He is no longer the rejected One, but comes in His majesty and power, comes to be wondered at, comes to be admired in those that believe. Then, when we are with Him in that day of manifested glory, when as part of the church we consciously realise that glory, we shall realise it to be His glory. We shall say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thee be the glory." How good it would be if we could learn to say it now! It is in substance the confession of the church: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Give Him then this glory. Because He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, we can give Him no higher praise than this. He is the Super-eminent One, and surely we love to say so, and to say so here in this world where He is disowned. Our neighbours, our friends, sometimes our dearest friends, wound us because they will not own Him; they, alas, despise the One we love and adore.

We need to abide true to our absent Lord. Let us beware lest our deceitful hearts set up anything as an idol in the place of the Christ, the Son of the living God. So may we abide with the Lord's help faithful to Him Who is the Head of His body, the church.

03.02. Christ and the Communion Service of His Church

Christ and the Communion Service of His Church (Read Acts 2:41-47; Acts 20:6, Acts 7:1:1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 1 Corinthians 11:20-34)

I spoke last week of the promise of the building of Christ's church upon that foundation which should never be shaken, and on that occasion we saw also that the building was commenced on the day of Pentecost. The distinguishing feature of the church is its union by the Holy Spirit with the Lord Jesus, Who has gone on high. The Lord proved His presence there, and His power, and the fulfilment of His promise to them, by sending the Holy Spirit. The fact of the Spirit's coming was demonstrated in Jerusalem by the effect upon Peter's audience. Three thousand were that day turned to the Lord, and were added to that new company which had been formed into a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now we know that before our Lord went on high — when on the night of His betrayal He held, if we may so express it, His final private interview with His disciples He sought to ensure their remembrance of Him. He was about to leave them, but they must then remember Him in a particular way. That death, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem, must not be forgotten. And He thereupon instituted the breaking of bread for their continual observance. The Lord was on high; they were here. He would not leave them nor forsake them. He would always be with them in the power of His Spirit, Whom He would send; but one great object of the Lord's Supper was that in His absence their affections should not wander away from Him, Who had passed through death for them. That which must necessarily touch the heart of a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ more than anything else is His love, which was unto death. His obedience to the One Who sent Him went as far as death, even the death of the cross. The Supper is a memorial of that death.

Now the remarkable fact that stands before us in the second chapter of the Acts is that there was an immediate response on the part of that newly-formed assembly in Jerusalem to this desire of our Lord that they should break bread in remembrance of Him. The church of God was entirely distinct from God's ancient people. The high priest, the Jewish council, had nothing whatever to say or do in connection with the arrangements of the assembly of God. The Spirit of God was there already in the midst of the disciples. He was not in the temple with all its architectural grandeur, but in and with those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourfold Continuance And the Spirit of God records here that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." These were the four things that were characteristic of these people. No longer is it the teaching of Moses; it is now the apostles' teaching. It is no longer the natural tribal fellowship which arose because the Jews were all the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but there was a new fellowship entirely, a fellowship which was the consequence of their being indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, Who had united these disciples of the Lord, and made them one with the Christ of God. And this fellowship expressed itself in their having one heart and one soul, having all things common, being together for one purpose. There was one fellowship, the communion of saints, which is an abiding feature

of the church. The member of the body of Christ is not regarded as an isolated person, not as an individual. He is an individual so far as his reception of the gospel is concerned; he is an individual so far as his responsibilities are concerned. As a sinner before God a man is, and must be, an individual amenable to judgment, but when he comes to Christ he is thereupon brought into this unity, this holy association, this new place in the church of God, where all are one because the Holy Spirit is dwelling there. At the beginning, this oneness was expressed continuously in every form of spiritual activity. But there was also the breaking of bread. This was what the Lord enjoined — the joint remembrance of Himself in eating of the loaf and in drinking of the wine. That He was absent, so far as the outward eye could see, they knew. But He was present with them to preside at this meeting, and to make the breaking of bread totally unlike those empty Jewish ceremonies which were still going on in Jerusalem. It was a living act on their part in the presence of the living Lord, of remembrance that He, the Son of the living God, went down into death on their behalf, for the glory of God.

There were the prayers which are mentioned also. These were the regular prayers of the church as the church. The disciples had the extraordinary privilege of being able to unite their hearts in earnest supplication at the throne of grace, the Spirit Himself interceding for them and in them. It was not one man praying for another, but it was the continuance of them all acting together in prayer. They each had their individual prayers in the privacy of their own circle, but what is spoken of here was true of them all when they were together. So they continued steadfastly in the prayers of the newly-formed assembly.

We ought not to overlook the importance of assembly prayer. Two or three may pray anywhere, and at any time, having some specific desire before them; but that is not necessarily assembly prayer. The assembly prayer is when members of the body of Christ come together with the united purpose of seeking the face of the Lord in earnest supplication; and, being together as such, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for them unitedly with groanings that cannot be uttered. Such prayers are fruitful in blessing.

You find that when the church was praying in Jerusalem, the whole place was shaken — a remarkable token that God hears and answers united prayer. And it is still so. In the present broken and scattered condition of the church it remains true that we may continue steadfastly, if we will, in the assembly prayers. Let us not forget to do so.

Breaking of Bread Established

We find that the breaking of bread was an established practice among these new church-members. The practice was there so fully and so definitely established that we are told in the 46th verse that they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home, did eat their meat, or food, with gladness. Here a distinction is drawn between eating their food and breaking bread because elsewhere we do find breaking of bread used with reference to an ordinary meal — in the last chapter of Luke (Luke 24:35), for instance. Here the breaking of bread was not the ordinary meal; it was the remembrance of the Lord Jesus according to His own appointment before He went on high; and the Holy Spirit, to prevent confusion, joins it with the ordinary partaking of food. They ate their food with gladness, but they broke bread at home, not in the temple. And they did so daily. Their hearts were in continual touch with Him Who had so recently gone from their midst. It was a real thing to them too, because not so many days, very few

weeks, had passed since some of them actually saw Him when He said to them in the upper room, "This do in remembrance of Me."

They may have recalled the very tone of His words in the upper room, when He looked into the faces of the eleven, and said, "This do in remembrance of Me." Could they refuse obedience to Him? Was it a hardship for them to do this day by day in remembrance of Him? It was real to them in Jerusalem, but we ought not to forget that though many centuries have passed since the Lord. uttered those words, the Holy Spirit can still make them vivid and real to us also, if we will. If we are together, sensible of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst and waiting upon the Holy Spirit to act among us as He will, will you tell me that He cannot make the voice of the Lord and the presence of the Lord a reality to our hearts?

Then why is it not always so? Is it not because we lack faith? Because we come into the presence of the Lord in a way that we should not come into His holy presence? We come in perhaps as if we are going into our dining-rooms to sit down to a meal, forgetting that the Lord is there, in His assembly. The breaking of bread was a real memorial to those persons in Jerusalem, and it can also be real to us now. The Lord is in our midst; the Holy Spirit also is there; and in spite of all our weakness and failure His presence becomes a real thing to our hearts in so far as we grasp the truth of it. So it was then at the very beginning in Jerusalem. And so we find later in Acts 20 at Troas. There, in that town, the disciples met together in accordance with their practice on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord’s resurrection. And we know it was a weekly practice because the apostle, who was on a journey to Jerusalem, and anxious to get there as quickly as possible, tarried at Troas seven days expressly (so we may gather from the scripture) that he might break bread with them, and also use the occasion of their being together to discourse to them concerning the things of Jesus Christ. And it was not, as the ordinary text might seem to imply, that the disciples came together to break bread and that Paul came in amongst them as a stranger; but the correct rendering is, "when we came together." It was the joint act of them all, Paul and his companions as well as the local brethren.

They met together as the assembly, and the express purpose of their coming together was to break bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s discourse to them was a secondary matter; breaking of bread was put first, as it always should be by the assembly of God, the reason being that the breaking of bread is the express wish of the Head of the church. The Lord Jesus in His supremacy, in His authority, as being Head over all things to the church, has signified what His will is in this respect, and we delight to respond to that request of His.

Breaking of Bread in Practice

I pass on to notice what the apostle says in 1 Corinthians with regard to the breaking of bread from a doctrinal point of view. In the Acts we have the historical references to the practice which are all the more forcible because they are introduced incidentally in the course of the narrative. Luke, in writing the Acts, does not draw particular attention to the breaking of bread, but he mentions the custom as he proceeds with his history, showing that it was a part of the church’s regular procedure. So in this unobtrusive way, its established observance in Jerusalem and at Troas is noted.

Because the Lord Jesus laid down so few particulars about this ceremony — if I may use this rather cold word — the saints of God are in danger of abusing it. Let me put it in the first person; we are in danger of abusing this precious privilege of remembering our Lord Jesus Christ in the breaking of bread. The apostle in his Epistle to the Corinthians, in the two chapters that we all know, the tenth and the eleventh, makes two distinct references to this subject, each having its particular teaching for them and us.

Looking at the tenth chapter very cursorily, we see that the breaking of bread is spoken of in contrast with idolatrous feasts. These saints of God were for the most part recent converts from idolatry, and were accustomed to the orgies that accompanied the worship of false gods. And we know it is still an easy thing and a common failure to bring into the church the habits of unconverted days. In our unconverted days we served ourselves. In our case, it may not have been in the worship of stupid idols, but it certainly was in following the desires of our own mind, and in having our own way, and in listening to the voice of men like ourselves. Hence the truth that was spoken to correct the Corinthians applies in principle to ourselves. The Cup of Blessing

These people had imported some of their former idolatrous ways into the assembly in connection with the simple remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the apostle warns them to flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14), because the evil power of Satan was behind all idolatry, and would defile the saints. He said, if I may try to paraphrase the words to help a little, "This new feast, this breaking of bread, brings you into the closest and most intimate association with one another as well as with the Christ of God. What does the loaf set forth? What does the cup set forth? It is association with Christ and the fellowship of the whole assembly." "The cup of blessing", the apostle says, "which we bless, is it not the communion (or fellowship) of the blood of Christ?" The closest and most intimate fellowship with Christ was expressed by the cup. And the apostle, in the earlier verses, had reminded them of how such association in the things of God was regarded in Old Testament times.

He refers back, as you will remember, to incidents in the history of the people of Israel when they went through the wilderness. Then they all ate of the same spiritual meat; they all drank of the same spiritual drink; and he adds one thing in connection with the drinking of the water, miraculously supplied from the rock; he says, "And that rock was Christ." The Israelites all outwardly partook of the benefits of the smitten rock — Christ. They all drank of the cup of blessing that the smitten rock in the wilderness had provided. But how many of them fell in the wilderness because of their association with idols? God smote them, and most of them failed to reach the promised land. And these things, the apostle says, were "written for our admonition." They are solemn warnings against defiling association. The remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ is a most holy occupation. We then come into close contact with Christ, and in a particularly solemn way: in connection with His blood. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" And therefore this service is so holy. We are touching what is holy, and therefore, since we touch what is holy in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, what manner of persons ought we to be! What godliness there should be in us! What separation from all that is defiling and contrary to the Christ of God!

We are apt to consider only the fact that we are called to take the cup of blessing. We think of it mainly as the cup of blessing. We bless God for it. Our hearts rise to Him in thankfulness because

of the privilege which is ours to be at the Table, and to share one with another that cup of blessing. But let us go a step further. Let us not forget that holiness becomes the house of God, His habitation through the Spirit. And this question of holy behaviour is so serious because on these occasions we are all so closely and intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. This, I suppose, is one reason why in this passage we have the cup mentioned first: a reversion of the usual order. We might suppose that the apostle would speak first of the bread, and then of the cup, but instead of the historical sequence, he speaks of the cup first, and then the bread. He speaks of the blood before he speaks of the body. Now the blood of Christ is that which cleanses us from all sin, and removes it finally; it makes atonement; it is the ground of fellowship in the light of God; and therefore we are forcibly reminded by it first of all that in participating in these extraordinary and unparalleled privileges we are engaged in a most holy occupation. Communion with the blood of Christ behoves us to maintain separation from everything that is inconsistent with the holiness of the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. The Symbolic Loaf The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Here, we have communion, or fellowship, named again. This time it is in connection with the body of Christ. Now, the body of Christ, we gather from this passage, has a twofold signification. First, the loaf represents the body of Christ, which was given for us, that holy body in which He bore our sins upon the tree. "This is My body", the Lord said, referring to that sacrifice which He made of Himself in order that our sins might be purged. But there is more. In the second aspect the body of Christ signifies the whole company of believers, forming His church or assembly. "As the body is one", the apostle, speaking of the natural body, says in the twelfth chapter, "As the body is one, and hath many members . . . so also is Christ." What does he mean? He means there that Christ is the name of that new man, the mystical man, consisting of the heavenly Head, Christ, and the church, His members; they are together looked upon as one. The body of Christ then includes all those that are His, all those who are associated with Him as the Head. Accordingly, the apostle says in this place, "For we", many though we are, "for we being many are one bread, and one body." He does not mean here the body of Christ as that sacrifice which was given for us, but that body which by the Holy Spirit is formed of those that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the body of Christ. And therefore we have this remarkable fact that two or three gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remembrance of the Lord in His death see before them in the loaf a symbol of that one perfect body which is the church of God for which Christ gave Himself. There may be but two or three members present, but there before the Lord they are entitled to behold in the one loaf, the one body united to Him by the Holy Spirit; and we ought not to forget this side of the truth. The manifold extension of the church of God, throughout the centuries so far as time is concerned, is there represented in its unity at the Lord’s table every time that we are together for the breaking of bread. The Lord would not have us to forget, however feeble, and few, we may be, however scattered the saints of God may be, however ruined the condition of the church at large may be, He would not have us to forget that He died for the whole church, the one church. The thought before Him was that they, however many and diverse, should be one; and He intends them to be one now. They are therefore one by the Holy Spirit; and they will be one in glory throughout all eternity.

Before the bread is eaten, the loaf is broken, of course. It is passed to all, that all may partake. But the thought of unity is prominent in this chapter. This intimate association between the saints of God is, beloved friends, what God calls us to maintain, in this day of brokenness. We ought never

to give up this testimony. As we look about us, and see conflicting parties on every hand in Christendom, the Lord reminds us that His own are still one, one body. We belong to that one body for which He gave Himself. "The gates of hell [hades] shall never prevail against it." He said, "I will build My church", and He will do so. And because He said it, we believe and rejoice in it. The reason for our assurance lies in the fact that He died, and overcame death by His own mighty power, and is now risen on, high. So we see that the question of association comes out specially in this tenth chapter; we are all partakers of the one loaf. And great responsibilities devolve upon us because of this truth, though we cannot pursue them further at present.

I want now to say a few words on the following chapter with special reference to this memorial service of the church.

Lord and Christ In the eleventh chapter, as we know very well, a different view of the breaking of bread is taken. Here the question before the apostle is the proper behaviour of the individuals present to eat the Lord’s supper. They are there, each having a separate responsibility. It is not a question of their all being one and all being merged in a spiritual unity; but individual conduct is here considered. It is a matter of one and another person being judged and chastened of the Lord. Responsibility comes in, and this is why the title of the Lord is different in the eleventh chapter from the tenth. In the tenth chapter, as we saw, it is Christ — "the blood of Christ"; "the body of Christ." This is the official title of the Lord as the One to Whom the church in its unity belongs; "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." But His Lordship is brought in when the connection is specially with the truth of our responsibility to Him, Who is our Lord (see Luke 6:46). The apostle makes it manifest that it is possible for persons to come together and participate in the Lord’s supper and yet not to eat the Lord’s supper at all. The Corinthians came together, and the result was that they ate their own supper. They brought their own food and their wretched selves with them. "Self" was prominent in their minds all the time they were together. And though they made the usual motions with their mouths the hearts of many were far from the Lord. The Solemnities of the Gathering The Lord looks upon this assembly with sadness, and in His authority and power He judges those who are present to remember Him in His death, but who forget His living presence. He still walks as the Lord in the midst of the assembly, and we ought to remember this when we are together. Because, when we consider it, can there be a more solemn engagement for us on this earth? Is anything more solemn than being together to remember the Lord Jesus Christ when He died? — when He died! We may have seen our dear ones pass from us. Oh, such a solemn fact, is it not, when those we love most dearly leave us, and we see their faces no more? But, after all, what is the death of our dearest ones in comparison with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord of life, the One Who had fullest power over death, that He Himself should go down into death, and such a death, the death of the cross! When we gather together for the breaking of bread, and look by faith again and again to Calvary, recalling those incidents of shame and suffering, they become almost familiar to us, but yet fresher and fuller every time they are before our hearts. Surely this is so. We know it is the most solemn occupation of the saints of God in this world. And therefore there is the constant need for circumspection in approaching to take part in the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle assumes that the Corinthian saints understood that the Lord is there, at His supper. He is spoken of as supervising, so to speak, what is proceeding at the remembrance of His death. The apostle had delivered to them what he himself received of the Lord. As we think of the fact of this special revelation it adds to the

seriousness of the subject. The apostle could tell them that the Lord in glory had spoken directly and specially to himself with regard to His supper. Paul, the chiefest of the apostles, was not present with the eleven in the supper-room before the crucifixion; but the Lord spoke directly from heaven to him that he might have it from His own lips in glory that this supper was to be observed by those who loved Him.

Paul speaks of the supper being instituted on the night of His betrayal. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." "My body;" "My blood;" "Me;" there was the fact of His own personal presence behind (not in) the bread and the wine. The supper was a memorial of Him in His death, but it was a memorial of Him, the living One. It sent their hearts back to Calvary, but He was present; this was the point. They had houses to eat and drink in, if it was a question of satisfying hunger and thirst; let them eat their necessary food at home. But at the Supper the Lord was there, while His death and the manner of His death occupied their hearts. And if they realised by the Holy Spirit that He was present, they would automatically, so to speak, fall into their proper posture of adoration before Him, as they remembered that He, the One before their hearts, had veritably been crucified. When Thomas saw His hands and His side, his ejaculation was, "My Lord and my God." And it will be so with us too when we are before Him and His hands and His side come into our view, that from our hearts will spring involuntarily, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, the cry of worship, "Our Lord and our God."

Such worship is not something that can be arranged beforehand. It is not something that we can concoct in the privacy of our own homes. Worship springs unprompted from our hearts by the working of the Holy Spirit when we are together. Only we are to be careful that our hearts, when we do come, are in such a state that the Holy Spirit will freely act within us. And what state is this? The right state is that of having the Lord Himself before our hearts. I have come to remember Him. No, put it in another way. I say beforehand, "I am coming at eleven o’clock to remember Him," And this thought will surely set me right. If there is anything upon my heart and conscience that ought not to be there, the very thought, the very assurance and confidence that I am about to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, will cause me before I arrive to confess my sin to Him. If it be the sin of forgetfulness or of unpreparedness, I should confess it to Him. And He will faithfully forgive my sin, and cleanse me from all unrighteousness, so that I may come there a clean person, a pure vessel, cleansed by water, the word, prepared to be used by the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit will bring before me fresh thoughts of our Lord, fresh views of His person and His work, fresh memories and fresh joys; and the heart will leap up gladly in praise and adoration to Him. Let us not take everything for granted; as if there were no need for serious exercise of heart, when we come together to show the Lord’s death.

Behaving Unworthily This passage in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 is often read partially. We read the verses (1 Corinthians 11:20-26) that bear directly upon the Lord’s supper, but when we reach those (1 Corinthians 11:27-34) that speak of eating this bread and drinking this cup of the Lord unworthily, there is a shrinking from these words because of their solemnity. "Whosoever shall eat of this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the

Lord." Whereupon some say at once, "I cannot come; for I am sure that I am not worthy to come." But on examining the scripture we find that it is not a question of my worthiness to come. The unworthiness is in connection with my behaviour when I am there. "Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily"; clearly, it is the way in which the thing is done. It must not be done improperly. The sin at Corinth was the allowance of self at the Lord's table. One was drunken, one took his own supper before another; it was self clamouring for the upper hand and the foremost place. And self can be indulged in many ways. There may be a contest as to who shall be first in giving out a hymn, or who shall read a scripture. There may be a display of self in all sorts of ways. If a person reads a scripture, I may say, "Well, I am not going to follow that." A certain person prays or gives thanks, and I may inwardly say, "Well, I shall not say Amen to that." And who is speaking thus? I myself, that wretched self for which Christ died. There it is raising its shameful head in that very holy presence.

Then it is that I eat and drink, unworthily. Then it is that I am in danger of being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. I forget the solemn meaning of these emblems I forget the sacred presence of my Lord I ignore the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. And what is such conduct but sacrilege in the house of God? What can I expect but discipline, the exercise of the serious discipline from the Lord, of which warning is given here?

Oh, beloved friends, these grave words are not placed in close conjunction with the Lord's supper for no purpose. It is not for us to suppose that they apply only to persons who lived long ago, and not to ourselves. No, they apply to each one of us. Every one of us, I am grieved to say, is in danger at the Lord's supper of eating and drinking unworthily, in an unworthy manner. If you think you are not in such danger I am not able to agree with you. Though I can only speak for myself, all the members of the body of Christ sprang from the same fallen race they all have the same fallen nature within them. Christ has condemned that old self, that evil nature, by His sacrifice upon the cross and, beloved friends, if we do not keep it in the place where He has put it, under His feet, then it will make its appearance even on this exceptionally holy occasion of remembering the Lord in His death.

Let us see to it that we judge ourselves, because the Lord is holy. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Without this we cannot acquire a condition of practical holiness that is fit for His presence. Without this we cannot "see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). There is a practical holiness which the Lord enjoins on us, and we are in danger of forgetting our responsibility in this respect. There is the greater danger of this for the simple reason that when we come together from time to time there is no recognised organisation, no outward ceremonial, no agreed constitution or procedure designed to guide our own thoughts and to prevent any unwarrantable intrusion by those who are not entitled to speak.

Therefore there is a constant risk of our falling into some kind of improper behaviour, in thought if not in deed, and so of our losing the sweetness of the remembrance in the scriptural way of the Lord Jesus in His death. And, beloved friends, it is there, most surely, that we learn more of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ than we do anywhere else, because in His sufferings, in the darkness through which He passed, in all that terrible time on the cross, we are led by the Holy Spirit to see the love and glory of God shining out even in that dark hour. We remember Him in His death, and our hearts rise in worship and thankfulness to God the Father, Who sent Him, and to

God the Son, Who gave Himself to go obediently even unto death, the death of the cross.

03.03. Christ and the Various Members of His Body

Christ and the Various Members of His Body (Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-31) This scripture is one of several in the New Testament that deal with the subject of the membership of the body of Christ.

We saw last week that the oneness of the body of Christ was symbolically represented at the Lord's table by the one loaf. There the fact of corporate unity was set forth in connection with the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His death, but in this twelfth chapter of First Corinthians the diversity that exists in the body of Christ is brought out very distinctly. The body of Christ is one, and in this respect is quite distinct from the unity of the nation of Israel. That nation consisted, as we know, of twelve tribes, and those twelve tribes were represented before the Lord on the table of showbread by twelve loaves, one for each tribe. There was a national unity expressed in the fact that all the tribes were there, and the nation as a whole was thus represented, while the fact of their having the joint responsibility of administration in government was set out by there being twelve loaves. In the representation of the church of Christ, however, there is but one loaf. And this more intimate unity exists in spite of the fact that the body of Christ is made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, of bond and free, indeed of all classes and conditions of men. They are all brought together and welded by the Holy Spirit into a single corporation — the body of Christ. But then the church is not a community, a congregation of people who are all precisely alike, all identical in character, capacity, and condition before the Lord, and who therefore make up a solid mass of similar particles, so to speak. There is a diversity among the members of Christ, necessary for life, for living action towards one another, and for testimony for God in the world. Therefore the Spirit of God uses this figure of the human body to represent the relationship of believers one to another in the body of Christ, and, above all, in their connection with Him as their Head on high.

Union with the Head

It is often overlooked in speaking of the body of Christ that the body is of no account at all apart from the Head. The headless body of Goliath was but the proof of his final defeat. The body of Christ upon the earth without its Head is really unthinkable; and we can easily rob ourselves of the beauty and force of this truth by forgetting that there is a real and vital connection between the saints of God as a whole and the Lord Jesus Christ on high. He is the living Head, there, and because He is the living Head there, the body of Christ on earth lives also, and will live, and must live, so long as the Head remains intact in glory. This fact is a source of comfort to those saints of God who are really tried and troubled by the present condition of ecclesiastical affairs, which are so different from what we find in the scriptures. Perhaps some persons are cast down by the confusion; they say, "What is to become of us? What is to become of the saints of God? What is to become of the church of God? Is it all to be wrecked? Is it to go absolutely to pieces, and its testimony to be destroyed utterly?" Never; because of this unseen, but real, connection with the Lord Jesus Christ on high. And this connection — if you will allow me to dwell on this point for a moment — this connection of the "body" with Christ does not depend upon ourselves in the same way as our personal communion with Christ depends upon ourselves. To take an example, we

know very well that we may go through a day in happy intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ, but this is the result of some conscious effort on our part. On the other hand, because we are lackadaisical in our ways, and allow things to drift, and temporal matters to usurp the chief place in our hearts, we may lose altogether the sense of the communion which we have, and which, as children of God, we should enjoy with the Father and the Son.

Therefore, the enjoyment of individual communion, viewed in this way, depends upon ourselves. But the wonderful connection of the church of God with the Lord Jesus Christ does not depend upon ourselves. We are baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit of God, and it is the Holy Spirit of God Who is the powerful link between the saints of God as the body of Christ upon the earth and the glorified Head on high. And as long as the church is on earth the Spirit abides in that habitation of God.

We can therefore take assurance and comfort from the remembrance of this fact. But we must also bear in mind that the active care exercised by the Lord does not remove from us all responsibility in connection with the church. This is enforced by scripture also. We have our own responsibility as members of the body of Christ, and in this twelfth chapter we have brought out the activities that go on amongst the saints of God for their edification, for their spiritual joy, for their peace, for their power to witness for the truth in the world. The Spirit of God shows us here that all the saints of God are mutually dependent one upon another; that their common welfare and spiritual growth rest upon individual effort, individual faithfulness, individual communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will see that at the commencement of this chapter, the apostle refers to the sharp distinction that should be drawn between the power of the Holy Spirit of God acting in the assembly and the counterfeit action of the emissaries of Satan demons who, through idols, exercised a destructive effect upon men. The Corinthians, in their natural state, were accustomed to spiritual manifestations, and therefore they might be deceived when such were displayed in the assembly of God. Consequently, the apostle gave them a test whereby they might prove what was of the Holy Spirit and what was of an unclean spirit; and this test was the Lordship of Christ. The Spirit of God invariably glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and calls Him "Lord"; but an unclean spirit never does this. Never; he is there to degrade, if possible, the Person of the Lord Jesus and remove Him from the attention of the saints of God. The apostle writes, "I give you therefore to know, that no one, speaking in (the power of the) Spirit of God, says Curse (on) Jesus; and no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in (the power of the) Holy Spirit." (New Trans.) Divine Agency and the Gifts

Then he proceeds in the fourth, fifth and sixth verses to show that the actions which take place in the assembly of God for mutual edification and comfort, arise from the agency of the Spirit of God, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of God Himself. He says, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Here he establishes the great fact that whatever ministry is really worth having amongst the saints of God comes to us by the power of God working in our midst. This may seem a very simple and elementary truth, but it is one of real importance to us, because we may find ourselves in a very small company of people, where we may have elements of weakness staring us in the face every time we are together. And if we suppose that our resources are entirely in the hands and hearts of those that are assembled

together, we shall be depressed perhaps by this poverty-stricken condition. Despair seizes us for the simple reason that we have forgotten the existence of the Spirit of God; we have forgotten the Lordship of Christ; we have forgotten that God Himself works all in all in the assembly. In short, we have overlooked the threefold encouragement of these verses.

Paul says, first of all, There are many gifts and various gifts in the assembly, but there is one Spirit Who gives them. The same Spirit distributes His gifts in the assembly to one and another as it pleases Him. He is the ruler. He appoints. There is no human arrangement at all, but the various kinds of gifts all spring from the same Spirit. You must have noticed in this chapter how the phrase recurs over and over again — "the same Spirit." There is one Spirit, the One Who came down at Pentecost, the One Who dwells in the church, the One Whom the Lord promised to be with us for ever. It is not a human, not an evil spirit, but the same Holy Spirit; He gives the gifts.

But, secondly, a man may have a gift, and may be concerned to know how and when he is to use it. For direction in this matter he has to look to the Lord, as may be gathered from the teaching in the next verse. They had differences of administrations, which means the ordering of the time when the gift should be put in exercise. There was the regulation of the movements of the soul, directing each man when to speak and when to be silent; what place he is to speak in, and what place he is to desist from visiting. All such activity is under the direction of the "same Lord."

You find instances in the Acts. Those that assayed to go into Bithynia were not suffered to go by the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7, N. Tr.). The Lord spoke to Paul in Corinth, telling him that He had much people in that city, and the apostle remained there for eighteen months, teaching the word of God (Acts 18:9-11). And so you find the Lord exercising His prerogative of government in the midst of the church. The man who has received a gift by the Holy Spirit has no right to use it except as the Lord directs. The Lord will not allow anyone to use His gift for his own pleasure, but only as He means him to act in the midst of the church. If it is a question even of singing praise collectively in the assembly, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto Thee" (Hebrews 2:12). "He leads His own in praise to God. So that the Lord administers whatever processes are in progress in the body of Christ for its maintenance. And then the apostle says, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." He makes it clear that it is God Himself Who is active — not that the Spirit is not God; He is; not that the Lord Jesus is not God; He is. But the apostle sums up the Trinity in a word, and shows us that God Himself is intimately interested in all the affairs of the assembly of God. He worketh all things in all the assembly. The words are so framed that there is no loophole of escape from His operation. There is no little obscure member whose functions are left out of it. There is no little deed that is done, no action such as giving out a hymn, nor any simple act performed by any member of the body of Christ, but God Himself is the One Who works all things in all. What a holy character this truth imparts to assembly activity! And how effective for the well-being of the assembly! The Manifestation of the Spirit

We have spoken already of the Spirit bestowing the gifts in a general way (verse 4). The apostle goes on to speak more fully in the seventh and the following verses of the manifestation of the Spirit: "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." What are we to understand by "the manifestation of the Spirit"? The manifestation is the act of making the presence of the Spirit plain and patent to others. What is hidden is certainly not manifest; and the

Holy Spirit Himself is here in this world in an invisible form. The Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, was manifest in flesh; He was seen of angels, as well as men. He was an object of sight and hearing to the apostles and others. He was manifest in the world; but the Holy Spirit is not incarnate, and therefore His presence and His action are concealed for the most part. The manifestation of the Spirit is through the members of the body of Christ. The fact whether this person has a gift or that person has a gift is known only to the Spirit, except when the Spirit manifests Himself in working through this person and that for the exercise of the gift. Hence the apostle speaks here of the "manifestation of the Spirit, which is given to every man to profit withal."

Take the first example given. A certain man has the word of wisdom; there it is in his soul. It is, a power of discerning spiritual truth which he has within himself. The Spirit has given it to him. and he enjoys it himself. But so far as the rest of the assembly is concerned, they are ignorant of it, until the Holy Spirit leads that person to use the word of wisdom for the comfort and the well-being of his fellow-members. Then the action of the Holy Spirit is made manifest. When a brother stands up and gives a word of wisdom, then I say to myself, "That is of the Spirit of God That man is speaking as led of God. I know there is something in his word that I can put into practice in my life. I feel the power of the Spirit of truth behind it." So the apostle gives us a rule, as it were, by which we may judge the working of the Holy Spirit among the members of the body of Christ. When those possessing gifts are actuated by the Holy Spirit of God, they do something or say something in the assembly which is to the profit of the fellow-members. Such useful exercise does not arise simply because a person has a very happy thought that came to him during the week, and now thinks he would like to communicate it to everyone else on the Lord’s Day morning. It does not at all follow that the word from God which was very helpful to himself is also a word of wisdom on that particular occasion for others. Who is to judge what is suitable for all those assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus? It is the Spirit of God Who manifests His controlling and influencing power by choosing and directing the ministry in a way most helpful to the saints of God. And so you have this catalogue of diverse ministry which gives us the manifold manifestation of the Spirit: the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, both of which the apostle is careful to say are by the same Spirit. Then he says, "to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit." Why do we find in this varied list the repetition, "by the same Spirit"? Because we are so apt to approve only of the particular gift that pleases us, forgetting the great variety in the Holy Spirit’s operations.

There are some, for instance, who are very pleased with an exhibition of knowledge. A person who can run very quickly from Genesis to Revelation and point out this, that, and the other throughout the pages of Scripture commands their admiration. They say, "What a knowledge of the Scripture he has!" And the exhibition of knowledge — the fact of his possessing apparently an intimate acquaintance with the truths of Scripture — appeals to them as a mark of spiritual ability. The word of knowledge is here stated to be the manifestation of the Spirit; and it has its place as a means of instruction; but then I ought not to say, "I like the word of knowledge, and prefer it to anything else." The Spirit of God may see that I need a word of wisdom first. This is something different from the word of knowledge, because wisdom is the right application of the truth of God to the troublesome and puzzling circumstances in which we often find ourselves. A person gives us a word by the Holy Spirit which, like a flash of light, shows us the way. We may have been praying and puzzling. for a long time as to what was the right thing for us, and at last some one is led to

give the word of wisdom. Then we know what is the will of God. He has set before us that truth of scripture which has shone as a light upon our path. To be able to do this is a high attainment in ministry to the saints. I suppose only that person can speak the words of wisdom who is humble and lowly in himself; who has the fear of God before him; and who lives in communion with the Son; for only the Lord Himself can teach us how to apply His truth to the manifold difficulties that arise day by day. But the wise person is the one who sits like Mary at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and hears His word — that word which is always capable of helping us, and of preserving us from the errors to which we are liable. This is how we learn to be wise ourselves; and the Holy Spirit then gives us the word of wisdom, that is, the ability of putting it so that it will help others. We read in the Proverbs, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright" (Proverbs 15:2). This service is not necessarily and always a word spoken in the assembly meeting. A word of wisdom may be spoken in private life between two members of the body of Christ. And if we can even in a private way speak a word of wisdom to a person who is distracted and perplexed in the things of daily life, it is of great value: it is something which will advance the spiritual health of the whole body of Christ.

Let us remember that the Spirit of God gives all these things. We would probably like to possess the gift of healing; but the Spirit of God puts first the word of wisdom; and the word of knowledge comes before it, and the word of faith too. Faith is the power of taking hold of God, of laying hold of His word, and of counting upon Him in the face of every difficulty, and of every foe. There are those that have this faith which is given them by God the Spirit. We are all believers, but not every believer has the faith that is spoken of here — the faith that removes mountains, the faith that opposes Satan and quenches his fiery darts, the faith that is always triumphant, the faith that walks even upon the waves of the sea.

Nine Gifts, One Spirit As the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, is ninefold, so there are nine gifts of the Spirit enumerated here for the help and blessing of the church; but you will notice that in the eleventh verse the apostle says, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." So there is no confusion in the body of Christ. In the human body all its members are co-ordinated, and they work together for a common purpose — the health and activity of the whole. And so it is in the body of Christ, the reason being that God’s own Spirit is working there. However many the gifts may be, He controls and uses them all for one purpose, that is, for the blessing of all the members of the body of Christ and so to the glorification of the Head of the body, Christ Himself. And it is added that He, the Holy Spirit, divides severally to every man as He will. Thus the power and authority of the Spirit of God are present in the midst of the church. I think we ought to be very jealous of the authority of the Spirit of God amongst the saints, lest it should be disregarded. The Lord Jesus has sent down the Holy Spirit into this world, and His dwelling-place is in the church. His presence is denied, of course, by the world. Alas, it is also denied largely by Christendom; and we who know the glory of Christ, His faithfulness to His word, and that He sent His Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and that God the Holy Spirit still dwells in the midst of His saints — how often we do not recognise His presence! Ought we not always to bow to His authority? Ought we not to wait for His leading? Ought we not ever to seek to be in such an attitude of soul that He may use us as He will? This necessity for dependence applies to sisters as well as brothers, to silence as well as speech. For the Holy Spirit answers the expectation that is in the hearts of those that are together; and we all must wait for His movement. Did I say wait? Yes,

in our audible worship we have to wait; we always have to wait for the direction of the Spirit of God. But the word "waiting" in this connection is sometimes misunderstood. Let me seek to make it quite plain for the youngest of our friends here tonight. We come together — at eleven o’clock, shall we say? — for the breaking of bread, and we sit together quietly perhaps even for a quarter of an hour, waiting; but are our hearts inactive during that time? Is there nothing Godward passing in our souls? Is the mind a blank, as it were, waiting for some person to break the silence and to speak aloud?

If so, you are waiting in a wrong sense. The Spirit works in the hearts of those who recognize His presence, and He would do so in the hearts of all that are together. At eleven o’clock, the appointed time, the Lord Jesus Christ is there. The Holy Spirit is there. The worship and the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death should begin at eleven o’clock. It is not at all a question of something audible being the essential feature. Waiting is the dependent attitude we take before the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We are together to remember the Lord, and He brings to our hearts His holy word; the Spirit brings before us the glory of Christ, the beauty of His Person, the marvels of His sacrifice; and we break out in adoration and praise to Him, as our hearts are led back to consider Him when He laid down His life for us.

Oh, beloved friends, the Holy Spirit is verily present amongst the saints, and He works, surely works, on these occasions, if we really believe in His presence and forbid the rising up of the impatience of our flesh.

"So Also Is Christ" In the next three verses, (12-14), the apostle goes on to speak of the oneness of the body of Christ. He says first: "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." The apostle has been speaking about the gifts — the word of knowledge to one, the word of wisdom to another, faith to another, healing to another, and so on — but then not all men have gifts. The apostle now speaks of the whole body, which consists of numerous members. They are all one, though there are many. There is a variety in the body, all the members having their respective differences; but by reason of these differences they contribute to the health and efficiency of the whole body of Christ. This unity is not something to be constructed by ourselves, the members; it is not something that is a result of each one losing his individuality, and so becoming merged with the others. That is not the way in which the body is formed. We find that it is formed by the connection of the members with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a remarkable expression here: "All the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." The apostle is evidently speaking of the Head in glory and the body here upon the earth, constituting one spiritual "man", Christ being the Head, and all the members the body. When he says, "So also is Christ," that mystical man is designated by one name — Christ.

We have an analogous instance in the Old Testament where in Genesis 5:2, speaking of God’s creation of man, we read, "Male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name, Adam." The two, husband and wife, were looked upon as one flesh bearing one name. Both were one, and the oneness in Eden is alluded to in Ephesians 5:30-32, in connection with Christ and the church in her bridal aspect. Here then you have the intimate unity existing between the body upon the earth and Christ in glory: "So also is Christ." Christ and His body are described as one.

"For by one Spirit", he says, "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." There is an allusion apparently to the two Christian ordinances — to baptism first, and to the Lord’s Supper in the drinking "into one Spirit." The allusion does not imply, of course, that baptism by water has anything to do with the formation of the body, but the apostle uses that well-known term to describe the action of the Holy Spirit when He came down and formed that new unity. He baptized all believing Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, into that new thing, which is called the body of Christ, in which they are all one. But the apostle also uses a second figure, we "have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And this use perhaps explains or helps to explain why in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, speaking of the Lord’s Supper, the cup is mentioned before the loaf, because there the question treated in the verses is one of communion, of association; and "drinking the cup" especially implies our communion with Christ and our communion with one another at the Lord’s table. Accordingly the apostle says here, we "have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." All the members share the operations of the one Spirit. It will he remembered that our Lord used the term "drink" with reference to the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost (John 7:37-39). The Foot and the Hand

Paul goes on to show how the various members composing the church of God are dependent one upon another. There is an interdependence between all those who make up this holy body of Christ. — No one person, no one member, can isolate himself from the body, and maintain an independence, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" The seriousness of such a spirit of independence lies in the effort to get away from practical connection with the body of Christ. It is not only that a foot assuming to have no connection with the hand does an injury to the hand, but the whole body is affected. The apostle asks, "Is it therefore not of the body?"

If the foot, or the hand, or both of them, were severed from the body the relations would be different, but each forms an essential part of the body. What is the body without the foot? It is an incomplete thing. A maimed body is imperfect, and its well-being is interfered with. Therefore there is a necessity for the presence of each member in the body, and for its activity. If the foot does not act, of what use is it? Though it exists as a part of the body, it is a useless member. It does not help, and all the members are affected. They all suffer because it does not do its duty. Do we not see the application to ourselves? The functions of the foot and the hand, walk and service for God in this world, are not to be divorced. Both are necessary, because we should walk before the world as those that belong to Christ, just as truly as we should serve to the glory of Christ. This applies equally to one member or more. The person who serves actively and diligently but fails to walk in the fear of the Lord is injuring the body of Christ. He is making a great display, showing much activity as a rule, but there is not a consistency of life. There must be the right and faithful walk as well as the devoted service. The same principle applies to the eye and the ear and the other members.

Care for One Another

I need not go through these verses in detail. The gist of them is that all the various members have their duty and relation one to another, and they are all helpful to each other. All the members need to "have the same care one for another." We are put together in a spiritual association by the

power of God and the action of the Spirit of God; and being there, we have a responsibility, not only to the Lord, our Head, but we have also a responsibility to one another. We have by love to serve one another. We have to help one another in the things of the Lord. We have to contribute to one another's spiritual joy and peace. Where anything can be done to advance another's knowledge of scripture and of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our business to do what we can in that respect.

We sometimes forget our responsibility to our fellow-members that are so near to us. We think of lands and islands far away, and of people far away, who are removed from us by natural inclination and habit and so on; and we forget those by whose side we sit week by week, whose faces we see, and with whose voices we join in praising the Lord, kneeling with them at the throne of grace. It is so easy to forget that we all, far and near, are members of the body of Christ, and that our responsibility to them all is, for that reason, greater than to any others upon the face of the earth. The members of Christ should have the same care one for another. This care requires thought; it requires wise action; it requires self-denial. It requires a certain amount of personal loss and self-sacrifice oftentimes to be real helpers one of another. Sometimes we may fail and be covered with confusion when we try to help others. We must not be discouraged; there is still our responsibility. We cannot avoid occasional failure, and this does not alter the fact that we are bound to serve one another. The tide of spiritual vitality in the body flows down from the Head in heaven, and it comes to my fellow-member as it comes to me. This living energy binds us together practically in the discharge of our mutual affections and responsibilities. The apostle says in the twenty-sixth verse: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." There, I think, is summed up the effect of this unseen work of the Spirit of God amongst the saints, which we often overlook to our loss, because it is distinct from oral ministry in the assembly.

Very often what we do and say in the privacy of our lives as the saints of God, in prayer and Bible study, in the practice of Christian virtues, in seeking to follow Christ more closely, has an influence, apart from our knowledge, upon our fellow-members about us. We exercise an influence upon others without trying to do so. We know very well that when sometimes we come into the presence of certain persons a feeling which we had not before takes possession of us. A certain amount of joy, a certain amount of peace, an indescribable elation comes to us, and seems to help us and do us good. The shake of the hand, the very look on the face, no word being said, are often enough to illustrate the powerful influence for good that one member of Christ can shed upon a fellow-member. This may be true of a young person, as well as of an older one. We exercise the greatest beneficial influence of this kind upon others, in so far as we ourselves receive from our Head in glory that which He alone can give us of life and communion, of holiness and power. Oh, may we covet this power of being of real spiritual value to others! There may be only two or three around us; this does not matter at all. It is not a question of numbers in any way. The whole secret is for me to be right with the Lord for myself, to allow the Holy Spirit Who dwells in the church of God to influence me in my life and action. If this be so, then the self-same Spirit Who works in the hearts of all the saints of God, Who produces His fruit in me, will, use me, perhaps silently, for the help and blessing of others. The Local Assembly The apostle up to this point has been speaking of the church of God as the body of Christ, regarding it in its entirety. He looks at the whole of the saints of God on the earth at one time. I hardly think that scripture warrants us in saying that the

church of God, that is, the church of God composed of all the believers in Christ from Pentecost to the day of His coming, is described as the body. The body is the living thing at any given time here on the earth, though associated with Christ in heaven. Those saints who have fallen asleep and are now in Christ still form part of the assembly which Christ is building, but the body of Christ is the living organization on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ was here in the body prepared for Him, and He was the Faithful and True Witness for God. When He went on high He formed the church which is His body, to be a witness for His name, speaking to all in the world of the Christ Who is gone on high. In the twenty-seventh verse, Paul does not repeat what we have in the thirteenth verse: we are "all baptized into one body;" or what we have in 1 Corinthians 10:17, "we, being many, are one bread and one body;" or as in Romans 12:5, "we, being many, are one body in Christ." In these passages, he is speaking of Christians generally, of what is true of fall believers wherever they are. But here, he says, "Ye are the body of Christ," that is, those to whom he was writing, the assembly at Corinth. He means they were so in a representative way. They were responsible in their measure, according to their limitations, in the same way as the saints of God everywhere. They did not in themselves form the complete body, but they were its local representative. The assembly at Corinth was representative of the whole assembly of Christ.

"Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." They singly were members of the body of Christ. It does not follow that Corinth would have the same variety in the manifestation of the Spirit that was in the church at large. We know that in an assembly of only two or three persons there could hardly be a dozen gifts amongst so few. But the distribution of gifts is not the point here. They were the body of Christ so far as receiving their due share of blessing from Christ, the Head in glory. Two or three, whoever they might be, will receive a measure of the gift of His grace in the Same way as the whole body. The Lord Jesus Christ is not unmindful of those who in weakness and feebleness represent Him here upon the earth. He regards them as His body, and as members of His body. Not that they have on this account any ground for self-satisfaction, or anything wherein to boast. The truth was stated for the comfort, and also for the reproof of those at Corinth; but we cannot now dwell further upon this interesting truth.

Apostles, Prophets, Teachers The apostle goes on in the twenty-eight verse to speak of what gifts are in the church generally. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." These are what God has set there normally. He does not here refer to the saints as the body, but as the assembly; and so he speaks of those gifts bestowed by Christ when He ascended up on high, and gave gifts to men. The first three, which he places in the order of their importance, are apostles, prophets, teachers: these seem to be personal gifts. Thus, the apostles were so many persons that were bestowed upon the church. They had no successors, being given for the definite purpose of laying the foundation of the church. They passed away when this work was done. They laid the foundation (Ephesians 2:20): there were no more added to them, because their particular service was not continued. The prophets of the church were gifted to communicate the mind of God about the truths and blessings consequent upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, while the apostles communicated the mind and will of God in the New Testament order of things for His newly-formed assembly. The teachers follow these two as those who expounded to the saints of God the instructions given to the early church through the superior gifts, and also explained the Old Testament scriptures in the light of the New. And Paul

puts these three classes first of all to correct the extraordinary and harmful mistake that had been made at Corinth. In this assembly they were esteeming above everything else the showy gifts of tongues and healings; and the apostle quietly reproves them by this very order. The gift of tongues was very well and useful in its place, but the main object in the exercise of gift was the edification of the church. This was the great test of value, and therefore the apostles, prophets, and teachers come first. God has set them foremost in the assembly, and Paul, himself the chiefest of the apostles, has put them first. We must keep them there, that is, their writings.

Other gifts, as helps and governments, remain in the assembly, and will remain to the end. This list shows the great variety of gifts bestowed. But the apostle shows they are not all apostles, they are not all prophets, They are distributed proportionately in number and quality. There is a variety to meet all the needs of the saints and to fulfil the purpose in God’s mind for the help and blessing of the church.

It will be seen that the whole tenor of the chapter is to show how God is working amongst the saints for their comfort and edification, for their building up on their most holy faith. God is doing His work still. The danger is that we may miss being benefited by that work. We may be in such a frame of mind or in such an association that the divine work and the divine purpose will pass by unheeded by us, and we may then be unhelped by what God is doing to edify and encourage His saints.

I am not now alluding to what the Lord is doing for us individually, but rather, of what is true of the assemblies of the saints and of their relationships with one another. We may receive a full share of these blessings if we will. The love of God is active; we know the Holy Spirit is not idle. The Lord Jesus Christ never sleeps or slumbers. He is doing His work. How is it that we are not benefited more than we are? Where is the hindrance? Where is the fault? What is wrong? Is there anything wrong with God, with the Spirit of God, with the Head of the church? No, beloved friends, the fault is with ourselves. We do not put ourselves in that attitude, in that frame of soul, to receive the benefits of the working of the Spirit of God.

Coveting the Best Gifts The apostle says, "Covet earnestly the best (or the greater) gifts." Do not be on the look-out for tongues. I think this exhortation may be taken in two ways. Sometimes it is regarded as meaning that a person is encouraged to have a holy ambition to possess some great gift in the church; and no doubt, this view is right, though very few of such ambitions will be realized. But does not the apostle mean more than this? Does he not mean that all the saints should desire that God would work in their midst by the greater gifts, that is, by the gifts for edification?

Supposing, if it were possible, that a person spoke with tongues in our midst tonight, and that there was no interpretation, and, therefore, no edification. What would be the benefit, as the apostle asks later on, to the saints? No benefit at all. There would be no edification, no promotion of love, holiness, wisdom or knowledge. Such a display would not be for the glory of the Lord. It would not be by the Spirit of God. But what is for the building up of the saints and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is the mark of the greater gift. Let us desire this for ourselves. Oh, the poverty-stricken condition in which we are! Then, are you often on your knees asking God to speak through His servants to bring home, His word in power to your souls? Are you asking Him to speak to you through the mouths of others? It may be by a simple brother, for the Lord can speak

to your soul through anyone.

But, supposing there are no gifts, what then? The apostle says, "I show you a more excellent way." And this he does in the next chapter. Prophecies may fail, tongues will cease, knowledge may vanish away, but there is one thing that will always remain, while the church is on earth; and that is love, the love of God, and the love of saints. And we ought to desire to cultivate love within us, to let love do its work upon us; because, as says the apostle in another place, it is love that edifies. A person may stand up in the assembly, and deliver a most moving and touching address, but if there is no love in it, if the Spirit of God is not bringing the love of Christ to me through His word, it will not help my soul, it will not bring me nearer in walk to the Lord Jesus Christ. This exhortation I leave with you: "Covet earnestly the best gifts", and do look out for that more excellent way of love which is within the reach of everyone of us. Let us love one another because Christ has loved us and given Himself for us. He has set us the example. He has given us an incentive. He loved us when there was nothing lovely in us. He died for us when we were sinners. This unselfishness should be the character of our love. Do we love just those who are pleasant and agreeable to us? What about the cantankerous ones? What about those persons to whom we can hardly get near? Do we love them and pray for them? "Covet earnestly the best gifts", and study that more excellent way given us in the thirteenth chapter.

03.05. The Church at Pentecost

The Church at Pentecost (Read Acts 2:1-8, Acts 2:12-18, Acts 2:22-24, Acts 2:32-47) This chapter, as we all are aware, gives us the history, the divine history, of the birthday of the church of God. To speak about the church of God is to speak about a difficult subject. And because the doctrine of the church is encompassed with peculiar difficulty, a great many believers ignore it altogether, and confine their attention and their service to individual Christian life. Nevertheless the church of God has a paramount claim upon every believer, whatever the difficulty may be to understand its present position in the light of God's word. Moreover, the greatness of the difficulty is, after all, a matter of fancy rather than of reality. The Exaltation of Christ

Whatever then the difficulty may be in understanding ecclesiastical truth, and in conforming to it, the subject is of the utmost consequence to each believer for the reason that the church of God is associated with two great facts of scripture history — two facts which are of transcendent importance. The first fact is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. His glory in the heavens lies far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. There God the Father has conferred upon Jesus of Nazareth the highest dignity and glory. He Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain is in that place of ineffable glory. The Man Christ Jesus, the One Who was crucified, the One Who was in the grave, is now at the right hand of the throne of God, and all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth.

Because of this fact the church was founded. The church began upon earth because the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified in heaven. The church was formed here, but there was a living connection between the company of believers so formed upon the earth and the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. You cannot match this fact throughout all the wonderful revealings of Holy Scripture; and therefore I say that the church of God has a unique claim upon you and upon me because of this character. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God, and the church upon the earth is connected with Him there. Moreover, I, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, form, apart from any action of my own, apart from any choice of my own, an integral portion of that church, and as such I am associated with Him there in heaven. It is a thought which ought to awaken the deepest chords of praise and thanksgiving to God that such a thing could be. You may say that heaven is far away, that it is a long distance from Wildfell Hall to the right hand of the throne of God, and you may think that because it is so far away you may neglect it without personal loss, and that it need not concern you now. But if you despise the privileges arising from this fact, you will miss the personal blessings they bring. The Descent of the Holy Spirit The other historical fact, which we also have in this chapter, is that as surely as the Lord Jesus Christ is there on the right hand of the throne of God, the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, is here upon the earth; and His habitation upon the earth is that house which He Himself formed at Pentecost, the church of God. The Spirit dwells not in temples made with hands; He is not to be found in those vast architectural wonders, raised by man in the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ, but He is veritably dwelling here in that unseen temple made holy by His presence. Is it not an incomprehensible marvel that the Spirit of God should be dwelling here? Night and day, week by week, year after

year, He is here in this world, for He came at Pentecost, not on a transient visit, but to abide.

How terrible to ignore this fact! We read in this second of Acts that the sin of the Jew in denying and rejecting the Son of God was great and heinous in God’s sight. What then must be the gravity of the sin of Christendom today in denying — denying in practice, if not in profession — the holy presence of the Spirit of God amongst the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ? How few believe Him to be dwelling, not only in one here and one there, but dwelling in them all corporately, uniting them in one perfect company, however spread abroad upon the earth; and each and all being in consequence associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head in glory of the church!

We must, in order to have right and holy thoughts concerning the nature of the church of God, take fast hold of these two central truths. The Lord Jesus Christ is at God’s right hand; and having given Him that heavenly glory, God has also given Him for His own special possession a called-out people, which is His church; and in order to maintain that church, in order to support, to feed, to energise that feeble company of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God is sent down here. The world cannot see Him nor receive Him, but you and I, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are bound to acknowledge His presence — to listen to Him, to give Him place, to heed Him for our guidance, to be under His continual sway. If we do so we shall then enjoy that sweet and gracious fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven of which the world knows nothing, but which those know best who humble themselves most and allow the gracious Spirit of God to do with them what He will.

Waiting for the Promise of the Father In reading this chapter we find that there was in Jerusalem a waiting company of people, very small in number, probably less in number than there are in this hall tonight, but they were assembled in Jerusalem, and were all animated by a common interest and a common purpose. Everyone in that company had a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and their latest knowledge of Him was that ten days before He had led them out as far as Bethany and while speaking to them there He was parted from them. As He ascended up into the heavens out of their sight, the strings of their hearts almost broke. He, the One Who loved them so, the One Who had spoken to them words that never man had spoken before, the One Who had died for them and risen again, was leaving them. He was fading from their sight, and they stood gazing and gazing, and hoping that He might immediately return. They were comforted, as we know, by the two angels, who told them not to stand gazing into heaven, for in due time the Lord would certainly come back. But before that happy event there was something of profound importance to take place; and the words of their Master came afresh to their ears and to their memories. For He had bidden them to go into Jerusalem and to wait there for the promise of the Father, "which", said He, "you have heard of Me." Now they remembered what was said to them in the upper room after the institution of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord had then made the astounding statement, "It is expedient for you that I go away"; and they needed some faith and enlightenment to understand how such a thing could be. "It is better for you that I go away, than that I should stay here. I go to prepare a place for you." This was blessed news to hear of a place for them in the Father’s house, but in connection with the expediency, He said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come, the other Comforter. The One Who is coming will come to take My place, and He will be to you even more than I have been. He will dwell with you, not for three years, but will abide with you for ever. He will be with you, never to leave you. He will be with you in any place where you may be, no matter how widely separated on the face of the earth; and He, the Spirit of truth,

will guide you into all truth."

Accordingly they went back to Jerusalem, to wait there for the promise of the Father, as the Lord had bidden them. How did the disciples wait? What was their attitude, while waiting? We find they spent their time in prayer. They were in the temple blessing God, as Luke tells us in his Gospel; but here in the Acts we find them continuing in prayer and supplication, not each in his private chamber praying separately, but each and all assembled together. They were praying that the words of the Master might be fulfilled, that the promise of the Father might be given. The Lord had said to them, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Accordingly those who were there had the authority of the Lord to ask God to give them the Holy Spirit. We find it on record that they prayed and God did send Him. Therefore, it is no use for us to quote the passage in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 11:13) as the scripture which gives us warrant to ask God to send the Holy Spirit now. Those one hundred and twenty persons who were assembled took their stand upon that promise. They prayed and received the answer, and we shall be centuries behind the time if we now ask for the Holy Spirit to be sent. He is here. How grievous to neglect His presence!

Early Morning Prayer The disciples waited day after day in that attitude. When the fiftieth day came, the day of Pentecost, there they were all together, very early in the morning, because it was only the third hour of the day (9 a.m.) when Peter began his address. That day they had learned the happy experience of an early morning prayer meeting. Those who have taken part in such early meetings know what freshness they have; they know the preciousness of the occasion; they know the power there is in the prayers. Persons who leave their beds in earnest self-denial that they may be together very early to wait unitedly upon God for His blessing are never disappointed. It is a true saying, that God is no man’s debtor. He is no debtor to you nor to me. If we give up anything for Him, oh, how much He gives us in return! If you have not proved this goodness of His, prove it now for yourselves — "Prove Me now herewith" — God gives us the challenge to prove Him.

Here, then, is a notable instance of God’s faithfulness. Those men and women were unitedly praying for the outpouring of the Spirit, that the promised Spirit should come; and He came while they were together. He came suddenly. The Holy Spirit came down to this prepared company, as in the early part of the New Testament we find the Son of God coming to a prepared company. The way of the Lord had been prepared by John the Baptist. At his preaching sinful men had repented of their sins and had been baptized in Jordan, confessing those sins. There stood this company of penitents feeling what sinners they were in God’s sight. And to that prepared company Jesus, the One Who should save His people from their sins, came at the appointed moment to be baptized also. Then the Father witnessed that His beloved Son was there, and, as He came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended and abode upon Him.

Sound and Sight and Speech

Now we have the Holy Spirit of God coming to this prepared company in Jerusalem, who were waiting for Him. There were audible signs that the Holy Spirit had come. There was the sound of a rushing mighty wind. They heard His presence, but He was unseen. He was "blowing" whithersoever He pleased (John 3:8), but He was undoubtedly present where they were assembled.

It was specially needful at the outset that it should be made perfectly clear to those assembled that the Holy Spirit had arrived. Hence there were not only audible but visible signs also, for there appeared to the disciples cloven tongues like as of fire. There were not many spirits present. There was but One, for the word says "it sat upon each of them." The tongues were cloven or divided, the reason for which we soon learn. The disciples were made able to speak with other tongues, the Spirit giving utterance to each one as it pleased Him. The wonderful works of God, the fact that Jesus Christ was glorified at God's right hand could not now be confined to one nation; God's exalted Christ must be proclaimed to all men everywhere. Hence they received power from the Spirit to speak with a variety of tongues for that purpose, but while there was diversity of utterance there was one directing Power. The same Holy Spirit rested upon each of them and of His power gave power to each, ensuring unity of action in their witness for Christ. Thus was the great fact substantiated that the Holy Spirit had come, and Peter stood up to speak under the influence and power of the newly-come Spirit. When Solomon's house was dedicated the cloud of glory filled it, and that glory was so great that the priests could not stand to minister because of the glorious presence of Jehovah in His earthly and material temple. Now the Holy Spirit had come down and formed another house, a spiritual temple, wherein He was to dwell. And now His was a genial gracious influence. None were overpowered by the presence of the Spirit. None were afraid of His manifestations in their midst. The disciples were all under the power of the Holy Spirit and were filled with Him, but the influence of the Spirit upon them was of a character that was suited to the faith and love within them. For they were prepared for the reception of the Holy Spirit Who had now come. And what had prepared them? The Lord Jesus Christ had drawn together this company by His own words. He came unto His own things, but His own people received Him not. Then He gathered together those who believed on Him; they came to Him and He taught them. He made them His own company. They loved Him; they welcomed Him when in the course of His ministry He came to them. Lazarus and Martha and Mary did not follow the Lord in His wanderings, but oh, how pleased they were when He visited their house! The Blood and the Oil And so, as the result of the Lord's own service there was this company in Jerusalem which belonged to Him. But there was now a special feature which marked this company. The great fact, never true before in the world's history, was that the Lord Jesus Christ had died for their sins. He had shed His precious blood. The work of eternal redemption had been accomplished by Him. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleansed them from every stain. These men and women were all clean, whiter than snow, purged in conscience by the efficacious blood of the Lord Jesus. This waiting company in Jerusalem was composed of prepared persons. In the old types, the blood of the sacrificial victim was put on the ear and the hand and the toe at the consecration of a priest and the cleansing of a leper. Wherever there was sprinkling upon a person, the blood came first, and then the oil was applied upon the blood. The figure of the Holy Spirit followed the figure of Christ's work of atonement and purging; and it was so historically at Pentecost.

These people assembled in Jerusalem, and praying, were a purged people. They were made clean by the work of Christ and, therefore, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and took them up for His immediate service. At once they began to speak with other tongues. They all were clean vessels filled with the Spirit for His use.

Announcing the Ascended Christ And Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, spoke to the multitude. What was the great subject of Peter's preaching that day? He said many weighty things, according to

the short account we have here. But the keynote of it all was this, that the One Who had just been crucified and slain in this world, God had now exalted in heaven. The apostle brought home their guilt to them, "You with wicked hands have crucified and slain Him, Jesus of Nazareth. You know what He did among you; you know that He was a Man approved of God. God set His seal upon Him; everything He did showed that He was God's righteous Son, yet you took Him and put Him upon the tree. Now God has exalted Him to His own right hand." And Peter's soul was filled with the glory of his Master. Taught by the newly-come Spirit, he was speaking of the work and excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said nothing about himself, nothing about the church, but the one theme of his heart was the glory of Christ — what the Jews had done in despising Him, what God had done because He was so dear to Him. "This is My beloved Son", the Father said with the voice that came out of the glory-cloud upon the Mount of Transfiguration. The Lord Jesus was now taken up into the glory. He was now glorified with that glory which He had along with the Father before the world was. And from that day to this, Christ, once crucified and now glorified, has been the central theme of the Spirit's testimony. If you listen to anyone speaking to you, and find that the subject, the discourse, the theme, is not in accordance with the theme we have here, the exceeding glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, you may set it upon one side as being of very third-rate value. The real value of testimony by the church of God to the world is measured by the value it sets upon Christ.

What a subject for the preacher! If we had even a thousand tongues, how feebly could we tell out the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ! Yet the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is the A B C of the church's lesson book, and the church should be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ all the while she is here.

Christ is also the test for each individual. I do appeal to you to consider what place the Lord Jesus Christ has in your heart. Does your heart thrill at the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are your energies given up to Him? Is He first and foremost in your life? What is He to you daily? I do not ask whether you have been delivered from your sins, or whether God answers your prayers and gives you joy in your heart from the happy circumstances granted you from day to day. But I do ask what is Christ to your inmost affections? Have you anything in your heart that answers to this first appeal by the apostle of the Lord to the Jews at Jerusalem?

Peter declared that the exaltation of Christ explained everything: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted . . . He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The Lord Jesus was above; hence there was power below. The people said, "These men are drunken, they are full of new wine." Of course they were not; it was absurd to suppose such a thing at that early hour of the day. But it never entered into their minds that the marvels of the tongues were due to the One Who was recently crucified and Who was now in supreme power at the right hand of God. Being astray as to the truth about Christ the Jews could not understand what was taking place.

Hence we see this great concourse of people gathered together in Jerusalem, full of amazement at what they were hearing, each in his own tongue, concerning the wonderful works of God. They ask, "What meaneth this?" And the answer is, "Jesus Christ is exalted and glorified." This fact Peter makes known to them in his powerful speech. What he said was shared by all those with him, for the church at Pentecost was characterised by this special feature that they were one and all full of the importance of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed to them by the

newly-descended and indwelling Spirit of God. The Effects of the Ascension

I really believe there are a great many Christians who never get further than the apostles at Bethany. They do not in their experience pass from Acts 1:1-26 to Acts 2:1-47. There they stand gazing up into heaven while the clouds hide the Master from their sight, and they say to themselves, "He is gone so far away from us." They do not understand what the ascension of Christ has secured for them. They have not yet listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, telling them from the word of God that far beyond those clouds, through all the heavens, Jesus the Son of God has passed; and He is now seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

What a difference this knowledge makes to me! I know that yon Glorified One is my Saviour, that He is the One Who died for me, and that He is the One Who has united me with Himself by the Holy Spirit. What is the whole world to me in comparison with this knowledge? There is nothing on earth to match it. And I repeat that this truth is of immense importance. If you forget everything else which is being, said, do not forget that the reason for the church of God being here in the world from the day of Pentecost to the present time is because Jesus Christ is exalted, and that the beginning of the church synchronized with the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit. This is the first and foremost thought that should fill the heart of every member of the body of Christ, the church of God. Moreover, the Holy Spirit abides here to keep the hearts of the saints in practical touch with Jesus Christ on the throne. This is a fact, beloved friends. When I say it is a fact, I mean it is something that has been done, that is accomplished. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth is as true a fact as Jesus Christ dying on the cross and now glorified on high. Is it not so?

Yet how many people get to the cross but never get any further. They do not get into the heavens by faith and rejoice in what is there for them. They hope to go some time or other to the place of many mansions, but the fact does not enter into the minds of everyone that Jesus Christ is already there, and that He is glorified by the Father, and that because He has been exalted the Holy Ghost is here as that "other Comforter" for them individually, while He also dwells in the church as the temple of God. In the verses at the close of this chapter, we have some of the characteristics of this newly-formed community in Jerusalem, and we will now turn to these. The Expansion of the Church

Peter makes it quite clear to his audience that this great gift of the Holy Ghost was not for a privileged few only. It was not to be confined to those who attended the early morning prayer-meeting; but it was for others too if they repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And the result of the apostle’s preaching was that men were pricked to the very heart.

It was the Lord’s Day morning, and one of unexampled blessing for the believers; but it was not a pleasant experience for those who were listening to Peter’s words. His words pierced their consciences like drawn swords, and they were convicted of guilt. They said, "We are sinners", and this is no pleasant feeling. Peter said, "You are amenable to God’s just judgment", and they felt it was true, for they had killed the Prince of life. "If what you say is true, that we have crucified the One Whom God has exalted to His right hand, what are we to do?" Then Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of that One you have crucified. Save yourselves from this untoward generation." As the result of this testimony, there were three thousand persons

united to the original company. And the converts withdrew themselves from the evil and adulterous generation that had despised the Lord of glory and crucified Him. Thus the Lord added to that new assembly formed in Jerusalem three thousand souls in one day, showing what great things His Holy Spirit had done. Of course, He can do similar mighty works still. And I believe He is even now saving more than three thousand souls in one day, if we consider His work all over the world. But He does not do this in one place, because the people of that particular place would probably become very exalted in mind. They would not be able to bear such a great work of the Spirit in their midst without despising other places not so favoured.

We may be sure, however, that the Spirit of God is never idle. He is ever at work drawing souls to Christ, and will continue to do so until the church is complete. Nevertheless, we have before us in scripture the fact that three thousand souls were drawn to Christ, and added to the church formed at Pentecost. We see this new company in Jerusalem, apart from the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, from all the Sanhedrin, from the scribes and lawyers and great men, and from the crowds in Jerusalem come up to keep the feast of weeks. There was the temple and its courts with the lowing of the oxen and bleating of the sheep for sacrifice; but divinely considered, it was a desolate place. Here in this little company in some back street of Jerusalem was the Holy Spirit, not in that magnificent building which took Herod forty-six years to complete. The Spirit of God passed by the temple made with hands, and came to blood-bought, blood-washed souls, to dwell in them. Oh, what an honour!

We stand in wonder as we see the cloud of Jehovah’s glory in the temple on Mount Moriah in the days of Solomon long past, but there is a greater wonder here. The Spirit of God comes to dwell amongst fishermen, common people, ordinary folk of daily life. But why to these? What characterised them was not their wealth, not their position in society, not their external piety, not even their exceptional devotion to their Lord and Master; but the one special feature about them, one and all, was love, regard, adoration for the Lord Jesus Christ Blessing and Praising

If we really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who loved us and died for us, is at God’s right hand in heaven, we are constrained to praise and worship Him. If we recognise His position in the highest glory, ought we not to show it, ought we not to sing His praises, ought we not to recount His excellences? Beloved friends, it is a sad day when the saints of God have to pump His praises out of their hearts. They should bubble up spontaneously (cp. Psalms 45:1, margin). You ought to praise Him because you cannot help it, because your heart, as it were, refuses to be silent. You love Him so much that you want to tell Him how much you love and adore Him. Oh, let us not forget to praise the One Whom God has so highly exalted. With One Accord

We find that this little company of believers was quite apart, quite separate from all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They continued together "with one accord." Before the Holy Ghost came they had various ideas, as we read, for instance, in the last chapter of John. There we read that some of the apostles said, "Let us go fishing", but they were not all of this mind, only a few of them went. There was nothing in this project to give the whole band a common interest, and to act "with one accord." Now they act as one; and what is it that keeps them together in this unity?

Now let us carefully consider this question. What will keep together those who quarrelled for precedence on the night of the Lord’s betrayal? At Pentecost we have the company at its beginning, together "with one accord." There is no contentious talk, no disorderly conduct; but we

see a united church in its primitive simplicity and power. What is it that keeps them all continuing steadfastly together? That unseen presence, the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. When the blessed Lord Jesus Christ came into the house in Bethany, Mary could see Him, and Martha could see Him. None can see the Holy Spirit in the house of God. He is in the church, but He is invisible. We can observe only the effects of His presence. And the one invariable effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit is that all eyes are directed by Him to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way all hearts, all minds, all mouths are united, and all act "with one accord", the glory of the Lord being the governing motive of each and all. No babe in Christ need ever go wrong about the working of the Holy Spirit. What is not in accord with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ may with safety and certainty be rejected. It is not of the Holy Spirit, and it cannot help you. But if a person is doing all he can to make you think better of the Lord Jesus Christ, you say, "He is right. I want a little more of this. It is the apostles' teaching, and will suit me very well." The doctrine of Christ is the test given us in scripture to decide what doctrine is of God, and what is of man. The Apostles' Doctrine The disciples "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." We must not think this continuance refers to the first day only. It means they went on in this way. These were the new habits of the disciples of Christ. The Holy Spirit gave them a new power of understanding the scriptures as well as new revelations of truth. In the Old Testament time God had given the prophets, and the writings of Moses, and the Psalms. And those who were gathered together were familiar with the Old Testament scriptures. But we read that they continued in the apostles' doctrine, and the apostles' doctrine means the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which they delivered to the saints at the beginning. But perhaps we may say more about this subject later.

Fellowship

Coupled with the apostles' doctrine is fellowship. Fellowship is a beautiful word, and one of peculiar significance to the church of God. Briefly it just means that everyone who is in the church of God has a common interest and a common title founded upon the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence those who are in the church of God are irresistibly drawn together; and the Holy Spirit works in them all for the spiritual well-being of the community as a whole.

If I am looking out for a person that I like, who has a fellow-feeling with myself, for whom I have a personal affinity, probably I can find but very few who are suitable. Fellowship in that sense would necessarily be very limited, but in the church of God there is no limitation of that kind at all. The fellowship that is spoken of here in Acts 2:1-47 is that all who were brought together into that new company loved the Lord Jesus Christ, all had been equally cleansed and redeemed by His precious blood, all had been put on a common platform as belonging to Him, all had received the Holy Spirit, and each and all formed part of that new creation by Him. The apostle Paul speaks later on of the church under the figure of the body, and we know that each member of the body of Christ is a member of the body equally with the rest. It may have to perform a special function of its own, but so far as the common interest and interdependence are concerned all are alike. And this fellowship is the particular feature of the assembly that we find here.

Breaking of Bread The breaking of bread is also mentioned at the very first. I wonder if the disciples observed the breaking of bread on the very day of Pentecost. We are not told that they did, but that they continued in it afterwards. At any rate, it was no doubt a great experience for the

eleven apostles especially to carry out the Lord’s wishes in this respect. Just a few weeks before, the Lord had asked them to eat the bread and to drink the wine in remembrance of Him. Now they do it for the first time as the church. The memorial was very real to them. The apostles could recall His very looks when He said, "This do in remembrance of Me." The very tone of His voice was fresh to their memories in those early days. The Holy Spirit also made the recalling to mind of His death real too, because they had not to depend entirely upon their own memories. One of His functions was to bring to their remembrance the things which the Lord had said. Therefore, unspoiled by sinful neglect or coldness, or even lukewarmness, it was their happy experience in the power of an ungrieved Spirit to remember the Lord in the way of the breaking of bread. Moreover, they continued steadfastly in eating the Lord’s supper. There must have been a special sweetness and joy and power about the celebration in those first fresh days of the communion of the body of Christ.

They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread. They were not content with an occasional observance. And do not let anything trivial keep us from the breaking of bread. Let us do it continually and steadfastly It is sweet today, and as real as it was at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit of God is still here, and the Lord is still true to His promise, "Where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them." The Prayers In addition to the breaking of bread they continued in prayers too. This does not mean individual prayers offered at any time and in private. It refers to the definite prayers of the assembled company, as such, because they could now all pray together as one. What had made them one? The Holy Spirit of God. They were united in heart and desire by Him, Who intercedes for them according to God (Romans 8:27).

I am sure we do not realise, sufficiently what power there is in the assembly prayer-meeting. The prayer of those whose petitions are united in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ must bring down much blessing. Nothing can keep blessing away from the saints in their walk and service when the church of God prays in its corporate character and privilege and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let us then continue steadfastly in the prayer-meeting like these people of old. If you stay away from the prayer-meeting, of course you will not get anything of the corporate blessings they did. You do not want these gifts of grace, and so you do not unite to pray for them! We attend because we are poor, empty vessels, and want to be filled. We also have the priestly privilege of interceding for others. And we are sure to succeed because we know the grace of our God, and because we bring to Him a Name which He will not on any account disown or disclaim. The Expression of Unity

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul. . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common." Their collective behaviour reflected the unity there was in this new company, and behind it was the power of the Holy Spirit making them suppress all selfish interests and act as one. They were all together, and they had all things common.

Moreover, they sold their worldly possessions, showing that their faith and hope was in a heavenly Christ, Whose kingdom was not of this world. A Jew who believed in the immediate coming of the kingdom on earth would not like to part with his freehold. He would wish to retain his inheritance in the land until Messiah reigned on the throne. But these believers had learned the "better" thing that Christ gives. They had a "better" inheritance, undefiled, unfailing, reserved in heaven for them.

They "parted them to all men, as every man had need." The mind of Christ was in them, and they thought of others, not of themselves. The Holy Spirit had come down and His first business, so to speak, was to fill them with self-denying love like the Master. For Who was it that, when He saw a pearl of great price, sold all that He had that He might have it? It was the Lord Jesus, Who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. The Holy Spirit casts out all selfishness from their hearts. Hence there was in these acts of humility and self-denial a lovely representation reproduced in Jerusalem of the Man Whom the Jews had killed and crucified. In the hearts and lives of His followers the meek and lowly Saviour was living again in that guilty city. Is there a similar testimony today? If we belong to Him, let us have the ways of Christ, our Master. Let it not be said that the members of the body cast shame upon the Head; but let the Head direct all their words and acts, and may His Spirit fill all those that are united with Him in glory.

Valuing Church Truth

I close by impressing upon you to keep it much before your heart that the truth of the church of God is the most precious revelation in God’s holy word. I say this with all due consideration. Israel was and is very precious to God; although the chosen nation is now wandering homeless on the face of the earth, its place of ultimate blessing is here on the earth, while the ordained place of the church is association with Christ in glory. And we have this assured destiny before us. We have the certain hope of sharing His glory. While waiting for the fulfilment of this hope, we are privileged to share Christ’s rejection by the world. Presently His glories will be shared by us because we are connected with Him in His heavenly exaltation. All this and much more is associated with our place in the church of God.

Lest we should allow the difficulties and perplexities of assembly life in its present dark and broken condition to obliterate from our hearts the real nature of the church of God about us, the truth concerning it abides unchanged in the scriptures. And we should accustom ourselves to look at things relating to the assembly in the way that God looks at them in His word. We need to have His mind about the church in its entirety, and therefore let us ever go back in thought to the beginning of its history. Oh, for those days of Pentecost! Let us look back with satisfaction and praise upon what happened on that memorable day, when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and took up His abode in the hearts of saints individually and collectively upon the earth — and He is remaining here to this day. Moreover, that Holy One will abide until the church is numerically complete, and the Lord Jesus comes to claim His body and His bride, and to take all that are His to be with Him for evermore.

Chapter 30

03.06. The Church Growing and Multiplying

The Church Growing and Multiplying (Read Acts 2:41-47; Acts 4:31-32; Acts 6:1-4, Acts 6:7; Acts 9:31; Ephesians 4:7-8, Ephesians 4:11-16)

We were considering last week the establishment of the church of God at Pentecost through the operation of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven by the exalted Lord and Christ. The church was then formed, but it was needful according to the purpose of God that this church should extend itself territorially, that it should expand numerically, that it should develop potentially, and become a great witness for the absent Lord throughout the world. And the subject now before us is how this development was brought about. In dealing with it we might consider historically the whole of the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the way in which the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and faith in Him were spread in those early days; and we might further consider the remainder of the New Testament after the Acts, for the Epistles, especially those of Paul, give us that holy teaching whereby the growth of the church is permanently secured. But in the time available we can only look at the matter from a general point of view, as the Lord may help.

What Growth and Multiplying Mean

I take it that the growth of the church, meaning by the church the assembly of God's people and not a material building, is its growth in love, that peculiar love which is of God, and in holiness, and in righteousness, and in faith, and in faithful testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and also in intelligence concerning what God has been pleased to reveal in His holy word. All this detail is comprised in the growth of the church, which necessarily includes the growth of the individuals. But there is also multiplying in connection with the church. The church originally was founded in a place, in Jerusalem, and probably in outlying towns and villages also, while in other places in Galilee as well as Judea there must have been those who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ in the course of His ministry. And these, too, with those in Jerusalem, would have been baptized by the one Spirit into the one body of Christ. Still, while a local church was first formed, it was the purpose of God that it should spread throughout the whole world, that it should multiply its companies, and that it should increase numerically. And we know historically that this result was brought about by the spread of the full gospel-story of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will probably have noticed that we find these two words, "growing and multiplying", used with reference to the children of Israel. They occur in Stephen's address to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:17). The sons of Jacob went down into Egypt, seventy-five souls, and in a short space of time they grew and multiplied to a miraculous degree. This increase was in such a striking manner that it attracted the attention of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. He was alarmed and took drastic measures to put a stop to the marvellous increase which God was giving His chosen ones as the seed of Abraham, who He promised should be in number as the stars in heaven and as the sand upon the seashore. But the growing and multiplying, in Egypt was by natural means. Here in the Acts you have the history of a numerical increase which is altogether different from the ordinary enlargement of families and nations. You read of a few persons in Jerusalem, persons of little

account so far as the world went, but believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and confessing His name, and from them emanates a power which in a single day spreads among those in that city to a marvellous and incredible extent.

Increase of the Church in Jerusalem A man from Galilee stands up and speaks of what God has done to the crucified Jesus, and the power of his words enters the hearts and consciences of those who listen to him. As a consequence, three thousand souls are born again by the power of the burning words of Peter. It was a phenomenon altogether unknown in the world’s history until that time. A man speaks and three thousand persons pass from death unto life — what does this astounding event mean? It means that the power of God has come down. It proves that the Holy Spirit is here, as promised, that Peter was full of the Holy Spirit, that he was speaking words that were not his own, but words charged with living and divine power by that same Spirit.

Through this Spirit-given witness, a great company of guilty men were brought to confess Christ and to be baptized in His Name, to leave the untoward generation that had crucified the Lord Jesus, and to associate with the company that bore His name. These three thousand souls in Jerusalem were added to those that believed; and this was how the church grew and multiplied even in that day of its birth at Pentecost.

Day by day the progression went on. Day by day the church increased. As we read, "the Lord added . . . daily." Men here, women there, children too, heard the same words of grace and power; and the same mighty result was wrought within them. They were brought to own the name of Him Who was crucified in their midst so very, very recently. Fifty days or so had passed, that was all, since that awful event. But the preaching proceeded and the converts multiplied amazingly. Whole-hearted devotion filled the hearts of the disciples. They were prepared to give their lives for Him Who had suffered for them. The mighty change was wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Let us look at the effect as it was displayed in its simplicity and its power in Jerusalem, for it is a lesson that we, as those that belong to the church of God, must never forget. The power for growth in grace, the power for multiplication in numbers is now what it was then; the same mighty, changeless Holy Spirit of God is still here to see that the church makes its proper advance and that it does its work in announcing the glad tidings everywhere throughout the whole world. The church rapidly increased in Jerusalem, so that we read of a multitude that were together, of a multitude of people believing (Acts 4:32; Acts 5:14; Acts 6:2). Jerusalem was very thickly populated at that season of the year and great numbers of visitors to the annual feast were also lodged in the immediate vicinity; but there was the fact that grace was working mightily among the Jews from other lands, as well as among the bloodstained betrayers and Murderers of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; the good seed was springing up and bearing fruit abundantly. God had mercy upon that guilty city that had slain the righteous, the Holy One. Their sin was at their very door, but "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound", and so large numbers were brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. A great company of the priests also were obedient to the faith.

Spreading Outwards But while the testimony to the exalted Christ was to begin at Jerusalem, it was not to remain there. God saw to it that the word of the gospel should go out elsewhere from that centre. Accordingly, we find that persecution arose to disperse the disciples. A valiant witness for the Lord Jesus Christ had to surrender his life for his Master. Stephen died, and received the crown of martyrdom; but the persecution that began with him spread with unmitigated fury

throughout Jerusalem.

Once the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem felt that they could injure the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the person of His witnesses, they threw their energies into this work. Impelled by the evil one, they set themselves to stamp out the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem by persecuting His followers. But the Lord had foreseen that persecution would come upon His disciples, as first of all it came upon Him. He had said to them, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Accordingly the believers in Jerusalem were all scattered abroad, except the apostles. But in other places they did not cease their work of witnessing for Christ. They went everywhere preaching the word. And wherever they preached the word, the same Holy Spirit was behind the preaching, and the preaching was effective, so that men were brought to confess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria men heard of the death, the resurrection, and the glorification in heaven of Him, Whose words many of them remembered, Whose miracles they had seen, Whose gracious presence they had missed from their streets. Now they heard that He had shed His precious blood for the ransom of souls, and that God had received Him into glory on high. The Holy Spirit was with the preachers, and the word of God had its effect in saving many souls. But we find that those persons who believed the gospel were all gathered together into the new company formed at Pentecost. Those who believed, the new converts, were added to those who already believed, and we read that throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, the church (for this most probably is the true reading in Acts 9:31) had rest and was edified. It was one church, one assembly; many meetings, many towns, many villages, but one assembly. Why were they all one assembly? Because One Spirit had come down to form the one body. As there is but One Holy Spirit, so there can be but one church, and as there is but one Head, so there can be but one body.

We read, therefore, that the whole church throughout those provinces had peace. Being edified, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the church was multiplied. There was growth up to this point, and throughout this book we continue to read of the progress of the word of God in the enlargement of the church. It was not only in Samaria, and in the districts immediately around Palestine, but throughout Asia Minor and into Europe and Africa the word spread, and everywhere men were brought to know our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the remarkable result was that although so many in so many places confessed Christ, there was never more than the one assembly, united to the one Christ on high and inhabited by the one Holy Spirit, Who had come down to form that holy temple unto the Lord. So then without going further through this book for evidence, we can safely come to this conclusion, that the growth and the multiplication of the members of the body of Christ continued from Pentecost onwards. And all the time of which we read in the New Testament, the increase continued. There was no cessation; the church was a continually growing thing, for behind it was the energetic and unresting power of the Holy Ghost. The Work of God in Building The church is called the church of God, because its origin is of God, and it is the power of God by His Spirit that accounts for the presence and continuance of the church in the world to this day. Though sadly ruined, it is still the church of God. We are apt to judge of a thing only as we see it, but scripture shows us what is behind the scenes in the history of the church. And there we behold the mighty power of God, in contrast with the outward failure of man.

"I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace", the apostle Paul said when he was speaking of church declension to the elders of Ephesus, "I am going to leave you, but remember God is for you." "Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building", as the same apostle wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:9). God is calling out of this world a special company, which is known as His assembly, and, when He has finished it, it will be for the praise of the glory of His grace.

There is also the present work of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with the formation of His assembly. I think a very refreshing subject to take up as a study in the Acts of the Apostles is its various references to the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are apt to think of the Lord Jesus only as One Who has for ever left this weary world, Who has done the mighty work of eternal redemption here so completely that nothing needs to be added to it. It is indeed blessedly true that He has finished His work, having glorified God the Father here upon the earth, and that now He is seated at God’s right hand, His work finished, and He consequently resting there: and indeed this side of the truth it is most necessary to know. It is establishing to the heart and conscience to be persuaded that the great work of atonement is completed and that a seated Christ is the abiding proof of it. But there is another aspect of revealed truth to remember. We ought to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is still active. When Peter, taught by the Father, made his remarkable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My church." When is that work of building His church carried on? When He went up on high, He then commenced to build. Who was it that added together those that were being saved? We are told that the Lord "added to the church daily such as should be saved." The three thousand souls at Pentecost were those that He brought into His assembly. They were living stones placed by the Builder in that new building, in that spiritual house which was to grow up by His own mighty handiwork until complete.

Though ascended, the Lord Jesus is said to be active on earth, working with His servants (Mark 16:20). As we go through the history in the Acts we find it is so. Who was it that looked down from heaven and spoke to Saul of Tarsus, arresting him in his course of persecution? It was the Lord, Who had a special purpose in doing so in connection with His church. "I will reveal especially to him that Christ and the church are one, and that the church has a heavenly and a glorious calling. To him I will communicate the mystery of Christ and the church, hitherto not made known to the sons of men." The Lord Jesus Himself spoke directly to this man, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" It was a real, verbal challenge, a real Person speaking real words to the man’s conscience and heart. It was not a noonday dream; he was smitten to the ground, and the persons around him heard the sound of the voice. It was a substantial vision, right here in the world, and was the result of the special agency of the Lord Jesus at work in the formation of His church.

We may take comfort from the great fact. When here the Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." You and I may possibly be idlers in the Lord’s field, but the Lord is never idle. He is at work continually; He is building His church, adding stone by stone, day by day, as it pleases Him. The Lord has a purpose before Him that the church may be completed, and until His church is completed, He will never cease from His labour. He has also a work for each of us to do for Him, but we will come to that later. The Personal Energy of the Holy Spirit

We need to remember that these divine Workmen, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are all concerned in the building and maintenance of the church, yet men despise the

church because of its outward failure. God has revealed in His word the truth concerning the essential nature of His church, and He has associated its establishment on earth with the special agency of the Godhead — God the Father promising the Spirit, God the Son shedding the Spirit forth at Pentecost, and God the Holy Spirit founding and forming the assembly. A more correct title of this book containing the history of the early church would be the Acts of the Holy Spirit, not the Acts of the apostles. All through it the acts of the Holy Spirit are recorded. Whatever the various servants of God did in preaching and teaching, they did as they were animated by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was behind Peter, Stephen, Philip and others guiding and controlling them and their service. For instance, the servants of the Lord wanted to go on one occasion into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not; it was not the will of God that they should go to that place at that time (Acts 16:7). Is this directing government of Christian service a thing of the past only? Has the Holy Spirit departed from the church? Is the church an empty, tenantless wreck and ruin? No, the Holy Spirit is still here to take up those who desire to be used by Him and to use them in this glorious work of edification and evangelization, so that the church may continue to grow and multiply. Before we think about what our service should be, let us think of that blessed Holy Person Who is at work in connection with the establishment and the development of the church which will ultimately sit with Christ on His throne and reign over the earth in His name. The Edification of the Holy Spirit The work of the Holy Spirit does not cease because of human failure, though it may be hindered. In the Acts we get historical examples of His work outside and inside the church. When we come to 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, we shall find the nature of His work in the assembly. The Holy Spirit gives His gifts to aid the spiritual life of persons in the church. He gives a word of wisdom to one, and a word of knowledge to another for the benefit of the whole company, He provides just what is needed for the growth and development of each assembly, so that it may not be lacking in any one spiritual grace.

What is the great object of those diversities of gifts exercised by "that one and the self-same Spirit"? 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 and 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 of this Epistle show that they are exercised for the edification of the saints, for the express purpose of building up the church in the faith of God’s elect.

Edification means a building process. Christ said, "I will build My church", which implies that He will continue to add living stones to His assembly founded upon the rock. He can raise up stones to be witnesses for Him, for He gives life to dead stones, so that they become living stones, and are immediately brought into and made part of that spiritual house. This is the Lord’s work in building His church. But there is also the edification or building up of saints in their most holy faith, widening their knowledge of the truth, deepening their love for Christ, quickening their activities in worship and service. Who does this? It is the Holy Spirit, working in the midst of the assembly, giving through this one and that one the necessary ministry for the edification of each and all.

We are none of us perfect, we all are lacking in one respect or another. There is One Who knows what we lack, and there is One Who can give it, One Who is prepared to give it. God’s Holy Spirit abides in the midst of the assembly for this purpose. He sees one member who is declining in devotion to Christ, and He brings His word to bear upon that person’s heart and conscience. He shames him, He makes him to feel that he has received so much and given so little, that he is spending his life for himself instead of living for his Master. He makes the backslider in heart to feel that he has been disobedient to the plain teaching and holy precepts that are contained in the

Holy Scripture. By the ministry of the word the Spirit quickens the sluggish energies to greater activity. In many such ways the Holy Spirit carries on His work among the saints. Because you are one of the assembly, the assembly is the place where the Holy Spirit ministers to you by means of others, speaking through them to you for your spiritual advantage and blessing. Correction is not a pleasant experience. You do not like the things that hurt, but very often the things that hurt most are the things that do most good. A cunning doctor often disguises his bitter medicine, nevertheless it is the bitter medicine that does good to the patient. There is no remedy in its sugar-coating. But the Holy Spirit does not disguise the word of truth. He does not use the sword concealed in a scabbard. The truth comes home to you with its piercing point and sharp, dividing edge, and you know it is the truth about your naughty ways; yet you say, "I do not like the man who is telling me this. I do not like his speech. I think he might correct his own conduct, and not talk about me." You ought rather to say, "Is he speaking the truth of God, and does that truth apply to me and condemn me?" If the exhortation proceeds from the Holy Spirit, it will be to your spiritual loss if you refuse to receive it and apply it to yourself.

All the members of the body of Christ need exhortation, correction, and instruction from time to time, and these varied requirements of the assembly are met by the word brought to us by the Holy Spirit through the mouths of this one or that one. It may be simply the inaudible speaking of the Holy Spirit within ourselves. Many of us can say that some of the sweetest thoughts of the things of God in connection with the Holy Scriptures have arisen within us in the assembly, without a sound to be heard. Often and often, in those sweet silences of the gathering which are of the Spirit, He speaks to our hearts in a still small voice. Oh, for ears to hear and hearts to receive what the Holy Spirit would bring before us at such times! He is truly the great and capable Teacher; He will guide us into all truth; and He always will lead us on if we will only let Him. He is here with us to work in the church to the edification of all by means of the gifts that He Himself has given. The Lord Gives Persons to His Church In Ephesians 4:1-32 we have yet another side of this subject. We there read again of gifts, but they are spoken of in connection with the Head of the church, the One Who ascended up on high, and not, as in Corinthians, with the Spirit Who has come down from above. The exalted Head is the One that gives gifts unto men, and we are told that He gives "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." He gives the persons; the men themselves are His gifts to His church.

There is thus a slight difference between the gifts that we read of here and those we read of in Corinthians. In Corinthians we read of the Holy Spirit giving a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or the like through one person or another. He impels one person to pray, and another person to prophesy, and so on. There the gift is the thing that is done, the action, the use of the organs of speech in the assembly but here in Ephesians, the Lord, as Head of the church, gives certain persons for the benefit of the assembly. He gave apostles; Paul and others were actual persons, who were given to secure the establishment and the growth of the assembly. In Ephesians we are not shown how the unseen Spirit works in a variety of ways through this one and that one for the benefit of all. Here we learn that a particular person receives a particular gift from the Lord, and that gift brings responsibility to use it for the spiritual well-being of the whole church. If the Lord Who went away from this world has bestowed a gift upon any of us, then we are directly responsible for its use to Him Who gave that gift. We shall have to answer to Him; and that is why the Lord is spoken of here as the Head. The apostles, prophets and others were all in

relation to the Head from Whom they derived their usefulness to the church. By and by they must all stand individually before, their Lord and Head to give an account of what they have done.

We are not responsible to the Holy Spirit in exactly that way. The Holy Spirit has not taken His place in the church on earth for the exercise of supreme rule and authority, except that He has the authority which is proper to Him as proceeding from the Father and the Son. As Isaac figuratively represented the Son, so Abraham's servant represented the Spirit. But the Lord Jesus is in the place of authority and power and supremacy in all that concerns the assembly, and He has bestowed upon the church her gifts, those persons who are responsible to Him for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

We have no apostles now. The early apostles have all passed away, but we have the apostolic writings. All that is needful for us to know we possess in the Scriptures, for the apostles and prophets have once for all laid the foundation of the church. We have the writings of the prophets as well as the apostles. Luke was a prophet; Mark was not an apostle, but he was a prophet. These two prophets wrote the mind of God about the life of Christ, each for a particular purpose in the scheme of divine instructions for the church. So we have the writing of the apostles and prophets as the foundation upon which the church rests.

Evangelists The evangelists too, thank God, are not missing among Christ's present gifts to the church. They are those who go out anywhere and everywhere preaching the word. Philip was an evangelist, and he went down from Jerusalem to preach Christ in the city of Samaria, and then he went down into the desert to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. He was a man under the influence and direction of the Spirit of God to make known Christ where He was not named. He was a gift bestowed by the Head to go out into the world in service that Christ might build His church. Philip was to find the stones for his Master, so that they might be wrought into the spiritual edifice. He sought in the quarry of wickedness and shame for dead souls for his Master in connection with His formation of the church.

Thus the evangelist belongs to the church; he is a gift to the church from its Head; his work is intimately concerned with the growth of the church. If he is concerned only in getting a confession from a man's mouth that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he then leaves the convert to shift for himself, he is not doing his full work. His work is to see that the convert becomes part of the confessing body of persons upon the earth, which owns the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The evangelist should not omit to instruct the new recruit in what the word of God reveals as the truth about the church.

Pastors and Teachers

Pastors and teachers are also necessary to the growth of the church, and in the list given here the pastor comes before the teacher. Probably the pastor and teacher was often a double gift united in a single person, though not always so. A pastor is one who feeds the sheep of Christ, not one who stands up and talks a great deal of airy stuff about the higher criticism of scripture, and usually leads his hearers away into a mist of darkness, where they cannot follow him. Such are persons who "understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm." A man who is a teacher of that sort is certainly no pastor. The pastor that Christ gives is one who feeds the hearts of His saints with the bread and water of life.

We who love the Lord Jesus Christ hunger to know something more about Him. There is nothing that we value more than some new thought or some new glimpse of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sweet to us because it is about Him. And the pastor knows how and shows us how to bring Christ into the things of daily life, into the workshop, into the busy street, into the home, into the various circumstances in which we find ourselves. We need instruction and advice about these practical matters because sometimes young Christians are not as wise as they might be, though they mean well. For instance, they sometimes talk about Christ in the office, perhaps, when they ought to be doing their duty to their masters, and that is not a wise nor a righteous thing. Again, we sometimes talk to people with a view to help them, and instead of that we drive them further away from the truth by our foolish remarks, and we never have another opportunity of saying what we should to them. We are so unwise, and need to be taught how to present Christ worthily and winningly. The pastor is a wise person who brings the truth of God before me and down to me, so that I feel that it is just the word that want in my present associations. For example, here we are tonight, all differently situated. I cannot say what truth will suit you, and you cannot say what truth will suit me exactly. But the Holy Spirit of God knows my need and brings the suitable word before me by means of another’s wise conversations, so that I see at once the truth I want. It sheds its light upon my pathway. The pastoral gift is something to covet.

How can we become pastors in the church of Christ? I mean in a very simple way, of course. We can only be useful in this service by first of all proving for ourselves the adaptability of the truth of Christ as it is revealed in the word. When we have proved the value of a thing for ourselves, we can with confidence recommend it to others. If we find a scripture that helps us in the worship and service of Christ, it is absolutely certain to help other people in the same way. We may, therefore, with confidence recommend to others what we have found good for our own souls; and so in a simple way we can feed the sheep of Christ.

Teachers are gifts employed by the Head of the church to lead on the saints in knowledge of what is revealed in the word of God. The Whole Body Growing

Without dwelling further on the various gifts, I want to draw attention to the direct reference made in this scripture to the growth of the church. In verse 16, we read, "From Whom" (that is, the Head) "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Here all the saints are viewed in the unity of the whole body, which makes increase of itself because of its association with the Head in heaven. This is of immense encouragement. If you are really a confessor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and belong to the one body of Christ, you are included in this supply of vital energy communicated by the heavenly Head for the well-being of all.

We are told that the connection between the Head and the body is so intimate, so profound, so far-reaching, that "every joint" and "every part" are affected. Consequently the spiritual well-being of the whole and of its parts also is secured. It follows that normally each member should contribute to the health and efficiency of the whole body of Christ. We are necessary to one another and to all fellow-members. If one member suffer, then all the members suffer in consequence.

How important I am then to my brothers and sisters! The fact that my own soul is in touch with the living Lord in glory will have a helpful effect upon all that are present in the assembly. But suppose, for instance, I go to the breaking of bread with an ill temper in my heart, I may sit down and say not a single word, but there is a smouldering fire of evil feeling within me. I am a silent hindrance in worship and prayer to every brother and sister that is there.

I ought not to have come in such a condition. I ought to have confessed this sin. I ought to have owned it to the Lord in private. I ought not to have come unwashed into the holy assembly. What I wish to convey is that without saying a word it is possible by my personal failure to mar the worship of God in a whole meeting. This is because every part of the body contributes to the efficiency of the whole. This statement applies to sisters as well as brothers, to young as well as to old, to every part of this wonderful structure which the Lord is energising. We are all so united one to another that, if anything is wrong in one person, it has an ill effect in others. The converse is also true. Let me come with my soul happy in the Lord, let me come empty of self and full of the Holy Ghost, let me come with my heart uplifted in praise to worship God and remember the Lord in His death, then the radiancy of this inward joy spreads to the others. I do not need to advertise it, the Holy Spirit is there to make it good and make it real, "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part." My right condition is necessary to the perfection of the whole; and in this necessity lies our individual responsibility.

Individual Responsibility In 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 also we find this subject of responsibility with regard to the growth of the assembly. We ought to realise what responsibility rests upon the members of the body of Christ in, this matter. It applies to those that are taught in the assembly, and to those that teach, as well as to those that help or minister in any way. There is a great deal of instruction on this point in this chapter, but I can only briefly refer to it. You can study the chapter at your leisure. At the beginning of it the apostle speaks in a somewhat strange way to the saints at Corinth. He says that he cannot write to them as he would like to do. Their spiritual state hindered him. It was three or four years since he had left them, and they had now fallen into a state of sad disorder. And instead of feeding them with meat as adult Christians, he has to feed them with milk as babes. Now there was a reason for this low and stunted state. He writes, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ." The Flesh Hinders Spiritual Growth

What was the matter, what was wrong at Corinth? Why were they so stunted in growth? They had forgotten that being now members of the body of Christ, they belonged to a new class of persons entirely. Their relationships to one another were new. In the assembly, they were not to be governed by their former worldly responsibility and worldly ways. There was a new standard, for they now belonged to Christ; and yet they had been acting just as men of the world. They were influenced by carnal motives, and there was strife among them, and divisions. Their differences arose about something which in some respects appeared to be commendable. They did not agree among themselves with regard to the relative merits of their leaders and teachers. They had various prominent persons before them in their assembly. They well knew the apostle Paul, of course, who had been among them some eighteen months teaching the word of God. There was also Apollos, and there was Cephas too. The saints had attached themselves to these leaders in a spirit of appreciation and devotion, which, however, developed into rivalry. One said, "I am of Paul", another "I am of Apollos", and another said, "I do not belong to any of you, I belong to

Christ", and a party was set up even in that way.

Thus while there was no open division, there were cliques in the assembly. And this party-spirit was just what they had been accustomed to in their unconverted days. Consequently, the assembly in Corinth had its circles of doctrine; one man was wholehearted for his teacher, and another was whole-hearted for his teacher, and they had brought these varying views and feelings into the assembly. They were looking at influential men; they were not looking at Christ as the Head of the whole body. When a man said, "I am of Christ", that is, "I have got Christ in a way that you have not", he made Christ the head of a party instead of the Head of the church. His zeal was not according to divine knowledge. The truth was that they had allowed worldliness and self to usurp the place that Christ should have in their hearts. They were fleshly, and therefore had to be fed with milk. They could not receive the truth of God which the apostle would have loved to minister to them. And if a person cannot receive the truth of God, he does not grow up into Christ "in all things, which is the Head, even Christ." He makes no progress in spiritual things, and so there is a failure in his personal responsibility.

Individually and collectively, spiritual growth depends upon obedience to the word of God. We have an example in the early church, of whose progress we read thus: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied" (Acts 9:31, R.V.). The church was multiplied, and this increase followed a faithful walk. This connection between spiritual growth and faithful walk is important to note. As members of the body of Christ, are you walking in separation from the world? You know very well that the world and Christ cannot go on hand in hand. You know that if you indulge in worldly parties, clubs, and associations, you at once acquire a distaste for the word of Christ, and soon you have no relish for Christ Himself. You are asked, "What is the matter with you?" You say, "I do not know." But you do know; it is the result of your association; you have been allowing the love of worldly pursuits to creep into your heart; and this is destroying your communion with the Lord. You do not like Bible readings; you do not like to read the word of God yourself, nor to read it with other people. You do not grow in grace and truth. Why is it? Because you have fallen into worldly ways and carnal habits. This is what the apostle upbraided them for at Corinth, and the passage provides a word of caution for all those who are being taught in the truth, lest they should by their own practical failure interfere with the church growing and multiplying as a whole.

Now, in the latter part of the chapter, Paul speaks about teaching and service in the church. He speaks of laying the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10). He himself laid the foundation in Corinth, and the foundation was Jesus Christ.

Works which Stand the Fire

Other persons came there afterwards, and taught various doctrines. They built upon the apostolic foundation. But some of the workmen, some of God’s workers in the assembly at Corinth, had not been building wisely. They had not been serving the saints faithfully. They did not have the Lord before them to direct their work, and they had not used the right material, the truth of God, in their work; and the apostle here warns them against this improper and unfaithful service.

If we are helping in the assembly to build up the saints in any way, let us take heed what we build, because Christ means to have a pure, holy, and spotless church, which He will present to Himself. And if we are putting anything into the structure, He will test our work to prove whether it is good. He tests it by fire. The apostle deals with the subject in figurative language. Some build on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones; others wood, hay and stubble. In the day of Christ, He will try every man's work, to show publicly what sort it is. Fire will try every man's work, and some of it will disappear, being only wood, hay, stubble. Gold, silver, precious stones will stand fire. And only what is of God's word will stand the fire of His judgment, His final test. The Bible is the imperishable word of God, and if I put into the heart of my fellow-Christians what is the truth of God contained in this word, the work will stand. But if I minister my own thoughts and opinions, the work will be destroyed in the judgment day. Let every one take heed what he is doing in the church of God. It is a terrible thing to put a stumbling block in the way of one of Christ's little ones, and to cause him to fall. Some are placed in difficult circumstances wherein they have to walk every day, and any moment they are liable to slip and fall. What am I doing? Am I holding out a helping hand to them, or am I giving them a push? If I give them any helpful advice, I must give them what is written by God. If I do not, it may do them more harm than good; and this service of mine will be burned. But there are also the good workmen of whom the apostle speaks. Their work will stand inspection when the Master comes, and He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Oh, let us covet to be good workmen in the sight of the Lord, faithful workmen in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are seeking to help a person in spiritual distress, what is the good of reading to him something out of Shakespeare or Milton? Such literature may be useful in some matters so far as this world is concerned. But the use of God's holy word is to keep you loyal to Christ of Whom that word speaks. Help him then with what is sterling and good, and you shall have your reward. A man who wishes to work well chooses the best material for his work. In addition to the second class of workmen, whose works are burned, but they themselves saved, there is a third class. These are wicked and terrible persons, who defile the holy temple of God, bringing evil, poisonous teaching into the assembly of God. Nothing is said of their works, but the apostle says solemnly of such an one, "Him shall God destroy."

Conclusion

We have only had before us a very imperfect outline of this subject of the growth of the church. But let us remember that there is a divine work proceeding in connection with the building of the church. This work is infallible and cannot be overturned. It will go on in spite of our failure. But there is also the individual work, in which we each have a responsibility. So surely as we belong to this church of God, so surely we have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters to help them, to do them good, to get them a little further advanced in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord looks to each of us for this. Let us by His grace do what we can for His name's sake.

03.07. The Church in Decay and Disorder

The Church in Decay and Disorder (Read Matthew 13:24-43; Acts 20:28-32; 2 Timothy 2:19-22) The above scriptures all have a bearing upon the subject proposed for this evening, which is the decay and disorder in the church of God. There is decay so far as doctrine is concerned and disorder so far as moral and spiritual practices are concerned.

We have on a previous occasion considered briefly the founding of the church of. God at the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and we then saw a beautiful and striking picture of the new formation in Jerusalem that had been constituted in the Name of the Lord. We also saw that the small nucleus consisting of disciples of the Lord, baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, very quickly, even upon the first day, began to add to their numbers. The power of the Holy Ghost Who had come down was such that He wrought mightily through them for the blessing of others in the city, and men who had been betrayers and murderers of the Lord Jesus were born again through the word preached. They confessed faith in His Name, and they were added to those who were already together in Jerusalem.

Spreading Out From Jerusalem And the word of God grew and multiplied still further, not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee, and subsequently to the very ends of the known world at that time. In the first few years of the church's history, the spread of the gospel was undoubtedly phenomenal, but although the companies of believers multiplied so rapidly, although the numbers of individual saints increased so quickly, yet still they were all together in the same purpose, though not in the same place; there was a unity between them; they were one in the things of the Lord. They walked together in the truth, and acted together in faith and love; and throughout large districts, though there were many assemblies, there was but one church.

And, in view of this marvellous development, we might ask ourselves, Why did not this glorious work continue to spread and spread? If the church spread so rapidly in the first thirty or forty years of its existence, and it is now more than eighteen centuries later, how is it that by this time the whole world is not confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? If the church was one in those early days and growing apace in those early days, why is it that things are so different now? Instead of seeing those who name the Name of the Lord Jesus all walking together in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, we see that they are sadly divided and scattered, and that things are permitted among the saints of God and encouraged in the name of the Lord which we know to be of Satan and not of God. Many popular doctrines and practices are absolutely foreign to the character of our Lord and Master, and yet they are all ostensibly authorised under His Name.

If we close our Bibles, we shall be baffled by this great mystery, because apart from the word of God, the declension cannot be explained. There is no hypothesis to account for the contrast between the present days and the early days of the church, except what we find when we turn to the scriptures. There we find that the whole discreditable history was foreknown of God and foretold by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, we learn that the reason why this failure in the church has arisen is the same reason that accounts for the failure recorded in Old Testament times. In those times, the people of Israel, when they were brought out of Egypt to Canaan, and were called to witness to the unity of the Godhead against the prevailing idolatry, forthwith began to worship idols like other nations. They were held responsible before God for this sin against the light, and were punished in consequence. The church, like the nation of Israel, failed in its responsibility, as man always does fail and dishonour God in the things which are committed to him. Do you regard this breach of trust by Israel and the church as a strange thing? If you do, you may not perhaps have rightly considered your own history; because I am bold to say that there is no one here tonight who is absolutely faultless in his own private life. Is there one here who would stand up and unblushingly declare in the presence of God that he has been absolutely true and faithful in all that has ever been committed to him, and that when he is called to give to the Lord an account of his stewardship he will have no excuses to make, no acknowledgments of failure, nothing to deplore? From the beginning, everything that was committed to the hands of man became manifestly a failure, and was often grossly abused. And on this account we read right through the scriptures intimations of God’s purpose to bring in the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, His own beloved Son. The last Adam will never fail in what is committed to Him. What our Lord Jesus Christ does abides for ever, it never deteriorates, it never decays, it is never subject to disorder, it never in any way brings dishonour upon God the Father. The work of the Lord Jesus is absolutely perfect and glorious to God, and this truth is an immense comfort to every one of us here tonight. Man has failed, miserably failed, and wickedly failed, and he is responsible to God for his unfaithfulness; but we can look confidently upon our Lord Jesus Christ and glory in Him Who never failed God as the perfect Servant in the work that was committed to Him to do. He did all things well, and to the glory of God. The Lord’s Work Perfect

Therefore, while we look upon ourselves with distrust and dissatisfaction, we look upon our Lord Jesus Christ with satisfaction and delight. We glory in His cross, and in His perfection and His fullness. We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Now in connection with this subject of the church, the scripture makes it perfectly plain that whatever our Lord Jesus Christ does in connection with His church is perfect and always will be perfect. When the church is spoken of as Christ’s work, there is no failure nor imperfection attaching to it at all. The Lord Jesus Christ said at the beginning, "Upon this rock I will build My church." He is going on with this building, and every living stone He adds to that spiritual edifice is perfect. The building is growing, stone by stone is being assembled, and the whole structure is rising up into a habitation for God, which will be flawless, and will be seen to be absolutely perfect.

Christ loved the church — here is the real motive; the whole church is before His mind and heart. The Lord knows each individual that is His, and forms part of His church. But He also loved the church in its unity and completeness, and gave Himself up for it; He lives for His church; He serves it on high; He cleanses it by the washing of water by the word. Then by and by, when it is all complete, He will present to Himself His church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The day is coming when the last member of the body of Christ will be added, and the whole church will be completed. Then Christ will take that church to be for ever with Himself.

Later still, when the Lord comes in glory to this world, the church in glory will accompany Him, by the grace and faithfulness of her Saviour. The world will wonder at those whom God will bring with

Him. They will say, "These are sinners saved by grace, and there they are now right in the glory of God, absolutely perfect, without any failure." Where will you find anything in this world approaching that triumphant work of grace? The world cannot discern perfection and glory in the church today. You can search all round the world, but you will never find a church on earth which is comparable with that perfect, ideal church set out in the scriptures, the church which is His body, the fullness of Him which filleth all in all. The Blotted Record of the Church

No! I have been saying that we cannot look around the world and find that ideal a perfect, blameless church. And when we turn to the scriptures, we find a record of failure even in those early days. Who were the writers of the Epistles we have in the New Testament? Were they not the apostles and prophets, the foundation of the church? And they wrote Epistles to the various churches. They wrote to Rome, to Ephesus, and to other places. What do you find in every Epistle? You find that the apostles had to set to work to correct disorders that even then existed in the church of God. Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, a place he had not then visited; he expounded the gospel to them very fully, but he had to correct their behaviour. The spirit of oneness in the truth, the spirit of the unity of the body in Christ, the spirit of caring in love one for another because they were Christ's had departed from them. Those who rightly thought themselves delivered from the prescriptions of the law scorned those who were not able to rise to the same degree of liberty in Christ Jesus.

Again, when you read the Epistles to the Corinthians, you find a flood of errors in this church. There, those who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus were suffering all kinds of evil things in the midst of the holy assembly; immorality was condoned in the midst of the church of God; the operation of the Holy Spirit of the Lord in their midst was made an occasion for men to display their pride of heart and their self-satisfaction, the rich setting themselves against the poor at the Lord's supper; some denied the resurrection of the body. The apostle had to correct all these things and more in the church at Corinth; and it was only about three or four years after he had founded that assembly that Satan effected an entrance there and these things of the flesh and the world were introduced into it.

Similitudes of the Kingdom

If you go studiously through the whole of the Epistles, you will find that the work of the apostles was not only to found the church and set it upon a stable basis as to doctrines and practices, but also to correct what was evil and wrong which even then had sprung up in their midst. Evil had come into God's assembly while the apostles were still alive.

What was it to our Lord Jesus Christ to see this beautiful house of God so quickly defiled? But the Lord Jesus Christ knew this beforehand, and I read those parables to you from the thirteenth of Matthew, wherein He speaks very clearly of this disorder. You may say you do not get the church there; that the church is not mentioned in Matthew 13:1-58; and that the Lord Jesus speaks of the kingdom of the heavens.

It is true that the church is mentioned for the first time in Matthew 16:1-28. And before the Lord says anything about the church, He discourses about the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord Jesus came from God to set up that kingdom, which should be like the kingdom of David His father, only better and more stable than that of the son of Jesse; but the people would not receive Him. He

was in the midst of the Jews, a greater than Solomon, and He would have given them a dominion greater than Solomon's, wisdom greater than Solomon's, power and riches greater than Solomon's, but they would not receive Him. Have you ever heard of a kingdom in existence without a king? If a king is not acknowledged by his subjects, where is his kingdom? It must remain in abeyance. In earthly government you associate the kingdom with a person who is ruling. The truth was that the people of Israel would not have "that Man" to reign over them. "We have no king but Caesar", they said to Pilate, "as for this Jesus of Nazareth, crucify Him, crucify Him. We will not have this Man to reign over us." The Lord knew beforehand that this refusal would take place, and taught His disciples accordingly. He said in effect that the kingdom of the heavens would, in consequence of this rejection, assume a specially strange and peculiar form. He said, as it were, I am going to heaven, and in My absence, the kingdom of the heavens will be formed of those who render allegiance to Me throughout the world. I shall not be present to reign over them; I shall not be seen by them. Those who call on Me, those who acknowledge My name, will constitute this kingdom. But it will not be like the future kingdom of Israel, when I shall sit on the throne of My father David and reign over Jerusalem. As a kingdom it will be unique in the world's history. So the Lord gave these similitudes which are in Matthew 13:1-58, and which all relate to the kingdom of the heavens, the first being introductory. They depict its new and peculiar features as compared with Old Testament teaching. The Tares Among the Wheat In the parable of the wheat-field, a man sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy came and sowed tares in the same field. And when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the tares appeared also. The servant said to the householder, "What shall we do? Shall we root up the tares?" "No," said the owner, "let them grow until the time of the harvest." Here, therefore, you see the kingdom of the heavens depicted in this composite form. There is good and there is also evil side by side; there is a stalk of the wheat, there is a blade of the tare; both are growing side by side. They are similar in appearance; they resemble one another outwardly; but you will never get any good fruit from a tare. The good wheat will produce that which is the staff of life, but not the tare, though apart from fruit-bearing there is a close resemblance between them.

Now, the Lord explained that the tares are the sons of the wicked one, and the good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and therefore Satan is the great enemy of Christ; and in order to work harm to those that bear His name, the evil one places his own sons in the assemblies of God's people. Though in their nature so dissimilar, they are allowed to congregate together. During the period when they are growing in company, the Lord Jesus Christ does not cast out of His kingdom all things that oppose, as He will when the harvest, the end of the age, comes. Now the Lord Jesus is not on the throne of David. He is on the throne of glory, but not on His own throne to rule righteously on the earth, hence He does not interfere outwardly with the constitution of His kingdom. Those who name the name of the Lord in truth are found side by side with those who are under the rule of the evil one. And this mixed condition will persist until the time of discriminating judgment arrives, when the tares are gathered out and burned, and the wheat is gathered into the garner. In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, you find that the mixed condition which was portrayed in this parable had become a fact, and evil persons had crept into the church of God. They were there side by side with true believers. They sat together in the assemblies; they listened together to the teaching of the Holy Spirit; but they wrought evilly to the detriment of what was holy and true, because the sons of the wicked one can only exercise an influence which is evil.

Let me endeavour to make this distinction quite clear. This parable was not spoken as a picture of church condition and relationship. It is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens, which consists of those who nominally own our Lord Jesus Christ. Some are included who do not really mean from the heart what they say and confess, but these unreal ones are mixed up with the children of God as they gather together. And this springing up of tares among the wheat is recorded in the early church history as given in the Acts and the Epistles. Wolves had even then entered in among the flock of sheep (Acts 20:29).

Birds of the Air in the Big Tree But there is another similitude of the kingdom of the heavens to consider. The second one is that of the grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. The mustard seed, the least of all seeds, we saw when we were looking at the second chapter of the Acts. There were about one hundred and twenty disciples of the Lord together in Jerusalem, fishermen, simple folk; what could such a small company accomplish in the world? But although in men’s eyes they were "the least of all seeds," they immediately began to grow in, strength and increase in numbers, and they continued to multiply until by and by they became a great tree. The apostle, writing to the Colossians, speaks of the gospel having been preached to the whole world by that time; such rapid progress was a great and unexpected phenomenon, and a good thing for those who received the gospel. Consequently, this astonishing growth of Christianity was soon considered something worth taking notice of and worth taking advantage of by the world. You will remember that in the first of our Lord’s parables, the seed that fell on the wayside was stolen by the birds of the air. They also could easily carry away the mustard seed, the least of all seeds, but when the seed became a tree, they could not carry the tree away, but they could roost in its branches. So people of the world, when the company of believers grew too numerous and strong to be ignored and despised, sought to use the new faith as much as possible for their own advantage and convenience. We know that in the history of the church this was the case. In the early part of the fourth century, the Emperor of Rome found that a great many of his soldiers were Christians, and that there were Christians in all parts of his dominions. As a matter of worldly policy he said, I will become a Christian myself, so that I can have their support. Then it was that the world and the church intermarried. The world abandoned its persecution, and took a prominent part in managing the outward interests of the church of Christ. The birds of the air found a lodgment amongst those who confessed the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This amalgamation formed an epoch in ecclesiastical history, and we know that right on to the present time the world has kept its footing in the church. The world not only holds the sceptre of direct control in its hand, but its indirect influence penetrates everywhere in Christendom. It takes up the things of Christ to use them for its own ends. Worldly men will not scruple to use the name of Christ in an advertisement of displays in a theatre, or of a picture play, or of anything of that kind. They argue that some will be attracted because the name of Christ is associated with their entertainment. This is but a single instance of the world making use of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to popularize its pleasures. The Lord warned against this artifice of Satan in those very early days before the assembly was formed. The Leavened Meal

Now the next parable is very brief, but full of meaning, First, a man sowed seed in the field, then, a man sowed mustard seed: but now we read of a woman who took leaven and hid it in the meal. The Lord’s word suggests secret dealing on the woman’s part; the small piece of leaven was

concealed in the three measures of meal. And you know the effect of leaven is to spread itself throughout the whole mass in which it is present. The three measures of meal became permeated by the leaven. There was no further effort by the woman; the leavening process went on of itself. The woman only had to put in the leaven, and the result was sure; the whole measured quantity of meal became leavened.

Leaven is a type of evil. "Beware", said the Lord afterwards to His disciples, "of the leaven of the Pharisees." Their teaching was corrupt and corrupting. Nothing spreads so rapidly amongst the children of God as leaven. If it is introduced into a company, it spreads throughout that company: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump", the apostle said to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:6), and also to the Galatians (Galatians 5:9). He did not only mean that it will go on to leaven it, if not cast out. But the sentence also implies that the effect of the presence of leaven is to contaminate the whole lump, and that result is owing to the corrupting nature of the leaven itself. Unchecked evil has an insidious, permeating effect, destructive of what is good.

Ought we not even from experience to know that sin has this corrupting character? Have we never had the sad, humiliating consciousness of the poisonous effect of an evil thought or idea? Though, at first, but a germ, it is apt to grow and multiply within us. We may not desire its presence, but being there it works, it poisons the springs of action, it spreads throughout the whole life. As this is true in the case of an individual, it is also true in the case of a company of God’s people. No assembly is absolutely immune from the presence and corrupting influence of evil, which may arise either in teaching or doing. In the Galatian assemblies it was a question of evil teaching (Galatians 5:9), for they were adding law to grace, and those who were carried away by it had fallen from grace. Christ had become of no effect to them. At Corinth, the leaven of corrupt practice was at work; gross immorality was permitted; and its presence had its defiling effect on the whole assembly.

Ought we not to allow these word-pictures of our Lord to warn us of what the contaminating power of evil is effecting among the saints of God? We should watch day by day against the danger of defilement. Unless we take account of it, there is the possibility of being ensnared by it and carried away by it. You know how rapidly disease is spread from one to another; infection is easily and quickly developed and carried throughout communities. Men are taken unawares by the epidemic; and it is so also in the matter of evil among the saints.

Paul’s Personal Warning From the beginning the church has been subject to defiling influences from within and without, and we must not close our eyes to the facts. We find them here in the scriptures. Without dwelling further on these parables, let us refer to the address of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:1-38). Paul was the great instrument that Christ used for spreading among the saints the knowledge of the church, which was communicated from heaven to him particularly. The risen and glorified Lord revealed the mystery concerning Himself and the church to Paul, the last-called of the apostles. The other apostles knew the truth, but it was particularly entrusted by the Lord to Paul, from whom they received it.

Here Paul is bidding farewell to these elders; he is going up to Jerusalem, and he has it particularly on his spirit to speak to these rulers of the assembly in Ephesus. He had put his whole soul into his work when he laboured there; night and day with tears he wrought amongst them. He was not a man who was in the habit of talking about his own service, but when he did speak in this

way, it was for a special purpose, and we ought to follow carefully what he said.

Paul felt in his spirit he would never see their faces again, and it was pressing him that in his absence terrible disorder and declension would come into the church. What the Lord had predicted in His parables would take place; evil would enter and spoil the beauty and purity of the church of God. Accordingly, he warns the elders, those who were appointed especially to watch over and care for the saints at Ephesus. Seeing what was hanging over their heads, he speaks out of his love for them and for the assembly. He said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

Wolves Ravaging the Flock

What were the overseers to do in view of this impending calamity? They were to feed the church of God. What is the great preventative against the spread of evil? Feeding upon the word of God. If our hearts and minds are fortified by the word of God, we become protected against the evil that is around and that seeks an entrance. If we know the truth, we also know that what is not of the truth is a lie. If we have the truth, we do not need anything else. We do not need to study the peculiarities of the five hundred or more different sects in Christendom to find out what is real and true. If we have the truth, if we know the voice of the Good Shepherd, we are safe from the deceptive voices of strangers.

Feed the church of God! This was his reason: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." What did the Lord in the parable say would come into the great tree? He said that the birds of the air would come in and lodge in the branches of the tree. His apostle said that grievous wolves would come in, not sparing the flock. Why do wolves come among the flock? They come to kill, and to scatter, and to destroy — to damage the flock as much as possible.

It is thus clearly foretold by the apostle that agents of Satan would enter the church of God. They are there now with evil intent. The protection against this danger is to give the sheep good food; feed them well, so that they are made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Let them know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and they will be preserved from those terrible foes which have entered the church from the domain of Satan. Of course, wolves may appear in sheep’s clothing to deceive before they destroy. Their presence is a constant danger, and the only safeguard is to exercise shepherdly care and feed the church of God. The Rise of Party Spirit But this is not the whole of the peril Paul foresaw. It was not only necessary to watch the doors and see that grievous wolves did not enter, but he also says "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." There would be trouble from an internal source. Some among the saints themselves would stand up and declare things not according to the truth of God, their object being to draw people after them and form a party. A man who can talk fluently, who can say pleasant things, who knows his power of pleasing men, is often very diligent in the hope that his hearers will gather around him as a company. At Corinth there was a party of those who said, "I am of Paul"; others said, "No, I am of Peter. Peter is the man for me." A third company said, "I am of Apollos." They made these little circles in the assembly, each called by the name of its favourite leader, not always with the approval of the "leader" himself. The saints who were led away were wrong, as well as those who led them astray.

But Paul is speaking of those who, instead of standing for Christ their Master, stood for themselves. They did not say, "Look at Christ"; they said, "Look at me, and follow my teaching", instead of following Christ. When we hear a person saying that today, we had better not follow him, because he is of those who are spoiling the church of God.

I know that these things about the corruption and failure of the church are not pleasant to hear, but I have not brought before you a tithe of what is found in scripture on this subject. I hope enough has been said to compel you to look further and further into scripture for guidance upon this important question. While the ideal church of Christ remains pure and holy as consisting of believers made so by His precious blood, not one of whom will be lost, but all will form part of His church in glory — while this is true, it is also true that in the professing church of Christ upon earth there is a state of general ruin and departure from primitive truth. Christendom includes all that which outwardly owns the name of the Lord Jesus, and there we find doctrines and procedure which are contrary to the holy Name of Christ and which are utterly condemned by His holy word. In view of this confusing condition of things every one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ will be inclined to despair and say, What am I to do? What is my responsibility? If there are evil doctrines and evil practices on the right hand and on the left, what is my responsibility to my Master?

Guidance for the Perplexed

Well, there is no need to despair. We may be sure that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who before the day of Pentecost spoke those parables depicting this state of degeneration, has also provided some guidance for those who want to do His will and serve Him. Surely I am not speaking to anyone who is without a real desire to please our Lord Jesus Christ? We may have had the melancholy experience of trying to please a number of people at the same time we find we cannot do it; and so some relapse into a selfish mood, and say, In the future I will only please myself. That is a very poor frame of mind to be in. We are here only to please our Lord Jesus Christ, and in pleasing Him we shall please our neighbour "for his good to edification." He is true to us; now then, are you going to be true to Him in assembly matters?

You say, what shall I do to please Him? Shall I just carry on with things as I find them? Shall I accept them as they are, because I cannot help them? I am not responsible for the present failure. I will do the best I can where I am. No, we are responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ to act upon His word, which we have. We know that He loves His church. We know that through grace we are members of His body, and that we belong to Him, the living Head. Therefore, surely we must be anxious to know His mind for us in this day.

I think we have ample guidance in the Second Epistle to Timothy with regard to these matters. This is the Epistle which deals especially with the last days, the final condition of the church, in which it will be found up to the time when the Lord comes. Is it not good for us that decay and disorder in the church began to take place in apostolic times? Because we have the light of God upon the confusion. We have the written word to shine in the day of increasing gloom and darkness. And we have this guidance here, in the passage I read from the second chapter. The Solid Foundation The first thing we notice in verse nineteen is a word of great encouragement. "Nevertheless", says the apostle, "the foundation of God standeth sure." He had been speaking about some of the terrible things taking place in the last days. Evil deeds and false teaching abounded then, and afterwards would increase. But Paul is rejoiced to remind himself and Timothy

and ourselves that although what is committed to man fails, the foundation of God stands sure. What is of God abides unimpaired, and nothing can touch it. And while this character of permanence is true with regard to church things, I think it is a very sound principle to have always in mind also as an individual believer. What the Spirit of God reveals to you of the truth never changes. Make sure that what you have is of God. Let it be thoroughly grasped in your own soul as before God, that what you believe and what you are associated with is of Him. Do not have your spiritual convictions from other people; do not have them even from your father and mother; but have them from God, and have scripture for them, and then you can go to your daily rest with a good conscience and peaceful mind. The foundation of God stands sure; and what was sure fifty years ago is sure now; what was sure in apostolic days is firm and steadfast still. The foundations of the faith are being undermined and destroyed in these days. There are men who are devoting their whole lives and giving all their powers to the destruction of this holy word; and they in the name of the Lord seek to destroy the confidence of the children of God in the Bible. They teach that only little bits of the Book are true. But what is the good of the Book to simple souls, if it is only reliable in parts? The apostle says, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." The Lord knows, and we can rest confidently on His knowledge. His eyes, those eyes of flame, search the heart and conscience. He seeks for real relationship with Himself. He alone knows those that are His in this congregation. I do not — you do not. But our great assurance in this day of shallow profession is our personal connection with the Lord Who knows us, and will eventually, own us publicly as His. But there is another inscription upon the foundation, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ (the Lord) depart from iniquity." Apart from our own will and desire, we may become physically infected with some contaminating, destructive disease if we come in contact with it. It fastens itself upon us, and we are laid upon a sick bed. Similarly, we are in danger from the evil around us. We are to beware of its pernicious effect. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." The House of Disorder

Then the apostle takes up the figure of the great house. If we had time, we could look at the First Epistle to Timothy where Paul writes to the same man and tells him how to behave himself in the house of God, the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15). There he speaks of the true thing, but here it is something else, not the house of God. He calls it the "great house", because he cannot associate the name of God with a composite thing where evil is permitted to remain side by side with good. When the Lord Jesus Christ went into, the temple in Jerusalem, He heard the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, the rattle of coins on the money changers' table. He drove them all out and said, "They have made My Father's house a house of merchandise, a den of thieves", for they were cheating one another in the very courts of God's house, making it a convenience for their purpose. It was evil in the sight of the Lord; and here we find the church, the house of God, had become the "great house", having lost its character of holiness. In the great house, there are vessels of gold, and silver, and wood, and earth. Those of gold and silver are the vessels proper to the service of the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar took them away from the temple at Jerusalem and carried them to Babylon, and Belshazzar brought them out at his great banquet, when he and his lords praised their gods out of God's most holy vessels, which were consecrated for the use of the tabernacle and temple. That night God judged his profanity. Belshazzar was slain, and Babylon was taken. Here there are not only vessels of gold and silver for the exclusive use of the Master, but also vessels of wood and earth which ought not to be

there.

You may take a golden vessel and use it to dishonour. When Belshazzar used the sacred vessels at his idolatrous feast, they were put to a dishonourable use. Similarly in the great house, where the vessels represent persons, you may have a real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ doing something, perhaps happily though mistakenly, which dishonours the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord cannot approve of this service, because it is associated with evil. The golden vessel contains a libation to the gods. The good servant engaged in an unholy service is a vessel to dishonour, not to honour.

Purging Oneself to be Serviceable The apostle says there are vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. Need I dwell upon this verse; does it not speak for itself to each of us? My Master is good, and kind, and gracious and loving, and He died for me; and now I want to serve Him; but if I would serve Him I must be a vessel sanctified and serviceable. How can I be prepared for every good work? If I purge myself from those vessels which are to dishonour, then I shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s Use.

I cannot come to Him in His service as if nothing mattered as to, my personal conduct. I cannot go to Him, associated with something or somebody which I know to be wrong in His eyes. We often use this text as if it only applied to ourselves personally and individually; exhorting us to purge our service from everything selfish and impure. That is needful, but the passage goes much further than that. It is putting away not only what is defiling in myself, but also what comes from mixing with others. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use." In the twenty-second verse you get the moral features that are proper to the service of the Lord. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Here the association with pure hearts is enjoined. You remember the text in the tenth of Romans, "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him", and so He is. Whether we have pure hearts or not, He is rich into us. If we call upon Him in the day of trouble, He hears. Have you not sometimes felt when you are delivered out of some trouble, that although you had forgotten Him, when you called upon Him you got His answer very quickly? How good of Him! But when it is a question of service, of association, of rendering a testimony for His name in the "great house", you must look for those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, who have sanctified themselves, and you must follow righteousness, faith, love and peace with them. By so doing you will purge yourself from those vessels which are to dishonour; you will leave them behind and have no more to do with them. There have been times in the history of the church when this purging has been done to a considerable extent. For instance, when people came out from the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, leaving the carnal and idolatrous worship behind and standing for the word of God and for justification by faith, that was a purging from vessels to dishonour on a grand scale. But today the Lord is calling us to hear His word, to abide by His truth, to keep ourselves clean, and our association pure. And His call is the more urgent for this special reason, that the Lord is very quickly coming. Ecclesiastical profession has become so evil now; the children of God and the children of the world are so mixed up that surely the Lord will not endure it much longer. Surely He Himself will come, and take away His church out of this mass of corruption — take it to Himself. How long the Lord has waited for His

church! Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; all through these many centuries He has been patiently gathering out souls, one by one, for His assembly. He wants to complete that church and present it to Himself in glory.

If the Lord should come tonight and find you in public association with something contrary to His holy name, though the word of God has shown you that it is contrary to His truth, what excuse could you render to Him? Renounce such links with evil for His sake, because He calls for this sacrifice. Depend upon it, the Lord will approve and reward your faithfulness. Sometimes people refrain from such a step because, they say, "I have so much greater influence and power over others as I am and where I am; and I think I should lose this power for good if I give up my present connection." This specious plea will not excuse your disobedience to the Lord’s word. Your service must take the second place. Then the Lord will use you in the way He thinks best. To bring this about you must seek to be a vessel to His honour, "meet for the Master’s use."

Remember, no person ever yet gave up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ and regretted the sacrifice. The Lord, as has often been said, is no man’s debtor. When a surrender is made in obedience to His word, He makes ample compensation. And how pleasing such acts are to Him! You remember that the Lord was in the court of the temple on that day when the poor woman put her two mites into the treasury chest. Oh, how He loved to see that act of self-renunciation, and to look upon the woman as she gave all that she had! It was a refreshing draught to our Lord Jesus Christ to behold this work of grace in her soul. He was soon to go to the cross, selling all that He had to purchase the costly pearl, His church. She, too, gave all that she had, though only two mites.

Beloved friends, the Lord is looking upon us, seeking that we should exercise some self-denial for His name’s sake. In the midst of all the decay and disorder in the church, may we be desirous to respond to His love; and if there is anything contrary to His word and displeasing to Him in our personal ways or in our association, let us give it all up for His name’s sake!

Chapter 32

03.08. The Church and the Lord's Supper

The Church and the Lord’s Supper (Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 1 Corinthians 11:20-34)

These scriptures are no doubt familiar to us all, and we can I hardly hope to consider them in full detail this evening; but you may have observed that the verses read may be roughly divided into three parts:

Firstly, 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 speaks of the Lord’s supper as it concerns the church collectively looked at as the one body. I refer particularly to 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." In this passage, the church is viewed in its unity, and the celebration of the Lord’s supper is regarded as an act by the church in its collective capacity.

Secondly, in 1 Corinthians 11:20-26, the apostle is referring to the manner of eating the Lord’s supper, bringing out those tender and affecting features of the remembrance of the Lord which are so closely connected with a proper observance of the Lord’s supper. This is a passage of the greatest importance to us, seeing that it sets out the meaning, the spiritual import of this central institution of the church of God.

Thirdly, the concluding verses of the eleventh chapter (1 Corinthians 11:27-34) are a powerful exhortation with regard to the personal conduct of those who attend the observance of the Lord’s supper.

One Loaf, One Body In the tenth chapter then, the apostle presents the Lord’s supper with regard to this great fact that in it all the saints of God (because they are members of the one body of Christ) are represented when they gather together on such occasions. They meet as units of that great congregation on earth which forms the church of God and the body of Christ. There is one loaf; and the one loaf, while it speaks most truly of the Lord’s own body given for us, also speaks of that mystical body, the spiritual body, which He Himself has formed by the Holy Spirit, because of His death. We, being many, are one loaf: there is one loaf, there is one body. Symbolically, the saints are all together there — a most important consideration, particularly at this present juncture in the history of the church of God, when the saints, outwardly speaking, are divided into so many conflicting parties, all carrying on under different names. Nevertheless, week by week, as the saints of God gather together for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, the one loaf upon the table has this voice to all that are present, namely, that there is but one body. The Lord Jesus Christ died that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, and the unity of the church, formed and maintained by the Spirit of God, is expressed in a figurative way in the one loaf.

There was, no doubt, a special reason why in the tenth chapter the apostle presents the Lord’s supper in this way, and the reason was found in those whom he addressed. The saints of God at Corinth, and possibly at other places too, had forgotten the peculiar and unique nature of the

Lord’s supper. They forgot that it was something which linked them with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; it was His own appointment; and this appointment was made by Him after He had completed the observance of the paschal supper, of which He Himself was the Antitype. Then it was that, speaking to the eleven apostles, He desired of them that they should do this for a remembrance of Him. The Lord’s supper was thus instituted to be the memorial of Himself — their absent Lord and Master. The One Who had died would be remembered in the world by the continual observance of His wishes in respect of this supper. The Lord’s supper therefore stood out as an institution in complete contrast with the Jewish feasts which were instituted in Old Testament times; it superseded them; it differed from them in character altogether. Think of the occasion when it was founded. The Lord Jesus Christ was sitting at the table and the eleven were around Him. It was a simple ceremony, appealing to the heart’s affections. The Lord spoke tenderly, graciously, as a man speaks to his friends; and He spoke on the eve of the solemn moment when He would be betrayed into the hands of sinners for crucifixion. He said in effect: I am going away and you will see My face no more. Remember Me, not only in your hearts, not only with the sense that though absent I am with you alway, but do this for a public memorial of Me. Eat the bread and drink the wine for the specific purpose that here in the world there may be maintained an abiding remembrance that the Christ, the Son of the living God, laid down His life at Calvary’s cross.

Because of this special character, the observance of the Lord’s supper, in spite of its simplicity, outshone in glory and significance everything in the Old Testament procedure. The Old Testament feasts and ceremonies pointed forward to what was to be done. The Lord’s supper speaks of what has been done, and particularly of the One Who has done it at such infinite cost to Himself, and Who has presented to all the participants in that feast, the spoils of His victory over sin and death. The Lord did not hedge about His words in the upper room with thunders and lightnings, as when the terrible Voice came from Mount Sinai. The men who listened to Him did not tremble as they sat before Him. There was no fright within their hearts as He spoke; He appealed to their love. He set before them Himself as the One Who loved them and gave Himself up for them, and said, "Do this for a remembrance of Me."

Association with Idols

Now, this simple ceremony, while it had the special character of obedience to the word of the absent and beloved Lord, was exposed to the danger of being degraded to the level of other observances. The children of God might be inclined to connect with this simple ceremony some other ceremony, either some of the ancient Jewish ceremonies, or of the idolatrous ceremonies to which they were accustomed in their unconverted days. We find that this danger existed at Corinth, and there were those in that assembly who had fallen into the snare. Consequently, the apostle brings before them truth to correct this error. He shows that the Lord’s table is exclusive in the fullest sense of the word. The Lord’s supper is for the saints of God only; and it must have nothing unholy associated with it, nothing that appertained to idolatry. Fellowship with idols was destructive of the real character of this simple feast. For in this chapter the apostle shows that those who partook of idol feasts, or of sacrifices offered in the worship of idols, and who also took their part at the Lord’s table were associating in a public manner what was of Christ with what was of Satan, because behind every idol was the emissary of Satan; behind the idols were the demons who wrought upon the evil passions of those who worshipped them. The constant object of Satan

is to steal, to kill, to destroy, to do all possible damage and hurt to men. And he was doing this in Corinth, and throughout the Gentile world of that day, by leading men into the worship of idols. These unthinking Christians linked up the Lord’s table with the table of demons; they attended both; and the apostle speaks to them in words of serious warning. He bids them to flee from idolatry (ver. 14). He reminds them of the Israelites, who started out from Egypt, the house of their bondage, where idolatry was rife, who were all under the cloud, and who all passed through the sea. All were baptized unto Moses, and they all partook of the manna which came down from heaven, and they all drank of that Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But God was not well pleased with many of them, and they were overthrown in the wilderness because they linked themselves up with idols (vers. 1-11). They worshipped the great enemy of God and Christ in the person of the demons, who were behind the images to which they bowed down.

God is a jealous God. He will not have Himself associated with idolatry. "What communion hath light with darkness?" God is a holy God. He said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy"; and if every individual who is a follower of God and of Christ must be a holy person, how much more so the church of God! — particularly in view of its unique character, being welded together by the Holy Spirit to form one body on the earth. It must be maintained in holiness, all being separate to God from all evil. The Cup Mentioned First The apostle, as you will notice, in speaking here of the Lord’s supper, reverses the historical order of the observance. He mentions first the cup and then the loaf, while we know from the Gospels themselves that our Lord broke the bread first, and passed the vessel of wine to the disciples subsequently. But here Paul speaks first of the cup; he refers to the cup of blessing which they blessed. Why is this prominence given to the cup? Because, he said, "Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" and the blood of Christ speaks of the death of Christ. The death of Christ had a significance which would correct their error. The Lord Jesus Christ inhabited the body of His flesh from the first. In the body prepared for Him He walked and served from the day of His birth to the day of His death, but the wine in the cup symbolized His death, not His life. When blood is in the body it is the life, as we are told in the Old Testament (Leviticus 17:11), but when apart from the body, it is the evidence of death. And in the Lord’s supper the cup of blessing told of the death of Christ; and what did the death of Christ mean? It meant that there was this great gulf fixed between the world and Christ. In connection with his death the world in combination rose against the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jew and Gentile in an unrighteous alliance put to death the Lord of glory. It was outwardly the triumph of unholiness and wickedness, but the Lord Jesus, Who was crucified in weakness, was raised in glory. The cup of blessing sets forth the blood of Christ, which not only made atonement for sin, but is evidence of the guilt of the religious and idolatrous world in crucifying the Lord. How completely the death of Christ cuts us off from the world! And it is not for me, nor you, any more than it was for the Corinthians, to seek to undo what Christ has accomplished by His death. There must be purity and holiness in those that share that cup of blessing, and particularly in the way of their collective association. Oh, let us lay hold of this fact that, in the tenth of Corinthians, the saints of God are not looked at individually; here they are looked at as a whole, as an organization bound together in spiritual unity by the power of the Spirit of God; and as such they are to maintain pure and holy associations only. The One Loaf Broken

"The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Now Paul is speaking of the body of Christ in which our sins were borne on the cross, but in the seventeenth verse, he passes to the new scriptural signification of the term "body", that is, the body of which the Lord

Jesus Christ is the Head — "We being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Each believer has his personal interest in that loaf. When the loaf is undivided, it is the symbol of Christ's body for which He died — that new corporation formed in consequence of His death.

Adam fell into a deep sleep, and God built from a rib out of his side a woman, whom He presented to Adam as a helpmeet for him. And in like manner the helpmeet for Christ was formed after His death; the church did not spring out of the living body. There was no union with Christ in incarnation, but through His death this new body was formed. And we all are partakers of that one loaf, we each have our share there. We all taken together form one body, while each one is a part of the whole. The Danger of Degrading the Supper In the next chapter the apostle brings before the saints of God the true character of the Lord's supper; it is a sacred memorial of the Lord Himself. It may help us if we remember what the error was into which the Corinthians had fallen in their actual observance of the Lord's supper. It is corrected in these verses, and it is an error into which every one of us during the observance is liable to fall. At Corinth, many had degraded the Lord's supper to the level of a common meal. They regarded it very much in the same light as they did their ordinary practice of taking food together as a company. The solemn significance of what they were doing passed from their minds. They mechanically ate the bread, they mechanically drank the wine, as in their ordinary fashion. No wonder the apostle declared, "This is not to eat the Lord's supper." Why? Because they had left the Lord out of their thoughts; they had not before their minds the adorable Person of the One Who died. They looked upon the memorials as common bread and common wine, as articles of food. And in a literal sense it was but common bread and common wine. There was no material change in the bread or the wine, yet there was a real presence in their company, the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ made those elements, the bread and the wine, significant of the most tremendous event in the world's history — the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son.

Received from the Lord in Glory But the saints in Corinth had forgotten all this, as we too are in danger of doing. Accordingly, the apostle recounts simply the facts concerning the institution of the Lord's supper, recalling its solemn significance. And we gather from what the apostle says in this connection the immense importance to the church of this Supper and its observance. This may be learned from the fact that the apostle Paul, who was not present at its institution, did not receive the account of it from the other apostles, but direct from the Lord Himself in glory. He was the latest of the apostles, as it were, born out of due time; he did not see Christ after the flesh, but he saw the Lord from above (1 Cor. 15:8). And the Lord Himself gave him the details of his special apostleship; the mystery of the church was communicated to him by personal revelation.

Here we have the fact that the things that the other apostles witnessed in the upper room in Jerusalem, the apostle Paul received from the lips of the Lord in glory, showing us that the Lord in glory and the Lord in the upper room are the same Lord. He is the One Who died, and He is risen again, and what He said to those who were present with Him that night, "This do in remembrance of Me", He said again from the glory of God to this apostle. Now Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and it was perhaps for that very reason that the Lord spoke especially to him. Otherwise some might have said, "That supper was given to eleven Jews and it is for Jews and does not apply to us." But the apostle of the Gentiles was instructed by the Lord Himself about the institution of this supper, so that we, Gentiles, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot escape from our

responsibility in connection with the Lord’s supper.

If we are His, His word comes to us to be obeyed. If we have any interest in His death, we must have an interest in the commemoration of that death in this world in the appointed way. And I do beseech you, my readers, to consider what is your relationship to Him in this matter. It is not a question of merely participating in some ceremonial observance when it suits you. The great fact which ought to appeal to you is this, that the Lord personally is interested in receiving this tribute of the hearts’ affections of those that are His upon the earth; and it is His will that they should as often as possible be entwined about Himself afresh, as it were, in connection with the bread and wine partaken of as a memorial of Himself in His death. The Lord’s supper is not something surrounded by complicated and forbidding restrictions, in which we may only take part very rarely, as if it were an observance so solemn, so awe-inspiring, that we must not make it too common by becoming too familiar with it. There is nothing in the scriptures which supports such a view at all. The homely manner in which it was instituted shows us that the Lord graciously comes, down to where we are in our everyday circumstances, and He says to us as He said to them of old, "This do in remembrance of Me." But a man may seek to excuse his non-attendance by saying, "I can stay at home and I can remember the Lord there; I can read my Bible, this chapter and others, and I can remember Him just as well privately as in the assembly." But the Lord said to His disciples collectively, not individually, "This do in remembrance of Me." Therefore, the Lord’s will is only done when believers come together as members of the body of Christ; it must be done not in private but in communion with one another. It is a holy communion most certainly, for the Lord is present and the Holy Spirit is present when the saints of God are gathered together in assembly. No single person in his chamber, or walking along the streets or in the fields and woods, can remember the Lord in the sense our Lord desired it and ordained it.

Eating Without Understanding

"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread." The occasion was most solemn. It was the hour of man and of the power of darkness. Do we not remember that Judas on that night of betrayal took the sop from the Lord? Then the Lord said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly", and the man rose up and went out; and it was night — the night of betrayal. Judas was going out to betray the Lord Who knew all that was in his heart, though he did not realise that the Lord knew all about it. He betrayed the Lord, because he did not realise Whom he was betraying. He did not realise that it was the Son of God Who handed him that sop. Then Satan entered into him, and he went out on his errand. He was not present at the Lord’s supper, but the fact of his awful betrayal is mentioned here, bringing before us the affecting circumstance that a man, who had companied with the Lord and had seen so much of His doings, could have the heart to sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. But the fact is true, and the historical incident of the betrayal is named by the apostle in connection with his rebuke of the levity of the Corinthians. It showed that there was a man in the upper room that night who took a morsel during the passover supper from our blessed Lord in fulfilment of scripture, yet did not understand the nature of what he was doing nor the evil of the heart that conceived it. It is a solemn reminder that there is something within me and you, when we are at the Lord’s supper, which is capable even of betraying our Lord. Do you believe it? I do. It is there. The Lord knows it is there. If we know that it is there, if we recognize it, if, at the same time, we recognize that the One Who is present to receive the remembrance of our

heart, knew it when He invited us there, and moreover, that He died for us condemning sin in the flesh because it was so evil and nothing could improve it — then all is well, for the truth is in us. But if we deceive ourselves as to the real character of the "old man" and fail to perceive the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is present, the Lord’s supper will become of no value to us. To partake heedlessly of this solemn memorial is to rob our souls of the inimitable fragrance of His presence, and to expose ourselves to the rod of His displeasure because of our thoughtlessness at such a time.

Simple but Solemn

There is no more blessed occupation on the face of the earth for the children of God than the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in His death; the oftener we do it, the sweeter it becomes to those who understand its significance, while if we forget, we do so at our peril spiritually. None can with impunity trifle with the remembrance of the Lord in His death. When we really think Who He is, and that He should suffer, and should die, and that we are remembering that great event, what a spirit of solemnity becomes us! How is it that we are sometimes so trivial during the few moments that we are together and think so little of the solemn act that we are remembering? The apostle states the circumstances of the institution of the supper very concisely, and very definitely: "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is (broken) for you: this do in remembrance of Me." The Lord first took the bread; this was to be for a symbol: He was holding the bread in His hand. He said, "This is My body." What the Lord held was not really His own body; the loaf was not something to be worshipped and adored, then or afterwards; but it was chosen to be the emblem of His body, the thing for our sight and our lips. But if our hearts are not right at the supper, there will be no fulfilment of the Lord’s word in our looking upon the bread, nor in our partaking of it; we shall miss its memorial character. The Lord said to them there, "This is My body, which is broken [or given] for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of ME." Observe the repetition of the injunction, "This do in remembrance of Me", in connection with the cup as well as the loaf. The Lord Himself is speaking, consequently He seeks the remembrance of Himself — "of Me." It is of the utmost importance to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of this institution. He is there! It is He that makes the supper a reality by His presence; it is He that gives value and worth to our memorial service. The Memorial of Himself The Lord Jesus Christ is not now an object of sight. His presence is to us a matter of faith, but we are apt to forget this at times. And when we come together for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus we are liable to allow objects of sight and hearing to come between us and the fact that we are remembering the Lord Jesus Himself, and that His known presence should engage every heart. This subtle danger has to be watched against. We have to be careful lest our thoughts wander from Him. We know how treacherous our hearts are. Some persons, I suppose, may have more difficult minds to manage than others; some people’s minds move very rapidly and are easily influenced by outward events — by whatever happens inside the door or even outside it. All these things Satan can use to rob us of some, if not of all, the few moments we are together for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus. The object of Satan is to interpose something between our hearts and the Lord Jesus Christ which will cause us to forget Him. If he can make me forget Him for twenty per cent. of the time, he has gained the victory so

far, and I have been so far defeated.

Every remembrance of our Lord Jesus brings responsibility of this nature. The object of Satan is to take from our Lord, for as great a period as possible, the engagement of my heart and my affections with Himself. He may accomplish this purpose in this way. He may introduce obstacles which in my lethargy I fail to surmount, so that I am ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes late; instead of being present before or at the appointed time, I arrive ten minutes after it. The Lord has lost ten minutes of my heart’s service, and I have lost what I can never regain. Should we be late if the king of this country had promised to be here at a definite hour? Who would slight His gracious Majesty by being absent when he came? And the Lord Jesus Christ is faithful to what He promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst." Let us always be present when the appointed hour comes. The Real Presence

Beloved friends, do not let Satan get any victory over us in this matter of punctual attendance. The Lord is there at His supper, and the object of this ceremony is His remembrance. We remember the Lord Jesus as the One Who died; He is present with us as the living Lord of glory, and this is the "real presence" in connection with the supper of the Lord about which we hear a great deal sometimes. The phrase is often misunderstood and misconstrued. The "real presence" is the living presence of Christ in this way, as He promised to be in the midst of His own company. He is there as the One Who is glorified at God’s right hand; and He is there to lead our hearts back to remember Him when He was betrayed and crucified. And what better guide than Himself could we have? Who knows the sorrows of Gethsemane like that One Who sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? We dare not think about such solemn scenes unless the Lord lead our hearts, direct our memories, and control our imaginations. But He will do this if we are depending upon Him; He will lead us into a true and worthy remembrance of Him, when they put a crown of thorns upon His head, when they spit upon His blessed face, when they mocked Him and bowed the knee before Him, and when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Who can awaken within us holy and true thoughts concerning Him like the Lord Himself? There is no one else. But it is a real feature of this Supper that the Lord is alive, and that it is He Who shows us His hands and His side, silent but eloquent witnesses of His death, so that we bow before Him and say, "My Lord and my God." He wrings the worship out of our hearts by His compelling presence and His power, and the well of water within us bubbles up unto everlasting life.

Until His Coming

Paul says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come"; and so the Lord’s supper is made a great link between two outstanding events in the chain of divine history. The central event in God’s history of the world is the death of Christ upon the cross. The Old Testament looked forward to it. He Who should come as its Saviour would die. The next great event is the Lord’s second coming. And the observance of the Lord’s supper connects the two comings, standing between the past event and the future event. Therefore we are to show or announce the Lord’s death until He comes. This passage is an answer to those persons who seek to minimise the importance of the act, and say, "Of course, the Lord’s supper was a right and proper thing for Christians to observe in the early days, because so many of them actually saw the Lord. There were many in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Galilee who had heard His words and had witnessed His miracles. The Lord and His work were fresh in their memories, and

therefore it was natural for them to keep this feast in the first century, but now the Lord’s death is to us long ago; it is an event long past; we do not need to keep the Lord’s supper now; we have got beyond the range of this early ceremony." But the answer in a few words is in this sentence; we are to proclaim "the Lord’s death till He come." The Lord has not yet come, so those who neglect the supper are without legitimate excuse.

Neglecting the Supper

I hope no believer present is searching for a legitimate excuse not to remember the Lord in His death at all, or to remember Him only once a quarter, or once a year. The Lord does not lay upon us any rigid commandment, enforcing obedience under the penalty of losing our eternal life. He does not even tell us that we are to do it every week. We are shown in the word of God that the early disciples broke bread at Troas every week, while earlier still, in Jerusalem after Pentecost they did so every day, while they were specially together there. What are we to gather from the absence of any prescribed interval, and from the record of actual practice? That we are to show the Lord’s death as often as we can. If we stay away when we might be present, there is One Whom we ought to satisfy that there is a real, a reasonable excuse for our absence. The Lord knows when any are unavoidably prevented from being present. And He knows those who deny themselves comforts and conveniences in order to attend the breaking of bread. Why are they so anxious to go? Because of what the Lord said on the night of His betrayal; because obedience is good to their souls; because they want to bless the Lord in the cup of blessing; because they cannot forget His precious word, "This do in remembrance of Me." They so love the Lord that they say, "As long as we can crawl we’ll go. Everything else must be given up, so that we may be faithful to Him in showing forth His death." And in this manner the Lord’s supper ought to appeal to us all, When the Lord comes, and receives us to Himself, we shall not then need bread and wine as memorials of Him. We shall see Him before us in His glory. His majesty will overpower us perhaps, as it did John in Patmos. We shall have glorified bodies that the sight may not altogether overpower us, but I think we may be dazzled when we first look upon our Lord. He will be so wonderful in our eyes. We shall remember that He is the same One as He Who died. When we see the glories thick upon the Lamb, we shall remember He is the Lamb Who was slain. The experience will not be by faith, as it is now; it will be by sight. Then we shall not need the aid of a commemoration supper. But even then it will be a season of fellowship, for in that place of glory our adorable Lord will Himself come forth and serve us, and give us to taste of the cup of His own joys. The cup of blessing that we shall share in that bright place above will be our share in the glory of Christ, which He will grant us in the day of His coming kingdom. But now, while our Lord is rejected, and while the world says, "We do not care for Jesus the crucified; He is nothing to us; we hate Him; we despise Him," there are a few on earth who say, "We love Him; we adore Him; and we eat the bread and we drink the cup in continual remembrance of His death." And by eating the Lord’s supper, the church proclaims to the world that the Lord Jesus died. The doors should not be shut "for fear of the Jews", but open so that the world can come in and observe what takes place. If any ask what it means, the answer is that these men and these women are celebrating the death of the Lord of glory. The world crucified Him, but God has exalted Him; and the supper of the Lord is a witness in this present evil age to this fact.

Improper Behaviour In the latter verses of our chapter we have the apostle correcting the absence of that simplicity and reality which should characterise attendance at the Lord’s supper. Some at

Corinth appear to have been partaking of the bread and the cup of the Lord unworthily.

Paul had already said that they were not to treat it as their own supper (1 Corinthians 11:21). If a man were sitting at his own table, he might sit how he pleases. He might sit in his shirt-sleeves if he wished. In the privacy of his own family his behaviour might not matter. But if he had a number of people there, or if he were summoned to a royal banquet, he would be very careful of his appearance and manners. The difference would arise because of the character of the meal of which he partook and that of the persons who were present. Now at Corinth the saints had treated the Lord's supper with levity, behaving as if it were their own supper. They had confounded it with the love-feast of the day, that is, in our modern tongue, the tea meeting or conference meal, when the saints of God come together out of common interest in the things of Christ. The latter occasion is right and proper, but to mix it up with the Lord's supper is altogether an error and destructive of the purpose of gathering together. The consequence at Corinth of forgetting the Lord's presence was that they went to the Lord's supper with their hearts and their consciences unjudged. By that I mean that the light of God was not allowed to shine upon what their hearts were naturally. They were looking at things from their own point of view, and social distinctions and personal prejudices were allowed to prevail among those present. Fleshly appetites were indulged, and they degraded the Lord's supper to the level of a common meal. The apostle writes, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper."

We see therefore the contrast drawn in the tenth chapter between the supper of the Lord and an idol supper, and in the eleventh chapter between the Lord's supper and a man's own supper. We are certainly all in danger of falling into this latter error of making it our own supper. If we make it our own supper, we consider first our own inclinations, and study our own convenience. There are, alas, too many persons who seem to think that they can come to the Lord's supper just how and when they like. They rise very late on the Lord's day, and after a hurried breakfast arrive five minutes or more late. Possibly there may be a legitimate excuse on some special occasion, but if lateness is a habit, what does the practice show? It shows that such a person regards the Lord's supper from an human standpoint altogether, and sets aside its claims in favour of his own ease and self-indulgence. It shows a deadened conscience toward God too, for he would not allow himself the same liberty in the matter of his secular employment. He forgets that the Lord is there; he ignores the sanctity of His presence; he does not judge himself and his ways. The consequence of. such laxity is that those who, forgetting the Lord's presence, eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord, do so unworthily.

Eating Unworthily Be pleased to mark this word of the apostle very carefully, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." He condemns the way in which the supper was observed. Some persons have misunderstood this text, and have needlessly stayed away from the Lord's supper for years. They say, "I am not worthy to go; it says in the Bible I ought not to go." But they have not read the passage very carefully, because the verse does not speak about unworthy persons eating, but about the unworthy way in which some persons ate. Where is the man or woman who is worthy to be at the Lord's table? None have a right to be there; we have no suitable qualifications in ourselves to be there; and we go only because the Lord has bidden us to go. He knows what we are, far better than we do ourselves; and yet He has invited us to "do this in

remembrance" of Him. The Lord says that we can go, but we must do so with propriety; we must remember in Whose presence we are; we must remember how to behave ourselves in the church of the living God. Because what are we doing when we "do this"? We are ostensibly remembering that the body of Christ was given for us, that the blood of Christ was shed for us; and can we think lightly about such holy matters as these? The body of Christ which was riven with the cruel spear, the blood of Christ which flowed from His side, can we treat these solemn subjects with levity? The apostle declares that the person who eats unworthily is guilty in respect of the body and blood of the Lord. The verse is very solemn. Will you therefore say, "I am afraid to go; I cannot trust myself to go lest I eat unworthily? Sometimes it is such a long time before anybody speaks or says anything, and my thoughts wander. I think of many things — of what happened last week, what is likely to happen tomorrow, about somebody who is there and somebody who is not there, and about all sorts of things. It is only when somebody gives out a hymn or speaks that my thoughts are recalled."

Well, why is it your attention is so divided and distracted? It is because your eyes of faith are not looking upon the Lord; you are not thinking of Him. If you were thinking of Him you would not be thinking of somebody or something else. If you find yourselves guilty of so doing, say to the Lord there, and then, "Pardon me, O Lord, for doing this; fill my heart; draw my wandering thoughts to Thee." Never mind about somebody else taking an audible part; you must not depend upon somebody else; you are there to remember the Lord. You are with others; this is blessedly true, but your individuality is not lost. Let your own thoughts be upon Him. Let some scripture, perhaps, come to your mind, and think about that. Feel that the Lord is speaking to you in His own living, written words, and this consciousness will fill your heart with a wonderful sweetness. Do you not think that you can keep your mind occupied with Him for sixty minutes or so? Are there those that sleep at the Lord’s table like those that slept in the garden of Gethsemane? Oh, shame that it should be so. You are to that extent guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and you have no excuse. Think of Him. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Proving Oneself The apostle shows how to avoid this sin of partaking unworthily. He says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." This does not mean that when I am sitting at the Lord’s table I am to look into my own heart, which would be a poor, wretched occupation. I can do that at home. A person ought to examine or prove himself. It means judging himself as to what he has done and what he is capable of doing. We may be so self-satisfied as to forget how liable we are to err, apart from God’s grace. Then, in our self-complacency, we may come to the Lord’s supper forgetting that during that short while it is possible to dishonour the Lord, to rob ourselves, to be guilty with regard to the body and blood of the Lord. But if, in the privacy of our own chamber at home, we reflect that without the Lord’s grace and power and the exercise of His priestly ministry on our behalf in the sanctuary we shall not be able to worship Him as we ought, we shall then be examining or proving ourselves as the apostle enjoins. We thus remind ourselves that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing.

"Let a man examine himself", and not stay away, but come and eat of this bread and drink of this cup. There is no excuse permissible according to scripture for a person absenting himself from the Lord’s table. Though in himself he is unworthy, he is, unless under assembly discipline, invited to come. If he comes confessing his dependence upon the Lord even that he may remember Him properly in His death, if he is honest enough with himself to get down upon his knees and say,

"Oh, Lord, Thou knowest how foolish and ignorant a person I am, and although I have known Thy love so many years and although I have learned much in those years about Thy sufferings and death, I am apt to fail even when eating Thy supper: I dare not trust my own heart, lest when I am present with all Thy saints, I may by my frailty or my folly hinder the working of Thy Spirit. Lord, concentrate my heart upon Thee, shut out everything that is unworthy, enable me to remember Thee as Thou wouldst have it" — do you think the Lord will not take care of one who takes this lowly place before Him?

Trusting the Lord, Distrusting Self Do not rush into the presence of the Lord at His table as if you were hurrying to catch a train; you are going into the most holy place. Go there circumspectly, having judged yourself before the Lord, having filled your heart with the sense of His great sacrifice, of His dying love for you, of His abiding love that desires the remembrance of such a foolish heart as you may have. Go in such a spirit, and you will find what a difference it makes to your enjoyment of the meeting. Do not be occupied with the fact that so-and-so is not there, and that somebody else is there whom you wish was not present. All such untimely thoughts are of Satan. The great enemy is the spoiler of the meetings for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus. You must not forget that Satan is a foe and never a friend, and that you cannot trust him. He may even come and sit by your side as an angel of light sometimes, and talk what seems heavenly language to you. But you ought not to be ignorant of his devices, and you may be sure it is the deceiver if he shuts out the Lord from your spirit. Have nothing at any time to do with Satan, but at all times have everything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. May God give us to have yet sweeter and more precious communion with the Lord and with His saints at His table. There is no place on earth like it, not only because the Lord Jesus Christ is there, but the saints are there in the character of the assembly of God and the church of Christ. There may be only a few in number, but the Lord has guaranteed His presence to two or three gathered to His name, and He works amongst these two or three in a way which is unique. There is nothing comparable to it on the earth. It is just a little foretaste of that great assembly of which we have a picture in Revelation 5:1-14, when every heart in unison with the mighty throng will swell with praise and adoration to Him in the midst, Who redeemed them with His precious blood. We shall all be there, every one of us; we shall not then be latecomers; we shall be fully prepared for that holy service; we shall not take part in that worship-meeting unworthily; but all and each will be to the glory and praise of the Lord.

Now the Lord’s supper provides us with oases in the desert; it gives us, even when we are passing through the wilderness, foretastes of that grand and glorious time. And it is incumbent upon all of us to see to it that we do not miss any of the joys that may be ours in the breaking of bread.

Chapter 33

04.00. Fellowship, Worship and Worldliness

Fellowship, Worship and Worldliness — A Selection of Six Memorial Hall Addresses Address 1. — Fellowship — its Breach and its Recovery Address 2. — The Spiritual Value of Divine Omniscience Address 3. — The Lord’s Words to the Last Three Churches in Asia Address 4. — The Altar of Worship Address 5. — The Sin of Achan Address 6. — The World against Christ and the Christian

Chapter 34

04.01. Fellowship — its Breach and its Recovery

Fellowship — its Breach and its Recovery An Address on 1 John 1:5-10, 1 John 2:1-2.

W. J. Hocking.

Memorial Hall, London, 23rd January, 1937. In these verses, we have the great subject of the fellowship of the family of God, coupled with the possibility of sin, which would be a breach in that fellowship. They also show the provision God has made for the maintenance of this fellowship, and for its restoration, if and when we fail. The term, fellowship, is often used in respect of ordinary affairs. Men of the world enter into fellowship with one another. With them the word has a meaning from their own point of view, and it signifies a common interest they have in certain things "under the sun." In Scripture, however, we must remember words employed by the Holy Spirit have their own special meaning. This is evident, seeing they are used from God’s, not man’s, point of view. Sacred and heavenly matters are the theme. Men in their fellowship leave out God entirely. They consider only how they and their fellows are affected. The result cannot be the same as if God were brought in, and allowed to be the chief Factor and governing Director in that fellowship. But we are now concerned with divine, not human fellowships, with that which is of God, and which could not be without God. How is the word used in Scripture? There even the term is not always used in precisely the same sense.

Thus, we learn that among Christian believers it is associated with the church of God. The fellowship of the members of the body of Christ is symbolized by the "one loaf," prescribed for use at the Lord’s Supper. This fellowship, peculiar to the whole assembly of God, is taught in the New Testament, along with many other privileges and responsibilities attaching to that truth. But in the passage read from John we have, not the fellowship of the church of God as such, but the fellowship of the family of God. More than this, it will be seen that as well as the fellowship of the family one with another, there is fellowship with God — with the Father and the Son. Is not this marvellous? I challenge you to produce a more important subject in the Christian life than that of our fellowship with God. Fellowship with one another, apart from fellowship with the Father and the Son, would be but a poor human affair, doomed to disappointment and failure spiritually. But fellowship first of all with the Father and the Son makes fellowship with one another easy and spontaneous, pleasant and joyous.

What is meant by fellowship? Two persons or more in fellowship have common thoughts, common feelings, common purposes, common desires. Briefly, those in fellowship are "at one" in all concerning them that matters. Now think of our fellowship with God from this standpoint. I, a poor worm, a creature of the dust, a mote in life’s sunbeam, I am by grace enabled to have common thoughts, feelings, and objects with the Father and the Son. Is not this incredible, apart from Scripture?

Without that revelation, it would be a blasphemous assumption. But, through the Lord Jesus Christ, this privilege of fellowship is guaranteed to all those belonging to the family of God. As

believers in the Son of God, it is their own incomparable portion to be made privy to the thoughts, purposes and mind of God, so far as these are made known in the Scriptures. This fellowship has not always been known to men. In the first four verses of this Epistle, the apostle John shows its origin. This is connected with the appearance of the Word of life. We read nothing of it in the Old Testament. Why? Because the Son of God had not been here. In New Testament days, the Son came into the world to manifest the Father, to make Him known to men. In former days, God's power and might and majesty and judgment as Jehovah might have been seen. But now One in the bosom of the Father came from heaven. He came into the world that men might see in Him what the Father is, and thus He provided the basis of fellowship. This manifestation by the Son was simple, yet profound. The woman at Sychar's well might not only look at Him as the Christ, but by faith see the Father in Him. The very child taken up in His arms would feel a warmth in that embrace which was not of earth, a love it had never known in its mother's bosom. This was the love of God, the love of the Father in the Person of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Weary men and women, heavy-laden with the toils and infirmities of this life, found the choicest emotions of heaven brought to them in the compassions of the Saviour. Even publicans and sinners, believing on the Son, proved the welcome of a Father's love. This fellowship is a great reality in Christian experience. It is not contained in a learned disquisition on some learned subject beyond the reach of most. The apostle says it is based on something seen, heard, looked upon and handled. It depends upon an Object outside of ourselves, upon the Son of the Father's love. When the blessed Lord Jesus was here, the love of God was manifested in Him. All that was in the Father's heart shone in the face of the "Man of Sorrows." And the twelve apostles who walked with Him in Judea and Galilee saw this glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten with the Father.

Thus the apostles had fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The Father spoke to them of His Son, Who was derided by the world and rejected by His own people. He testified, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." And the apostles heard that testimony from heaven, that certificate of divine purity, holiness, godliness and love inseparable from Eternal Sonship. The Father bore witness to the Son; and what did the Son not do for the unfolding of the Father! He did not speak a word other than the words the Father gave Him to speak. He did not perform a single deed or miracle except in direct obedience to the word from on high. Morning by morning He opened His ear to hear as the learned. He Who from the beginning knew all things was pleased to wait for His Father's word. He and His Father were one. This fellowship between the Father and the Son, John saw and heard, and others too. This knowledge was not acquired after hard study by men of big brains. No. Hardworking men and women could contemplate it in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary learned it at the feet of Jesus.

You may say, "They did not understand this fellowship of love between the Father and the Son." Don't talk about understanding it! We do not even understand the love one has for another. We recognize the love, but cannot explain it. No one can describe exactly the love a man has for his wife, or the wife for the husband. The mutual love is a positive fact, and it exists unquestionably between the persons. So we believe the Gospel saying, "The Father loveth the Son." This fellowship of eternal life and eternal love the apostles learned in Christ Himself, and from them it comes to us. So John says, "This is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you." This message, he says, not commandment, is for you, dear children of God. We enjoyed it as we walked with the Lord. Now He has gone on high to the Father, you can have fellowship with

the Son there, just as we did.

"But," you say, "there is nothing about fellowship in this verse. The next words are, 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.'" Scripture never makes a mistake. There is a reason for these words about light. Before the Spirit of God speaks about fellowship, He points out the nature of the One with Whom we have fellowship God is light.

Observe that it is not said, "The Father is light," but "God is light." Light conveys a different thought from love. Love is the centre and circumference of fellowship, and wherever the love of God is, His light is also. There can be no fellowship apart from the light, for the reason that while God is love, He is also light. And God will not allow one side of His nature to exceed or to eclipse the other.

God is perfect as light as well as love. His love is infinite, and so is His light. And His children must know this. In our own families, children must know their parents thoroughly before they can have a perfect fellowship of understanding. If an important part of the parents' lives is kept dark from the children, there can be no real fellowship. It is a one-sided affair, and the children even misunderstand their parents. So then, to have fellowship with God, we must know that He is light. Light is the purest element in existence. Its intense purity cannot be defiled. A ray of light shining upon a stagnant pool of corruption remains perfectly pure. It cannot be contaminated in any way. So the light of God resists all that is corruptible and evil, arising out of moral darkness. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." God is not one part light and one part dark; He is light, absolutely. This light shines upon everyone who comes into the vicinity of God, revealing the truth. This was seen in the Garden of Eden. Jehovah came there after our first parents had sinned. The serpent had deceived Eve, and Adam had transgressed. Both retreated behind the trees to hide themselves from the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden.

They were afraid, for they were naked. The coming light of the divine presence made them fear its revelation of their disobedience. They sought to put some screen between themselves and the light of God. Fear made them conceal themselves. Fellowship with God was broken by their sin.

If in my heart I fear a person, I cannot have fellowship with him. If I am afraid and tremble in his presence, how can our two hearts be knit together as one? Fear, distrust and suspicion destroy true fellowship.

It is a solemn truth, therefore, that God is light. Ask yourself the question, Is there anything hidden in my heart which makes me tremble at the thought of the presence of God? Am I ready without fear to expose the innermost part of my being to the light of God? Can I go into my closet and cry to God to search me and try me and see if there is any wicked way in me?

Unless your soul has been laid bare to the light of God, you cannot know true fellowship with Him. You may deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive God. He is light. He is holy. He is true. He knows every secret of your soul, and He wants you to look at them with Him in the shadowless light of His presence.

Let us not skip this truth. It is of the utmost practical importance to every child of God, old or young. Young believer, if you have not had everything out before God in the revealing light of His presence, do so immediately. If you have anything covered up in your heart and life, secreted from everyone, never yet exposed to the light of divine holiness, remember God knows it. That defiling

thing stands as a dark cloud, between you and God, Who is light. And yet God is love. Although He knows you are guilty, having done things which others do not suspect you either could or would do, yet He loves you in spite of what you are. Have you proved this? Can you say, Though I were the very chiefest of sinners, still God loves me, and He gave His Son for me? Is this the knowledge of your heart? You may talk in hackneyed phrases about John 3:16, without knowing its force. You can speak so often about it that its real beauty has gone for you. To feel the love of God when thoroughly searched by the light of God is another experience altogether. But this is God's introduction to the character of the fellowship He has provided for all His children — fellowship in the light.

There is true fellowship, and false. The apostle exposes the kind which is untrue, a mere profession of the lips. It is something which we "say." What we say we utter that others may hear. Our thoughts are crystallized into words. Saying is a step farther than thinking. But even in what we think, there may be something reserved, if the light has not shone into the heart, which is deceitful above all things.

Hence, in what we "say," we may deceive others. We may tell them fifty per cent. of the truth, or seventy, or even ninety per cent., still leaving something concealed, which is of darkness, and not of the light. We are walking in darkness.

John says plainly, "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We cannot know this fellowship unless we know the truth about Him and about ourselves. The truth of the gospel is that the Son came down among living men and told those who believed, "The Father Himself loveth you." I am among you as the Good Shepherd. You were lost, and I sought you. I found you, I brought you unto Myself. You know how much I love you. Well, the Father also loves you. I do not love you more than He does. In His ministry, the Son always showed a jealousy for the Father's honour and the Father's love. This was His constant theme. If He spoke of Himself, it was only to reveal to men thereby the love of the Father's heart. And what did the Father reveal to babes? When He looked down upon the Son, He declared, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Listen to Him, and you will never go wrong. He is the Truth.

Thus, we have in the Gospels the revelation of perfect unity, concord, fellowship between the Father and the Son. And the person who has received this revelation has learned the first principles of divine fellowship. He has learned it in the Father's thoughts of the Son and in the Son's thoughts of the Father. And He knows it because he is walking in the light. Those walking in darkness are outside the sphere where the light of God's presence continually shines. They are unconverted, and even they can say, "We have fellowship with God." But then they lie and do not the truth. The apostle warns us against taking words upon our lips which are contradicted by our walk. If we are walking not in darkness but in the light, we shall not have a lie upon our lips, for the light reveals the truth, and condemns the false. John's words are always very searching. He often touches our heart in his Epistles, because he is so plain and downright. He writes in sharp alternatives. There is no via media with him. You are in either the light or the darkness; you are speaking or doing the truth, or you are telling, or acting a lie. The Spirit of God uses such a keen saying about fellowship as this to set persons in their right category. What a grand discovery it would be if everyone in this audience found himself in the blessed family of God! and if no one

here is saying I have fellowship with God, and yet is working the works of darkness, walking in the ways of the prince of darkness, living secretly in what is evil! Such persons are living a lie, and the truth of God is not in their hearts nor in their ways. Fellowship with God demands holiness and purity of walk. The standard is high.

Now in 1 John 1:7, we turn from walking in darkness to walking in the light. What the apostle says is applicable to all the family of God. Let it be clearly understood that the phrase, "walking in the light," is descriptive of every person who is a Christian, who belongs to the Lord. It applies to him at all times, from the moment of his believing to the moment of his exit from this world. He is one who walks in the light.

You may say, I do not like that way of putting it. For myself, I cannot think I am always walking in the light. I really believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I believe God is my Father, and that He gave His Son for me. I believe my sins are forgiven. But I find in my heart what ought not to be there. Sometimes I find myself doing and saying what is wrong, for which I am sorry. Besides I feel that I do not love the Lord as I ought. Surely, I must be walking in darkness. No. It is because you are in the light that you feel guilty of these things.

Every believer is one who walks in the light as God is in the light. In the presence of God he first confessed his sins and received forgiveness, and from that moment he abides in the light. The light is the sphere of his movement as he walks, and he never walks outside that sphere.

Let me try to illustrate the truth. Supposing an Israelite was able to walk from the entrance to the Tabernacle straight through the courts to the tent, lift the first veil, and then the second, and so come into the Holy of Holies where the Ark was with the Shekinah-glory abiding upon the mercy-seat. He is now in the light of Jehovah’s dwelling-place, His habitation in the wilderness. The cubical room which he has reached is filled with light. Once he was away in the camp, he is now in the abode of light.

Now, in the light of His presence is where God puts every believer. If you own that you are not walking according to that holy light, but walking very much like a man of the world, who is in darkness, then on your own confession, you are not walking according to the light. You have fallen below the standard God has given you. You have failed to this extent. And it is just when you fail in your walk that your consciousness of fellowship is lost. I think you must know this as a matter of experience. You sometimes enjoy communion with God. You like to think of Him and His love. You like to think of the Lord Jesus, of His beauty and excellency, of His wonderful works. Your heart glows as you read the Scriptures; every word seems a mouth speaking to you great things about Christ. But another time, the Scriptures seem very dull. You find nothing interesting there. Daily reading seems a hard task. What has happened? A cloud is between your heart and the sunbeams of light and love. In your heart and life something has happened to cause this change. You are the naughty child. You have failed, but the Father remains faithful. His light still shines, but you have put up a barrier. Your fellowship with God is broken.

Fellowship or communion (the two words are interchangeable) imply joy and peace in the presence of God. Prayer is a form of communion, or, to speak more correctly, it should be so. In prayer, we come into His presence to ask for grace to help in time of need, while in fellowship, there may be just delight in the Father and the Son, without bringing any petitions. The two may he

distinguished, therefore. The little child we have heard about illustrates this kind of fellowship. She came into the father's study where, with his desk littered with papers, he was knitting his brow over some problem. Looking up, he said, "Well, Mary, what do you want?" "I don't want anything, father." "Then why did you come in here?" "Only to be with you, father." So the child sat still, and said nothing. She just wanted to be with her dear father. This was communion, the contented union of two loving natures. She had been there before for a penny to buy a toy. But now she only wanted to sit with her father. She loved him, and delighted to be with him. Is it your practice and mine to sit down quietly in the peace of God's presence? Do you esteem such fellowship more than other experience? To be rapt with wonder and worship in the presence of the Father and the Son — this is communion. And this unique privilege belongs to those who walk in the light, as God is in the light. Moreover, in the exercise of this fellowship with Him, we have "fellowship with one another."

Then we are shown the righteous ground of this association in the light: "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Let me remind you of the analogy already mentioned of the one in the most holy place in the Tabernacle, where the light shone from the Shekinah-glory enthroned upon the mercy-seat. There we see a smear of blood upon the mercy-seat, and before it there are seven marks of blood, the witness of propitiation, the righteous ground upon which Jehovah could speak favourably to the people among whom He dwelled.

Here in John's Epistle those who walk in the light as He is in the light are shown the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, which cleanseth from all sin. The efficacy of this precious blood maintains the children of God in their standing in the light, even when they sin. The light reveals to them the value of that blood.

If we sin, Satan says, "You cannot now go to God." The devil lies to destroy the believer's peace and joy. If you have sinned, go straight to God and confess that sin. As you bend in penitence before Him, you will see His light shining upon the cleansing blood of Christ. That blood avails to purify you from sin whatever its form may be.

Next, another wrong profession is condemned, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." This is the height of self-deception. We assume, not only that we have not sinned, but that we are without sin, without even the disposition to anything displeasing to God. We fancy we have arrived at that stage of Christian life when sin is altogether absent. This species of pseudo-holiness is a foolish and evil delusion. If we claim it, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The root of sin remains within the child of God. You can never get rid of it. It is like some of the troublesome weeds in the garden which have spreading roots beneath the soil. You pull up what is above the ground, but the roots remain behind and grow again. If the tiniest fibre of root is there, it will grow. Whatever we do, we cannot eradicate sin from our hearts. We may think we have done so because we cannot see any root, but we deceive ourselves, the Scripture says. But if we cannot get rid of sin, what are we to do when the evil nature becomes active, and we commit sins? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful" — I like that word "faithful." God is faithful. He is not like man. It is man's way to relinquish his side of the bargain when the other fails on his side. But what does God do when we fail? He will never let us go. He shows the remedy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful . . . to forgive us our sins." If then you have sinned, own it without any qualification or excuse. Say, "I have sinned. I have done this evil in Thy sight." He will forgive and cleanse you.

But observe He is just or righteous as well as faithful in forgiving and cleansing. The reason that He is just in doing so appears in the second chapter. Jesus Christ the righteous is in the presence of the Father. Not only is the blood of Jesus Christ in the light, but Jesus Christ Himself, Who shed that blood is with the Father. Hence when we confess our sins we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. The cleansing is needful for fellowship. If I have unrighteousness upon me, how can I have fellowship with Jesus Christ the righteous? What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? If it is broken, how can it be restored? He is faithful and just to cleanse me from all unrighteousness by His word. The water of the word removes unrighteousness from me, and then I am able to be in communion once more.

Now, the opening of 1 John 2:1-29 shows the object of this passage — that we should not sin and so lose our fellowship. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." There is, therefore, the possibility, the danger of our sinning. Do you believe this danger exists? Or do you cherish the delusion that it does not apply to you?

Let us be plain. Supposing the Lord leaves you here until tomorrow, the Lord’s day, is there any danger of your sinning between now and then? Is it possible that some sin may interfere with your communion? The apostle believed there was, and he wrote these things that you might not sin. But if you should sin in spite of the warning, what happens? Is there any personal help for you? "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." There is comfort in this. I can imagine a man being doubtful of himself because of his liability to be overtaken in a fault. He is afraid of himself because he has a quick temper or the like. He wants someone to keep him from falling, and to restore him should he fall. We have our Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He does this, and much more.

What is an Advocate? A popular idea is that it is the One Who turns the anger of the Father into love and favour towards us. Mary does wrong at home, and the father is inclined to be angry with her. She fears his anger, and she says to her brother, "Thomas, father loves you; go to him for me, will you? Speak for me, so that he may be no longer cross with me" Mary looks upon Thomas as her advocate, when father is angry with her. But this idea does not represent the truth in this case at all. Jesus Christ, the righteous, does not turn the Father from anger to love when we sin. The Father is righteous too. He will not pass over sin in His children, but judges in His own house. And it is not implied here that the Advocate changes the Father’s heart towards His erring children. The words "with the Father," are not rightly understood. The phrase, "an Advocate with the Father," indicates where the Advocate is. Jesus Christ is no longer in the world; He is with the Father. In John 13:1-38 we read of Jesus being about to depart out of this world unto the Father. He was about to ascend out of this world unto His Father and our Father. He also promised to send another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, to be with us here in the world during His absence. And now in the Epistle we learn that, while He is no longer with us here, He is with the Father as our Advocate.

What then does this Advocate do? An Advocate or Paraclete is One Who undertakes the management of all my affairs, even if I sin. He has my cause at heart, and has undertaken to see to everything Himself. This seems to be the simplest and most comprehensive meaning of this beautiful word.

There with the Father, the Lord Jesus in His love is supervising our concerns. This He is doing before we sin that we may not sin. And when we sin, He does not wait until we confess our sins, but uses His word by the Holy Spirit so that we may confess and be cleansed in order that our communion may be resumed. The eye of Jesus Christ the righteous was upon Simon Peter before his fall. When Satan was after the self-confident disciple, the Lord prayed for him. Before Peter went into the high priest's palace, before he had defiled his lips with oaths and curses, the Advocate on earth had interceded on his behalf. Peter was preserved from such an end as Judas had by the advocacy of his Master. This Advocate is now with the Father, and we have Him there for us.

We need this Advocate in many ways and at all times, but if anyone sin, he needs the Advocate in the character of Jesus Christ the righteous. Sin brings the believer under the charge of unrighteousness from which he must be cleansed to enjoy fellowship (1 John 1:9). Who undertakes this? Jesus Christ the righteous. It is He Who is made unto us righteousness, and in Him we have a standing of righteousness before God, unvarying and invariable.

If we do not live up to this standing, we fall below it into unrighteousness. All who have been given this standing in the light may not live according to it, but he does not forfeit his standing. A prince of royal blood may do something derogatory to his high rank, but he is still a prince by birth. So the child of God that sins loses his communion but not his relationship by birth. The Advocate undertakes his conviction, confession, forgiveness and cleansing by His faithful and loving service. The eyes of the soldiers and the servant-maid did not affect Peter's conscience, but the eye of the Lord broke down his hardihood. He fled into the night, naked and ashamed, a repentant soul, suffused with the tears of self-accusation. The Lord did not leave Simon Peter until he was converted and restored. Then Jesus Christ the righteous committed to his care His sheep and His tender lambs — a combined task for which none is suited unless the Advocate has exercised His skill upon them. This Advocate is now with the Father, there to deal in wisdom and mercy with us, even if anyone sin. His present service is to maintain us in that fellowship which is heavenly in nature. It is this fellowship which fits us to be witnesses for Him while we are here. When we are in communion, He moulds and fashions us to His liking. When we are out of communion He labours for our restoration. If anyone sin, this Advocate is not baffled and beaten. He makes the best out of a very bad job. "O Lord, Thy love's unbounded!" But a further truth is stated about the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Though there is the amplest provision for our sins, as we have already seen, we are not to underestimate the grievousness and the guilt of our sins. Sin is always a terrible act, and serious to the utmost degree in the case of a child of God, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and possessed of every heavenly privilege.

Hence we are shown that the One Who is our Advocate is the One Who suffered and died for our sins, Who is the propitiation for our sins. He made propitiation by His atoning sacrifice, and in Himself He is the propitiation, comprehending in His Person all that the work of propitiation signifies and accomplishes. Who knows more about our sins than our Advocate? He bore our sins, and offered to God what for ever satisfied His holy nature with regard to them. He carried out every iota of this work; to Him belongs all the glory of propitiation; and He is our Advocate, even when we sin.

Jesus Christ was the propitiation for our sins on the cross; He is the propitiation on the throne in glory; He is the propitiation with the Father. He is the same yesterday and today and for ever. And He is our Advocate! In the power of His person and the efficacy of His work upon the cross, He is the Manager of our affairs, our Intercessor when we sin, our Upholder in all that appertains to our fellowship with the Father and the Son, as well as with one another.

I wish we could realize what a blessed Advocate we have, and what is the fullness of His power and His love. We so often forget Him and His unseen ministry on our behalf. How often we make Him serve with our sins! We are so fractious, so wayward, so wilful, so obstinate; yet He never leaves nor forsakes us. His object is that we should have unbroken communion with Himself, with His Father, and with one another.

Fellowship is one of the greatest blessings of the Christian life. Our Advocate is with the Father to enable us to share in it. He wants us while we are here on the earth to share His own fellowship with the Father in heaven. The sunshine of the heaven of heavens is enjoyed on earth by this means. The Father and Son are united in purpose — in everything, and it is the will of God that we, being of His family, should be admitted to share the secret harmony of divine fellowship. May God grant that we may be led of Him into a deeper comprehension of this communion, and of all that it should mean to us amid the occupations and distractions of daily life. This fellowship is not for fathers and young men only, but also for babes in Christ, since they too know the Father. And if they know the Father, they must rejoice in Him. What else could they do except rejoice in such a Father? In Luke 15:1-32, we have an illustration of our fellowship with the Father. There was no fellowship between the lost sheep and the shepherd and his friends, and certainly not between the lost coin and the woman and her neighbours. The coin and the sheep did not enter into the joy of finding. But when the lost son comes home, we see him at the table with his father. There, too, we see the ring, the best robe, and the fatted calf. The father and son begin to be merry together. The son says, "Was there ever such a father?" The father says, "This is my boy. He was in the far country, now he is home. He was lost, and is found. He was dead and is alive again." This is the fellowship with the Father to which the Son brings us.

Out in the field, there is the elder son, who is outside the fellowship of the home. He is a son as much as the prodigal. His place is at the table also. But there is no spirit of fellowship in him. His heart is hard and cold. He will not own his penitent brother. "This thy son," he says, not "my brother." There is no desire for fellowship with his father even; "thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." He prefers his friends to his father. The elder son was an utter stranger to the sort of fellowship at the table between the father and the son. The parable, however, gives a little picture of the sort of fellowship that is ours — fellowship with the Father and the Son and with one another. Even if sin interrupts this fellowship, we have an Advocate with the Father. And He is the propitiation for our sins. And if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Chapter 35

04.02. The Spiritual Value of Divine Omniscience

The Spiritual Value of Divine Omniscience An Address on Psalms 139:1-7; Psalms 24:1; Job 11:3-5; Job 42:1-6; John 21:15-17.

W. J. Hocking.

Memorial Hall, London, 23rd March, 1935. A subject of scripture, very important in the spiritual life, is the constant necessity of recognising God's omniscience of oneself, personally, individually. This must be of the utmost importance to a life of godliness because it runs throughout the whole of scripture. We may say that the personal knowledge and continual scrutiny of the individual soul by God Himself is a truth inseparable from both his redemption and his communion, and from a walk consistent therewith.

I do not speak now of our own knowledge of God. This is of practical importance also, but I am speaking of God's knowledge of us, of the perfect way in which God investigates the hidden depths within us, laying bare our secret motives, and of our own consciousness that God's eyes in heaven are ever looking upon us, and not only upon our outward appearance, which man also sees, but upon the heart which man does not see. The man whose heart is thus kept right before the heart-knowing God is the man who receives the maximum of blessing from God, and who communicates to others the maximum share of his own blessing. The soul and the heart and the mind must be right before our Omniscient God, and this audience will surely agree with me that this attitude is necessary for a walk of faith and godliness. How is it with you, my brother, my sister? We all need to know how we each stand before God in the light of His knowledge of us, and how we each stand in our relationships to one another in the assembly of God. Nothing we do can be acceptable to God but that which is first approved of Him, and therefore it is of the utmost importance that each one of us should open our hearts before God to be searched by Him; and this beautiful and well-known Psalm brings before us the subject of divine examination. The psalmist begins with the confession that Jehovah had already searched him and known him, acknowledging what He had found in him. Jehovah had seen David in the wilderness, facing the lion and the bear with the confidence of a young man, yet relying, not on his own strength and skill, but on Jehovah Who was above him and with him. David went boldly forward to meet the lion and the bear in the full knowledge of what God was to him, a shepherd lad in the wilderness. Then, in that lonely place, Jehovah had searched him and had known him and had found him a stripling who could trust his God with all his heart in the face of great odds when there was no human arm to help nor eye to see.

Afterwards, we may trace the son of Jesse on the mountains of Judea, fleeing from Saul, his enemy; we may trace him in dark passages of his life, as when he feigned to be a madman in the Philistine city; and we may also see him in circumstances not to be mentioned in an audience like this; but in this Psalm David lifts up his eyes, and says, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me . . . and art acquainted with all my ways." He is consciously before the Lord, rejoicing in His full knowledge of himself and his ways, and making it the theme of his song to Jehovah. To

David, this intimate inspection was a matter for praise to God, the omniscient and the omnipotent One, Who had searched him and known him. Can we say what David did? We learned, perhaps in the Sunday School, the fact that God has a perfect knowledge of us and of all things, but it is another thing to be alone with God in the darkness of the night, and to be conscious that the eyes of God are upon us, that even then He is searching the heart, dividing asunder the soul and the spirit. There in the stillness of the night-shadows the all-seeing eyes of God are felt to be upon us, and we are consciously unveiled before Him. The lesson that at such times we learn under God's eyes of our own unworthiness and weakness becomes a secret means of power and peace and joy. Nothing in the world is like learning that our feebleness on earth is yoked with almighty power on high. We know then that God's infinite heart of love is ever round about us, and that if no one but God be for us, we can stand with the fullest courage and confidence in the face of the whole world arrayed against us. The knowledge of God's omniscience brings us to this full assurance of faith. It is a great gain to the spiritual life to have this experience for oneself, and it is the burden upon my spirit tonight to tell you that the power needed by every one of us, the youngest and the oldest, in order to walk with God lies in being absolutely sure of our communion by the Holy Spirit with God the Father and with His Son; for we walk in the light even as God is in the light, where there is no darkness at all, and where everything is exposed to that light. The psalmist stated the fact: Jehovah has "searched me and known me." It was to him an event of the past. We know that God does search and know persons everywhere without their asking Him, and He does so unawares to themselves. The thoughtless multitudes that throng our streets are all known to God, individually, just as fully as every believer is known by Him. But the believer knows that God knows him, and this makes all the difference. The child of God welcomes such a knowledge; he knows it is good for him. Therefore, David, at the conclusion of this psalm, desired further heart-searching by God; he had learned the value of it for his soul.

David's earnest outcry to God is "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." The fact is, of course, that God knows all about me at all times, whether I am sleeping or waking, whether I am conscious that His eyes are upon me or not. But when I apprehend the truth of God's omniscience in the way that the psalmist had done, I shall, like him, desire to walk in the consciousness of it continually. My heart will cry out to God that day by day I may ever walk with the light of His face shining upon me. Then I shall have the happy assurance, in all I do and say, that God Himself is before me and round about me every step of the way I am taking.

Beloved friends, do not let us imagine that the practical importance of this truth of our psalm is now passed away through the lapse of time since David's day, or is even diminished in value. It is still essential for the personal piety of the individual soul. Each one of us must abide in touch with God. Thousands of my brethren on the right hand and the left may fall or fail, but my own personal link with Him remains intact. The blessing of divine inspection and communion is mine, and exists between my own soul and God to be realised by faith.

If the individual soul is right before God in this respect, the effect for good will be found in the assembly also. Assemblies are made up of units, and so far as the units are walking in truth and grace before the Lord, and are guided by the Holy Spirit, so far there will be corporate worship in spirit to God and acceptable personal service to His name. The theme of this psalm runs throughout scripture, and is distinctly set forth in many places by both example and precept. In the Old Testament, for instance, we read of one man who was selected to be a notable example for all

time of God’s searching ways; Job was that man. God’s searchlight was directed upon him in a special manner for the good of his soul. A whole book of the Bible is occupied with the dealings of God with this one man. Job’s history shows the particular interest God takes in one man’s piety.

Simon Peter in the New Testament is a case analogous to Job. His history is not, like that of Job, confined to a single book of the Bible; but if you trace the details given in the Gospels, you will observe the personal dealings of God in our Lord Jesus Christ with that man, bringing out most unexpectedly what was in his heart, so that now even the world may know what was concealed there. As with Job, so with Peter, they both stand in the scripture naked and opened before our eyes. They were men of like passions with ourselves, and God has put them there as examples, so that we may know, not from sad and bitter experiences of our own, but by the recorded experiences of Job and Peter what is in my heart and in yours. Thus we may learn the truth about our nature without enduring a similar course of discipline.

Each of the two narratives has its distinct features. The history of the searching of Job’s heart ended with his confession to the Lord, "Behold, I am vile." But the history of Simon Peter revealed not only the sin that was lurking in his heart, unknown and undreamt of by him as by Job, but in the end the deep love that Peter had for the Lord was also revealed under the Master’s own questioning.

Let us now look very briefly at one or two points in the histories of these two men. They will teach us what are the definite heart-searchings that we also need for the profit of our souls.

First of all, let me make a remark which may prevent any misunderstanding. Heart-searching may take place in two ways. I may search my own heart, or God may search my heart. If I search my heart myself, I shall end in spiritual failure, and may even become a proud Pharisee. A man who searches his own heart in a light of his own kindling is exposed to the subtle deceitfulness of his own heart. Your own heart is deceitful above all things. It will deceive you, and cause you to believe everything that is good about yourself, even the very reverse of what is true. Some persons profess to search their own hearts, and are bold enough to say in public, "I have not sinned for (perhaps) three months." They have been searching their hearts for sin without knowing what sin is according to scripture. The light of God is not shining upon their hearts, and they do not know the truth about themselves. The Lord said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). But let God have to do with my heart, and then I shall learn the real truth about it. Then, too, great blessing will be mine. This was the experience of Job. The patriarch Job did not belong to the chosen people of Israel, the seed of Abraham. He lived, however, in those early days, and was contemporary probably with Isaac. Though he was not in the line of faith and promise marked out in scripture, he was a man who had the knowledge of the true God and who lived a perfect and upright life among men. He sought to do what was right and to please God in the doing of it, and in this task he was successful to an exceptional degree.

Job’s character and ways were so exceptional that they were the subject of conversation in heaven. God looked down upon him with approval. Satan also saw the patriarch, and sought to destroy him. The more pious a man is, the more determined the enemy is to overcome him if he possibly can. And Satan’s enmity is shown in a striking manner in Job’s case.

You know Job’s remarkable history. The beginning of it shows that he was overwhelmed with sorrow; all his possessions were torn from him in a day, with the loss of his family also. Yet Satan had to own, and all the angels of heaven, that Job in the face of this flood of calamities exhibited a patience that was marvellous. It is written, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." And the patience of Job has passed into a proverb for all time. Who else would have stood, like Job, unmoved, staunch, amid such fiery trials? The most cherished objects of his heart were snatched from him, he himself became a mass of festering sores, but Job meekly bowed his head before God. The wife of his bosom had no more to say to him than to tell him to curse God and die. He had not a friend in the world. for what sort of friends were those three who came in their critical fashion, sitting before him in silence until they accused him of secret sin?

What an experience this was for a perfect and upright man to endure! What was the object of it? Why did all these troubles come upon him? By means of them God was about to teach Job a most difficult lesson. The very fact of his habitual sincerity and integrity was a stumbling-block in the way of his obtaining real happiness and the deepest of joys before God.

Whilst it was true of Job that he was prepared to trust God though He should slay him, and that he clung to God as the One in Whom he must continue to trust, still Job could not see why all these afflictions had come upon him. According to his own conscience, he had done nothing wrong. With all his heart, he had sought to please God and to do what was right and good. Now all his possessions were suddenly taken from him, even his health; why had such severe trials come? As Job considered his ways, he saw nothing wrong to confess before God, nothing to account for his misery. But God did not leave the patriarch in this state of self-satisfaction. God had purposes of further blessing for him, even while he was on earth. But before this blessing was bestowed, Job must learn something about himself; what was this? An evil disposition was secreted within him, beyond his own gaze as yet, but open to the eyes of God.

What in his heart was so abominable in the eyes of God? Job was trusting in his own integrity. He said, "I mean to hold fast to my own righteousness, and cling to what I have done and what I have been. Who can find fault with me? I have been a father to the poor, the widows have been made to rejoice by me, and the orphans bless me. I have continually done good to the needy all around me. Now all I have is taken away, and these great troubles have come upon me. Yet I have done nothing wrong." This was pride in self. But the omniscient God looked into Job’s heart, and He saw there also a secret disbelief in Himself. His heart, though outwardly patient, was really doubting the wisdom and goodness of God in sending these sorrowful things upon him. The patriarch, therefore, was inwardly cherishing false thoughts about God and about himself also. He must learn how wrong he was.

Job said, as many persons in the world today are saying, Why is it that so many terrible things are allowed to happen to some men? Why is there so much suffering and misery? and why is it that the best people are often the greatest sufferers? Not merely the "down-and-outs," who have squandered their very lives in riot and pleasure, but good persons, pious people, servants of God, are full of afflictions. Many do not know even a day’s freedom from anxiety and pain. The question arises continually now as then, How and why is there in the world so much grief and sorrow? Such thoughts breed discontent and distrust. Some here tonight perhaps find such misgivings creeping into their souls like poisonous serpents. They think within themselves, Surely God does not know

the burdens of the human heart. If God is love, why are the righteous afflicted, and why do the innocent suffer? Such questionings spring from a secret distrust of God. By the searchings of His discipline, God showed that such doubts were dwelling deep in Job's heart. Eventually God Himself spoke to the afflicted man, not in the soft, tender tones we hear in the New Testament (the time had not yet come for that), but Jehovah spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, not once only, but twice, and with a thunderous voice, telling of His power, His majesty, His providence. He spread out before Job the evidences of His sovereign wisdom and might in creation. Had Job been thinking that God did not consider his welfare? What little creature was there, or what mighty one, the leviathan of the water-floods, or the sparrow on the housetop, for which Jehovah did not care? He cared for every creature of His in its need; and would not God care for him, the highest creature on earth, who had also a life beyond the grave? By the words of the Almighty to him, Job's conscience was struck as with a thunderbolt, and he was convicted of his sin. In self-accusation, he said, "I have distrusted Him, the omnipotent One, the omniscient One. I have been arguing with God Who searches the heart, and filling my mouth with idle words in His presence." Job felt his sinfulness in justifying himself and discrediting God. He confessed his sin, saying, "Behold, I am vile." He repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). Of what did he repent? His outward failure, and his inward distrust of God.

I am anxious to make clear this error into which Job fell, because it is easy for us also to slip into unworthy doubts of God. Mistrust creeps unsuspectedly into our hearts, our homes, and our assemblies. Oftentimes we are apt to think that we are impoverished like Job, that spiritually we have lost everything, that the very foundation of truth is undermined, and that the whole edifice of the Christian profession is about to collapse.

It may be that some man whom we have trusted and believed in with all our heart as a pillar in the church has disappointed us and disappeared. We feel, perhaps, that in spiritual matters we cannot trust anyone any more. Our hearts are like Job's full of feelings of doubt and distrust of God. Let each one ask, Is this not true in my case?

There are around us many examples and forms of the prevailing spirit of doubt. Some have their doubts about this Book of God, the Bible. Take a case. Young men in the City offices come out into the streets to look at the bookshops. Many of the books displayed are attractive in appearance and cheap in price. But they are written to suggest that the Bible is but a myth, full of old-world legends, containing nothing really trustworthy in fact, nor of real ethical value to modern man. By this means, doubt is instilled into the minds of the readers, until they, too, lose all trust in their Bible and their Saviour. In this manner doubt in divine things is being rapidly propagated in our day.

It is a serious feature of the times that the element of distrust in the wisdom and love of God is everywhere around us, in the very air, so to speak. All are more or less in danger of contamination, but the person who is wrapped up in himself and his own mental and moral attainments, who thinks himself somebody and fully qualified to judge for himself, even in divine things, is perhaps in the greatest danger of imbibing this scepticism that destroys the soul. Such a one may be just out of the higher schools, come out of his examinations with flying colours, and is at the top of the educational tree. When he is directed to the Bible, he will not receive it as the word of God. He learned the scriptures in his nursery days, but now he refuses it as the voice of God to his soul. He is a victim of the rationalistic unbelief that poisons the faith for so many today, and pride of intellect

has caused his destruction. As we profess belief in God, for us to doubt God is a "vile" thing. Such suspicion is prompted by the devil, tempting our old nature. Doubt of the love and wisdom of God in Christ was the very sin that crucified the Lord of glory. Let us beware of it. I may be outwardly a pious man, loving God, and may be a means of blessing to others; but if there is in my soul a secret want of confidence in God, I have something within me which Job described as filthy and vile.

If then I am in fault like Job, am I prepared like Job to confess my fault? To allow doubt and misgiving to creep into our hearts is an affront to God Who has saved us, sending His Son to die for us. God did not end His dealings with Job until he confessed this sin. But when he acknowledged his sin, he was blessed sevenfold more than he had been at the beginning.

Here then is the highroad to increased blessing from God — confession of sin, of my own sin, not of someone’s else’s. Are you prepared to do this, owning your sin to God, not to others sinful like yourself? With all frankness, Job said, "Behold I am vile. I take my place in dust and ashes before Thee, not because of my boils, but because of my sin." God had searched and tried Job, and shown him the wicked way that was in him.

Let us now look at Simon Peter for a little. Peter was in a different atmosphere from Job, because then God had come down to earth in the person of His Son, and in the pages of the Gospels is seen that pathway upon which and from which heavenly light shone with never a shadow. Wherever Jesus went on earth, there was the presence of God. And when in that presence, a man confessed himself to be what he truly was. The Light of the world revealed to him his right place. When a man had wrong thoughts about the Lord Jesus, he was never right about himself; but if he was right about Christ, he was right, or soon became right, about everything else as well as himself. We shall see this exemplified in the history of Simon.

I daresay you have been a little puzzled at that incident in the life of Simon Peter, when the Lord, in His preaching beside the lake of Galilee, asked him for the loan of his boat. Peter pushed out upon the lake, and the Lord, sitting in the boat, taught the people as they were gathered on the seashore. Then, at the close, the Lord said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" (Luke 5:1-11).

Peter had been listening to the gospel of the coming kingdom, to the Lord’s sweet and wonderful words about heavenly love and about God’s purposes of blessing for the earth, and about the fulfilment of the prophecies of old. He felt that Jesus knew all about these doctrines, but now He spoke about fishes, a draught of fishes! Who was Jesus to speak about catching fish! In his surprise and incredulity, he said, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing! nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." Now the Lord had said to him, "Let down your nets, all the nets you have." But Peter was dubious, and thought, "We shall not catch many, if any, fish; I will let down one net only; that will be sufficient." Accordingly, he let down the net, and a great multitude of fishes were enclosed, so many that it broke. They drew the fish into the boat, which soon was filling fast, and sinking. But Simon forgot the abundance of the fish. Fisherman though he was, he did not first attend to the catch. His uppermost thought was how he had wronged the Lord, and doubted His love and wisdom. It had never crossed his mind that the Lord all the time knew that he had spent the previous night in useless labour. He had never thought that the Lord knew where the fish were and was able to bring them to the side of the boat. In his heart

he had doubted and misjudged Him.

Simon fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This confession corresponds with the penitent language of Job, "Behold, I am vile." Simon found himself in the presence of the Lord Jesus exercising His authority over the creatures of the sea, and felt in his heart that he had not put his trust in Him. He had not believed that the Lord could do such a marvellous thing. Have you ever found yourself doubting the Lord as Peter did? Yet the Lord has been good to you, and He has not answered to your need, according to your little faith, but according to the great love of His own heart. He has made His bounty to overflow towards you. Then, when you saw His goodness to you, did you not feel how sinful you were to have doubted such a loving Master? This experience was the beginning of Simon Peter's training; not exactly the very beginning, because Simon had met the Lord before, when the Lord told him he should have a new name, Cephas or Peter, a stone. But it was the beginning of the moral training, which fitted him to be, as the Lord said, a fisher of men. God sends saved sinners to preach the gospel to unsaved sinners. This is His way. Simon Peter who learned something of the iniquity of his own heart was the one who afterwards magnified the grace of the Saviour before his guilty nation.

Simon Peter had to learn another important lesson on the sea, but first of all the Lord taught him that He, the Lord, could command even the denizens of the deep, and they obeyed His will. How needful that every servant should know the power of his Master!

Another time, when a storm was raging, the disciples were at their wits' end, for everything seemed to be against them. Then they saw Jesus walking on the angry waves, and coming to them. At once Peter's heart went out to the Lord he loved. He thought, "The Lord is coming over the waves to us in our distress. I would like to be the first to meet Him. I cannot wait for Him to come up to the boat. I must go to Him."

Then Peter said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." His fellow-disciples may have thought him mad, but Peter trusted himself fully to the One Who had before proved Himself to be the Lord of the sea. The Lord replied, "Come," and Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water, just as if he was on dry land (Matthew 14:25-33). For those in the boat this work of faith was a great testimony to the power of the Lord Jesus as Simon Peter walked to Him on the stormy sea. He walked well and firmly so long as his eye was on the Lord. But when he saw the waves furious and threatening, he began to sink; and faith lost its victory. So the divine searchlight shone once more into Simon Peter's heart to show him what was hidden there. Something there was wrong, or he would not have sunk. In the presence of the Lord on the waves he learned that his faith, strong as it was to bring him out of the boat to walk on the sea, was not strong enough to keep him there, contrary to nature.

Peter was taught that he must believe not only at first, but all the time. True faith is continuous, not intermittent. Simon Peter left the boat and walked on the water well, like his Master, so long as his eye of faith was on Christ, but when he began to consider the waves he began to sink. Is not our experience similar to that of Peter? We, too, have left our brethren, and gone out upon the sea to the Lord Jesus. The sea has no landmarks, no defined territories; it is not firm and settled and organised by man, which is the character of land. The pathway on the sea is no place for a man in the flesh. Only faith can walk where everything yields to the feet of the natural man.

Some of us have left human organisations and gone out at the bidding of the Lord, to that place and condition of things amongst God’s people where simple faith triumphs, but where doubt discourages and destroys. So long as faith looks continuously upon the Lord Jesus Christ, all things are right and happy, and the name of the Lord is magnified in us. We are walking upon the waves, and the Lord is with us.

If, however, we turn from Him and look around upon empty seats, and think of the persons who are not there and the sort of persons who are there, we then feel we are beginning to sink. Yet we know that when we are in our little room with perhaps only two or three gathered there, so long as the eye is upon the Lord Who is in the midst, all is well. The waves are forgotten. The minutes fly while we are looking to the Lord, but directly we begin to think of the poor condition of things, of the persons present and absent, of what they have done or are likely to do, then we begin to sink beneath the waves.

We are, beloved, in the last times, and the searchlight of God’s truth is upon us. Christendom is in the wildest confusion, and everything is tossing like the turbulent sea. If we look at the waves, we shall sink beneath them. Let us not look around or within, but at the Lord. Has He left us? He will never leave nor forsake the two or three gathered unto His name. Is He not sufficient to save us to the uttermost? Is not the presence of the Lord always sufficient? So long as we realise this, His power lifts us above our circumstances, personal and ecclesiastical, and His love warms our hearts and renews our faith. We feel neither sadness nor loneliness, but are filled with joy because of His presence as He takes us by the hand. So Simon Peter had another lesson upon the sea. He learned the weakness of his own heart in trusting the Lord, and the strength of the Lord’s right hand to save him when he began to sink.

Let us now refer to another incident in the life of Simon Peter. When the Lord asked the disciples what the people were saying about Him, they answered, "People vary; some say one thing, some another." Then He said, "What do you say?" Peter speaks, and, out of the fullness of a heart charged with love and devotion towards his Lord, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He was taught of God, for the Lord answered him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-23).

Simon’s confession was a remarkable one, was it not? What an honour put upon a Galilean fisherman to receive from the Father in heaven a special revelation of the glory of the Messiah! Then the Lord said further, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." So the Lord Jesus also gave him a revelation. In a very short time Simon Peter had received two very special revelations. He was thus exceptionally distinguished and honoured among the disciples of the Lord.

Peter was taught, not only that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, but that Christ would build for Himself a church. But then the Lord began to unfold what was needful to bring about this building. First of all, He must go up to Jerusalem, be maltreated at the hands of man, and be slain. At once Peter remonstrated, and in the foolishness of his flesh said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." For this utterance, the Lord rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan . . . for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter was looking in a human fashion upon the sufferings at Jerusalem of which the Lord

spoke. He was regarding them purely from the standpoint of a kind man who would wish to screen his friend from the malice and injury of his fellows. Could we unmoved hear that a dear one of ours would be trodden down by injustice, and abused and crucified? We should naturally, involuntarily, shrink from the very thought. But there was another side, which Peter forgot or overlooked. The coming sufferings of Christ were the will of God. It was fore-ordained that Messiah's sufferings should precede His glories. Knowing this, the Lord Himself said, "Not My will, but Thine be done." But when Peter heard of the sufferings at Jerusalem, he said to the Lord in effect, "No, Thou shalt not go. I do not want Thee to go." He thus became a stumbling-block in the way of the Lord to the cross, in His pathway of obedience unto death. Simon Peter's saying was after the flesh, and not of faith. Faith always submits to the will of God, but Peter spoke without faith, and showed the unreliability and failure of man in the flesh, even though such marvellous revelations had been made to him.

Next, we find that the Lord takes Peter up into the high mountain, and shows him His own glory and the glory of the kingdom. There in the midnight the wonderful glory and majesty of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ shone out before the three apostles. Was it worth while that such a grand display should be given to these three, Peter, James, and John? We perhaps might not have thought it was, but God did, and the Lord Jesus did. And blundering Peter was one of the three privileged witnesses who went up and saw that great sight. It was but a few days after Satan had spoken through him to cast a stumbling-block in the way of the Lord. But the Lord Himself had searched His servant, and had known what was in him. Down beneath the rags of self, behind the hasty tongue, was a disciple's heart of love, beating true to his Master. In the bottom of his soul, Peter was prepared to lay down his life for his Master, and this the Lord knew. He had searched Simon Peter, discerning in him what was of the new nature, and what was of the old. The Lord then took his erring apostle up into the mount with the two sons of Zebedee, but there the old Simon again spoke out. Moses and Elias were there with the transfigured Christ, and, not knowing truly what he said, Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here . . . let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Here was failure again. A great revelation concerning Jesus had been entrusted to him, but this was a complete breakdown in the application of it. Peter had been taught by the Father that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, yet he puts Him on a level with Moses the mediator and Elijah the restorer of the law.

Though the chosen recipient of the Father's favour, Simon Peter degrades His beloved Son. Such is man! Such is your heart and mine. Such is the heart of some about us today who, in a flagrant way, bring down God's Son to the level of a leader and prophet, regarding Him as One entrusted with the official dignity of Mediator. When Peter sought to class the Eternal Son with the servants of God, the voice from the Shekinah of God vindicated the personal glory of Him Who was about to suffer, and afterwards to enter into the glories of His kingdom. The Father declared, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."

If time permitted, it would be interesting and helpful to consider Peter's denials of his Master as another episode in the discipline of his soul. But we must pass on to the concluding scene of which we read in John 21:1-25, though the public restoration of Peter recounted there is closely connected with those denials.

It is very sad to reflect that Peter, that great and honoured apostle, should have so demeaned himself on that eventful night, but the Spirit of God does not leave us ignorant of the cause of his sinful failure. The Lord told Peter what he would do that very night — that he would deny Him three times — and He bade him, in view of this coming temptation, to watch and pray. The Lord led Peter to the prayer-meeting, to the place where prayer was wont to be made. And there in Gethsemane the Lord bade him watch with Him in the spirit of prayer, while He Himself went and prayed alone.

Alas, Peter did not watch nor pray. "Peter, do you not remember how the Lord spoke of the immediate fulfilment of the prophecy, 'I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered'? Do you not remember how He spoke to you of His imminent suffering, and of your denial of Him"? But Peter did not remember, did not watch, did not pray; he went to sleep. The Lord came and roused him from his untimely sleep, telling him emphatically to watch and pray lest he entered into temptation. Then his Master went away to pray again, while Peter fell asleep again. And so the third time. Thus the apostle came into the place of his temptation, not having by prayer sought that grace and strength which his oft-proved infirmities so sorely needed. Do you wonder Peter failed in his confession of Christ? And if you track your own failures to their source, you will find the same underlying cause. As you remember your faults, ask yourself in the presence of the Lord, Why did I do this or that last week or this week or today? Was it not because you did not pray, nor seek strength from on high? When challenged as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, Peter kept on denying his Master, adding oaths and curses in sinful confirmation, until he remembered the prophetic word of the Lord about himself. Then the word of truth pierced his conscience, and he went out and wept bitterly. He was sinking lower and lower as a confessor of Christ, but the Lord looked at him, and he broke down. His self-confidence was dissolved into tearful penitence.

What a contrast Peter by his unfaithfulness was to his Master! The Lord Jesus was the perfect One, and when He was challenged, "Art Thou the Son of God?" He answered, "Thou sayest it." The Lord alone is the Faithful and True Witness. Peter, in the same building, was with oaths and curses denying the Master Whom he loved, and Whom he had blessedly confessed as the Christ, the Son of the living God!

Alas, such shameful words may, apart from prayer and help from God, fall from our lips also. Peter was searched most surely in the high priest's palace, and the wicked way in him was brought to the surface. He had rushed unprepared into that place, the assembly of the wicked, where the light of God was shining upon His own Son, and revealing Him as the spotless and unblemished Son of man. Peter came into that light, and it revealed what a reptile he was! It is a terrible thing for any man to lie; but how much worse for a disciple of Him Who is the Truth to keep on lying! and to seek to bolster up his lies with oaths and curses, taking the name of God in vain!

But, oh, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! Who can measure it, or tell it? When He rose from the dead, He came early in the day to Peter; "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The interview was private, and over it the curtain of silence is thrown. What the Lord said to Peter then, and what Peter said to the Lord, we do not know. But if Peter wept bitterly that night when he went out of the palace after seeing the look of the Lord, what did he do at the feet of the risen Lord Who had come to him in tender love to restore his soul? But here, in John, is the account of

Simon’s public restoration, the point from which the Lord sends him out on a new mission (John 21:1-25).

They are together on the shore of the lake, in the locality of former incidents in the life of Peter, some also connected with the sea and fishes. The Lord treats Peter like an honoured guest. Food is provided, and they have a meal together. There is communion between them. They had eaten together in the upper room; now they are eating together by the lake. There is a season of peace and joy before the examination and manifestation commence.

Then, before his fellow-disciples, the Lord speaks to Peter, not of power but of love, not of faith but of love, not of hope but of love, not of service but of love. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas." He does not address him as Peter, the rock-man; for he had not shown himself a rock in the palace, but sinking sand.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The question was a simple one, but it had a dagger point. "More than these!" What had Peter said to the Lord when He forewarned him? Trusting in his own love and fidelity, Peter had boasted, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee;" "Though all shall be offended, because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Now the Lord asks him, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" The boastful one had denied the Lord; they had not! The Lord did not forget Peter’s boastful words, lifting himself above his brethren. He brought them back to his remembrance, very gently, with consummate skill and power, with such loving tenderness. Yet the keen knife entered, searching the reins, dividing between soul and spirit "Lovest thou Me more than these?"

Peter boasts of a superior fidelity no more, and he has not a word to say about "these." He answers, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Thou hast searched me and known me, my down-sitting and up-rising, and all my past ways, the things I have said and done, the denials of that awful night. Thou knowest all these things; and in spite of them all Thou knowest that I love Thee." He feels himself without excuse, yet affirms his love for the Lord.

Again, the Lord said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" But this time the Lord did not say, "more than these." One reminder of his empty boast was sufficient. Peter responds again, reasserting his love in the presence of Him Who knew his heart so thoroughly.

We must not overlook that by this dialogue Peter was gaining inward experience of the Lord’s searching power. He had known all about him when He was warning him of what he would do before the cock crew. Like the psalmist, and like Job, Peter was realising that he was naked and opened before the eyes of the Lord with Whom he had to do, and that He had known beforehand the wicked way that was in

Now the Lord was probing Peter’s heart to get to the very bottom and expose what was there. "Simon, after those denials, is thine a real love for Me? canst thou say without boasting foolishly that thine is a true love, not to be set aside by any foe? Supposing the high priest took thee, wilt thou now go with Me to prison and to death? Lovest thou Me? "Peter’s reply was not, I will go; I do indeed love Thee," but "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Then the Lord put the same question the third time. Peter was grieved that the Lord asked three times. Why three? The enemies of the Lord had asked Peter three times if he was a follower of

Jesus, and three times he had denied the truth. So Simon knew that the Lord was searching and trying him. He felt the point of the knife in his heart, and that he deserved its exposure. His only resource was in the omniscience of the Lord: "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Now the restoration of the fallen apostle was completed, and Peter was given his new commission, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep."

It is very necessary for us to bear in mind these experiences of Simon Peter. Are we not likely to boast of our attainment beyond others in love to our Lord? But the Lord measures our love by our faith, by our works, by our ways. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "If ye love Me, keep My word." Do what I say, what I will. In that way we must display our love for the Lord, and not in boastful talk.

If the Lord questioned us as He did Simon, son of Jonas, what should we say? If you were shut up alone with the Lord, and if He said, "Do you really love Me in these days?" what would you say? When you are in your little meeting-room, at the prayer-meeting and the Bible reading, at the worship-meeting and the breaking of bread„ what would you say if the Lord should ask, "Why are you here? Is it because you really love Me? "Are you sure that you are giving the Lord all your heart? or do you try to love the Lord a little, and the world a little as well?

Beloved friends, we ought to feel continually that we have to do with One Who knows us altogether. And if we really feel that this is so, we shall take up the language of the last two verses of this psalm, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me." Is there anything within that would grieve Thee, anything contrary to Thee? Perhaps I am hugging something selfish, something may be deceiving me, I may have wrong thoughts about myself, therefore I need that God should search me and try me, "and lead me in the way everlasting".

I am sure that as a matter of abstract knowledge you are all familiar with the subject of God’s omniscience, but I do feel that we are living in such difficult times that nothing but real communion between ourselves and the heart-knowing God and His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit will keep us faithful to His word and our hearts true to His love.

Things in the world about us are getting worse and worse day by day. Things of Christian association with which we are more intimately connected are in a state of corruption and decay. But One abides faithful, and He is the One Who is in the midst of the assemblies, and Who searches the reins and the hearts (Revelation 2:23). To those who confess their sins and whom He has cleansed from all unrighteousness, He will say, as He did to Peter, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." Tend them, care for them. If you love Me, love also those that I love. May God give us to feel the necessity of being continually and consciously under the scrutiny of His omniscient eye. He searches our hearts and tries our ways, and we cannot deceive Him. Let our hearts and consciences be right with Him and in accord with His will, Who said, "I will guide thee with Mine eye "(Psalms 32:8).

04.03. The Lord's Words to the Last Three Churches in Asia

The Lord’s Words to the Last Three Churches in Asia Revelation 3:1-22.

W. J. Hocking.

London Conference, 1st June, 1936.

I desire to draw your attention to the manner in which the Lord presents Himself to these three assemblies, and to the reward which He promises to those who overcome in spite of the general declension around them. Our Lord’s appeals and warnings to all the seven churches are of a special character, suited to the condition of each assembly as His witness. Under the figures of stars and candlesticks, allusion is made to the fact that the Lord has set them to be lights in the world, reflecting His truth and His grace. This is the manward aspect of the assembly, and should not be confused with the Godward aspect. In the latter view, the church is the edifice which the Lord is building according to His own declaration, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In the Acts, there is the historical record of this building process through the preaching of the gospel. Believers were brought together into the new institution, the church of God, formed and inhabited by the Holy Spirit. This church Christ loved, and gave Himself for it, and will present it in glory and perfection to Himself. We may call this view the divine side, and the body and the bride are Scriptural figures used of this aspect. But the stars and the candlesticks apply to the function given to the church to be a means of light to the world. How urgently this witness is needed! The world, lying in the wicked one, is a sporting-ground for the powers of darkness. How little there is for God in it! And is not this because the assemblies have failed in showing forth light and truth?

God means, however, to purify the whole world. And the fulfilment of this purpose is depicted in the visions of this Book. At the beginning of it the church in its sevenfold diversity is seen mingled with failure and evil, amenable to reproof and judgment. The Lord is seen walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, displaying His judicial attributes as Son of man. He comes, clothed in the white robe of purity, with a sword in His mouth, and with eyes of flame to search the hearts of those in the assemblies. As the Judge, He perceives every secret thought and evil disposition.

What had been the behaviour of the Lord’s public witnesses? In these chapters we have a sorrowful portrait of religious declension. The churches slide down a slippery slope from purity and perfection to a loathsome corruption, which the Lord rejects utterly. Most know that these seven epistles present a sketch of ecclesiastical history from Pentecost to the end of church profession.

Sardis.

We have read tonight of Sardis. This assembly represents a state of outward profession, of active works, of diligent behaviour, but of real death. Sardis was spiritually dead at the core, having a name to live but being dead. Historically, Sardis refers to the rise of Protestantism in the days of Luther. Human intellect then awoke from sleep, a benefit for man, a menace to divine testimony.

For intellect without faith leads man on to blaspheme the name of God and His Son, to deny the Bible and the truths of revelation. The witness of the church to divine truth is utterly quenched by it.

Significantly, the Lord comes in a different character to each of the seven churches. To Sardis, the Lord introduces Himself as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." All the stars are in His possession. He is the One Who meets and makes up for the deficiencies of His church. If Sardis with all its lapses only looked at Him walking in the midst, it would find all failure and weakness provided for in Him, and by Him; and its light would shine more and more. The Lord comes to the assembly bearing His name, but languishing in its care for that name; much is ready to die and more is without a spark of life, already dead. But He addresses Sardis as One having the seven Spirits, and concludes His address with the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." In this description of the Lord having the seven Spirits, we may trace an analogy with Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah Who will come to judge in righteousness and reprove with equity in the earth (Isaiah 11:1-16). The Spirit of Jehovah then rests upon Him, giving Him a sevenfold competency in wisdom, understanding, and judgment (Revelation 3:2-3), for the introduction of righteousness and peace in the earth. In this character, the Lord reveals Himself to Sardis as having a sevenfold competency to judge the evil and develop the good. "Seven" signifies the fullness of perfection and power for living energy. The Spirit is life, but Sardis is like the unfaithful widow, of whom it is said, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6). Sardis had a name to live but was counted to be dead.

Even so, the Lord shows the dead assembly that He has the seven Spirits of God. He is able to raise it from among the dead, to revive it, to make it wise, to fill it with faithfulness, fervour and zeal. Let us not forget this resourceful attitude of the Lord. There is no need for despair because of prevailing weakness, dullness and deadness. The Lord is walking in the midst of the assemblies in the fullness of His grace and power to supply all that we lack for faithful living testimony. But the Lord also has the seven stars. The assemblies are His property. He has bought them, redeemed them, and set them here to shine for Him in the world of darkness before the great day of His own appearing, when He will shine forth upon the earth as the Sun of righteousness. Then, too, the righteous will also shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But now, in spite of declension in the church, the Lord possesses governmental authority over the seven stars. They are His, and it is a comfort to the faithful soul to know His interest in the shining of His stars. Ephesus was told they were in His right hand (Revelation 2:1). He directs and overrules to the end the testimony to His name, even in the midst of the corporate failure of His witnesses. The Lord's solemn word for Sardis was, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This was their state in His sight. We must not think we can escape the edge of that word, saying we are not in Sardis. It has an application individually as well as collectively. It may be true of some of us that we have a name to live but are dead.

If so, our works will be but the work of the dead. All religious works apart from the life of Christ are "dead works." Not so many years ago, slumming was regarded as a fashionable pursuit by society folk. With no knowledge of the Saviour for themselves, they counted it a meritorious act to live in the slums, and help the poor as much as possible. Their works of mercy gave them a name to live, but they were dead. They helped the poor, and gave them useful instruction. But this was only their hobby, and not the fruit of the Spirit unto eternal life. So the Lord judged surely, as He judged the deeds of Sardis.

Whatever work of the Lord you may undertake, let it be in the power of the new life, that is, the life of Christ. The apostle says for us, The life which I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Christ lives in me, and this is the life that God accepts, the life that is life indeed. Whatever I say, whatever I do, wherever I go, all should be in the name of Christ, lest it be true of me also that I have a name to live, but am dead.

Remember the Lord is the Judge of our works: "I know thy works." We are not reliable judges of them. A person may be competing for a prize, and, looking at his own work, may regard it as excellent, and that he is certain to win. But it is the judge who decides, and he may even throw it aside as of no real worth. And so, only the Lord, Who knows our heart and motive, can rightly value our works. The Lord next says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." What is it to be watchful? Some say, "It means that I must watch for the Lord's coming; if not, He will come as a thief, and I shall be left behind, since He is coming for those who are watching for Him." This, however, is not the meaning of the Lord's injunction.

Watching may mean looking for the Lord's return, but it may have other meanings. When our Lord said to sleeping Peter, "Watch and pray," He was not calling Peter to watch for His coming from heaven. No, He called him to be vigilant at that moment of agonized wrestling in prayer. The Lord says to Sardis, "Be watchful." Be observant of the solemnity of the times. Do not sleep as do others. Be active, not drowsy. What you do, do under My eye. Thus the watchful servant will keep in living touch with his Master, Who says, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3).

Now the Lord commends those that were undefiled in Sardis. This assembly was in a terrible condition; it was in the place of spiritual death. Scripture everywhere teaches that contact with death defiles a person before God. This is specially shown in the economy of Moses. The Israelites were enjoined not to touch a dead body, or even the bone of a man, because of the religious defilement incurred (Numbers 19:1-22). Even their garments would be defiled by such contact.

There was serious risk of defilement in Sardis, seeing the Lord pronounced it "dead." They must be watchful lest their garments came in contact with what was a lifeless copy of the living, and they should partake of its defilement. How easily, and even unconsciously, we may drift into the imitation of the activities of those who seek their own aggrandisement, and not the glory of God and the honour of the name of the Lord Jesus. If we copy the "things without life, giving sound," we shall become infected with their corruption and death — as the Lord views them. But there were bright spots in Sardis. The Lord said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." These had been walking circumspectly. They noted what was dead, and gathered up their robes lest by any means they should touch the dead and be defiled. They had been watchful, and had kept their garments unspotted. We, too, must beware of our associations, that we may escape contact with the pollutions of death, which abound in Christendom. In view of their exceptional faithfulness, the Lord says, "They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy." When will this be? It is true that at the marriage supper of the Lamb, the saints will be seen clothed in fine linen, clean and white (Revelation 19:1-21). All present at that supper will have white robes, not a part only of the company. But the Lord here speaks of a "few" only, and these are given the special privilege of walking with Him in white, and seems to apply to the present, and

not to the future. The reward for overcoming, which is mentioned next, will be at the end of the conflict. When the struggle is past, "he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." But walking with the Lord is surely an experience enjoyed in this world. He does not walk with one wearing defiled garments. The defilement would be visible to every passer-by. And the Lord's presence will not accompany one who is unclean in his ways. He will, however, walk with those who are pure in heart and unblemished in conduct.

What a testimony such a walk would be in dead Sardis! The Lord is known to be with the few undefiled ones. They are clad in white. The world that said of the Master, "I find no fault in this Man" can find no fault in these white-robed disciples of His. Is this the world's verdict of you and me? Are we so free from spots and blemishes that the world and the professing church know that we are walking with Christ, being seen to be like Him.

It is remarkable that the Lord says of those who walk with Him in white that "they are worthy." This term should be considered carefully. Can it be true that I may become worthy to be the companion of my blessed Lord? The Lord declares it to be true of the few in Sardis who had not defiled their garments. They were worthy to walk with Him! This worthiness arises from a faithful and consistent walk. Those counted worthy are those who "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Colossians 3:10). Their Christian behaviour in the pathways of life is uniformly in character with the life of Christ, and the two walk together because they are agreed. With those who have sinned and defiled their garments. the Lord will not walk. Even when sin is confessed and forgiven, the stain, though removed from the conscience, still appears to the eyes of the world, and the Lord does not walk openly with such. Has not His name been compromised and dishonoured? He walks, not with the unworthy, but with the worthy ones. In like manner, those who eat and drink unworthily at the Lord's Supper forfeit His fellowship and incur His judgment. The overcomer in Sardis will also have his special reward. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." There is to be a correspondence between the character of his testimony and the character of his reward. As he had kept his garments unsoiled, so in the day of manifestation he will be clothed in white raiment. The nature of his testimony in the day of the church's failure will, in the day of Christ's glory, be permanently displayed. The overcomer had trodden an unpolluted path through the cemetery of the dead in Sardis. He had kept his garments unspotted from the world and from the mass of lifeless religious profession. The Lord, the righteous Judge, does not forget the faithful endurance of the overcomer, but awards him the white robes of victory to wear in the coming day of glory. But the Lord has reserved something further for the overcomer. He says, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." His name shall be preserved in the divine records, and be publicly owned before the Father and His angels. The overcomer is thus permanently distinguished from those in Sardis that had a name to live but were dead. These names were written only in the earthly register of those who profess allegiance to the name of the Lord. But their works showed that they lacked the life of the Spirit, and that their names were not written in heaven in the book of life. This was a negative promise, but the Lord adds a positive one: "I will confess his name before My Father." The Lord with Whom he walked on earth owns him as His in the presence of His Father on high. After the resurrection, He said, "Behold, I and the children God hath given Me." Concerning the overcomer, He will confess to His Father, "Here is one who lived in defiled and defiling Sardis, but who kept himself pure from every stain. He stood true for Me, and I walked with him, Thou, O Father, gavest

Me him, and I have kept him in Thy name."

What a day of rejoicing for the overcomers! One by one the Lord will utter their names in that august Presence, and before the angels too, confessing before them those that confessed Him before men (Luke 12:8). And the holy angels will behold with celestial astonishment this company of saved sinners exalted to privileges greater than their own. Does not this prospect move us to take greater heed to our associations lest we touch the unclean thing? Do we not covet to be confessed as overcomers before the Father Himself?

Philadelphia The Lord presents Himself to the angel of the next assembly in the series under quite a different title. He speaks to Philadelphia as the One Who is holy and Who is true. The name, Philadelphia, signifies "brotherly love." There is no doubt that, historically, this assembly represents that movement which began in Protestantism a little more than a century ago, bearing this character. At that time, the Scriptural teaching concerning the children of God, their membership of the body of Christ, and the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, was revived. It was vividly realized that those belonging to Christ were brethren in the Lord. Accordingly, the spirit of brotherly love (Philadelphia) became widely spread in all parts of the world.

Externally, the church was in ruins, but internally, the potency of the Philadelphian feeling of love was unaffected. Many saints learned this fact, and have acted upon it. They found that brotherly behaviour is independent of ecclesiastical organization, being founded upon their common life, each being born of the Spirit and indwelt by Him.

Clearly, the non-existence, through departure from the truth, of any assembly fashioned and furnished in full agreement with New Testament doctrine, was the cause of the brethren meeting without any visible framework of liturgy, clergy, or creed, but with entire dependence upon the Lord and upon His Spirit and His word. Externally, therefore, the assembly in Philadelphia was, in man’s judgment, a spectacle of utter weakness and inefficiency.

Now the Lord comes to this weak assembly as the Strong One. She is without resources, but what she lacks He is abundantly able to supply. The Lord mentions three features of His relationship to her: — (1) He is holy and He is true; (2) He hath the key of David; and (3) He opens and no one shuts, He shuts and no one opens. There is no word about the seven stars, nothing about the seven Spirits of God, nor the seven golden lampstands. But the Lord presents those of His own qualities especially suitable to individual believers in Philadelphia.

(1) The Lord speaks to them as "He that is holy, He that is true." Holiness and truth each believer must have. This is the inward character given to the new man (Ephesians 4:24), and all must put on these qualities. In no other way can a company of believers be holy and true. When holiness and truth are seen in the units, there will be unity in the assembly in this respect.

Now when Philadelphia looks to the Lord, she sees that He is holy and true, and realizes that in Him are the qualities she needs for herself. It is sad to reflect that if we consider the assemblies of brethren in the Lord, we are not always able to discern that they are holy and true. And what shall we find as we look at ourselves personally? Like failure, I am sure. But He is perfect, and His blessed eyes search our spirits, exposing our shortcomings, but encourage us to confide in Himself, Who is waiting to provide what we lack.

(2) "He that hath the key of David." The key is a symbol of authority, of administrative rule. You may inquire, "What has the key of David to do with the assembly?" Prophetically, David, that is, the seed of David, is the appointed executor of justice in the kingdom of Israel, and indeed among the Gentile nations also. By Him, all evil will eventually be subdued in the earth by the exercise of His power and His might.

Christ has that key of David now in connection with the assembly, only He exercises His powers over evil secretly, and not openly before the eyes of all. Now, the assembly is the sphere of His government; by-and-by, the world will be the sphere. The saints are now the light of the world to shine upon evil and make it manifest, but not to pluck up the tares. Still the Lord by His Spirit restrains the evil and keeps it within bounds. All power is given Him in heaven and in earth, though it is not openly exercised either in the assembly or in the world. The Lord reminded the weak saints in Philadelphia of the authority over evil which is His right.

(3) Further, the Lord encourages those living in a day of weakness by assuring them of His power to open and to shut. He has the key of David upon His shoulder (Isaiah 22:22). In assembly affairs and in personal service, it is "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

David had absolute authority in his own palace. There was no door there but was opened or closed at his will. And Philadelphia is told that the Lord has absolute power to open or close every door in the great house of Christendom. The State may claim political and even doctrinal control of the church. But the Lord still walks among the golden lamp-stands, and when His little flock is too weak to withstand the oppression of secular rule, it must remember that the Lord is taking charge of the doors.

There is amazing comfort in this fact for feeble saints and for feeble companies of saints. Think of an infant at a closed door. It has indeed "little strength," but the master of the house unlocks the door, and the child goes forward. Another closed door the master will not open, for in this case it would be dangerous for the child to go through. Wisdom and love are in charge of the doors for Philadelphia. Those opened lead to blessing, those closed screen from danger. This is the Lord’s doing. The Lord opens doors for service. Paul wrote of a "great door and effectual" being opened for him at Ephesus. There were many adversaries, but the apostle desired to go there, and tarry till Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8-9). Persecution did not deter him, when he knew that the door was opened unto him by the Lord (2 Corinthians 2:12). In such a case, the Lord’s name would be magnified, for no one could close that door. Not so, however, when the Lord’s servants are governed by self-will. Some, coming to a closed door, will even force the locks. But no one, save the Lord, can open a closed door for blessing. He prepares the way for His servants, and does not delegate this control to others. In Philadelphia, the Lord set open a door, and no one could shut it; for, He says, "thou hast little strength." The Lord did not reproach them for their lack of strength., Neither was it a reason for idleness. The Lord opened a door suited to their limited abilities. The Lord knew exactly the measure of their strength, and He would have them admit that it was little. Their success would depend upon their keeping within their measure. It would be useless for them to pretend to be giants when they were dwarfs, and foolish for them to seek to add to their stature. The Lord knew their feebleness, and He never expects a little child to do the work of a grown man. But the Lord also says to this feeble one, "Thou hast kept My word." He values this fidelity to

Himself and to His love. Before leaving His disciples, He said to them, "If any one love Me, he will keep My word" (John 14:23). Here in Philadelphia some had kept His word, and He had opened a door for them. The Israelites had to keep the word of Moses, the ten words of the law; the assembly has to keep the word of Christ. In the New Testament we have His word spoken on earth and from heaven. On earth, He said to the Father, referring to His disciples, "I have given them Thy word." From heaven, the Holy Spirit came to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us. In the Gospels and the Epistles, we have, therefore, His word; do we keep it?

During His absence, the Lord signified what importance He attaches to our obedience to His word. He writes to Philadelphia, "I know thy works . . . thou hast kept My word." The mark of my faithfulness is that I am keeping His word. Whatever ecclesiastical confusion has come upon the assemblies, I myself must keep His word.

Observe how in this assembly personal contact between the saint and his Lord is assumed. He says, "Thou has kept My word." Keeping that word is inseparable from communion with Himself. Here Philadelphia finds her strength. Fellowship with Christ is the special privilege offered to us in our day of utter weakness. This personal communion is needed by young and old who desire to find and enter the opened door. What clear, distinct guidance by Christ and His word is needed, particularly by the young, lest in the labyrinth of pathways in the religious world they miss the opened door the Lord has set before them.

Young believer, do not take a step without the Lord. A wrong turn may lead you to the dungeon of despair. You know that when seeking a new way in the country, though you go only a little off the direct road, you may have to travel many miles before you recover the right track. So it is easy but disastrous to turn aside from the narrow way of obedience to the will of the Lord. Therefore, be much upon your knees before Him until you have His word of direction for your way and having received that, you need never go astray.

Another commendation comes from the Lord: "Thou hast not denied My name." There is fidelity to the glory of Christ’s Person. Though a matter of the highest importance, little can be said about it tonight. There were those in early days who denied the Lord that bought them (2 Peter 2:1). There are such still.

It is sad to reflect that the spirit that denied the Holy One and the Just should be active still after nearly two thousand years of grace. The Father and the Son are denied. Men will not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The name stands in Scripture for what a person is, and to deny the name is to refuse to acknowledge the truth concerning the person. Many professing Christianity deny the name of the Lord, and there is no place for such in Philadelphia before Him Who is holy and Him Who is true. In Revelation 3:10, we have a special promise offered to this assembly. The Lord’s promise is bestowed because "thou hast kept the word of My patience." Previously, the Lord had said, "thou . . . hast kept My word," but this is more specific — "the word of My patience."

What does the phrase mean? You may say it means to exhibit the gentle, lowly, submissive disposition seen in our Lord. He was long-suffering, obedient, enduring in silence, the lamb dumb before her shearers, and all, being naturally impatient, should wish to be like him. But the reference here is not to the mind of Christ. The patience is the patience of hope in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:3), Who is speaking not of our patience, but of His own. He is, waiting in patience

on high, and those who wait here for the same moment are keeping the word of His patience. The Lord has directed their hearts into the patience of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

Think of the patience of the Son of man on high, Who is waiting for the day of His manifestation. He is already invested with glory and honour. All the glories of the coming kingdom are centred in Him. And He is waiting for the hour when He will assume His great power and reign in glory. We also wait for it, for if we now suffer with Him, we shall then reign with Him. Thus we keep the word of His patience.

Now the Lord's promise to such a one is that He will keep him out of the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth. This promise the Lord will fulfil by removing, from earth to heaven, His waiting church, which will thus escape the terrors of the predicted hour of trial. The Lord preserved His own disciples from the sorrows and sufferings which came upon Himself between Gethsemane and the cross. He said to those who came to take Him, Let these go their way. They had continued with Him in His temptations, but when His hour and the hour of the prince of darkness had come, they were kept out of it. The Good Shepherd turned His hand upon those little ones. This coming trial will fall upon those who dwell upon the earth. The earth-dwellers are those who are earthly-minded. This apocalyptic class abandon the heavenly calling of the church and will be abandoned by the Lord at His coming. Instead of keeping the word of Christ's patience, they choose the pleasures and pursuits of this evil world, and tribulation and wrath will fall upon them. Further; the Lord offers a reward to the overcomer: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God." The one overcoming, yet with "little strength" will be made a pillar, which is an emblem of strength. Moreover, it is in the temple of God, a permanent part of its structure. Out of weakness he is made strong in glory. The temple of God is the place for His worship, where everything is forgotten save His presence, and where the soul is engrossed with His power and His majesty. This is the Lord's award to the overcomer who has kept His word and not denied His name. He gives him a special place in the Father's house, where the continual occupation will be the praise and worship of God and the Lamb.

Further, the Lord says, "I will write upon him . . . My new name." Observe the recurrence of the personal pronoun in the promise: "My God" (four times); "My new name." The Lord meets the heart's desire of the overcomer. What is of Himself is more precious than anything else to those who love Him.

Those faithful ones in Philadelphia had wholly followed the Lord. Their hearts were set upon doing His word and His will. They had left the organizations of Christendom to be occupied only with the Lord, depending entirely upon His faithful love, serving Him, and waiting for His return. As a reward, the Lord says, the whole universe shall know you are Mine. We write our name upon our property, a book perhaps. The written name is a guarantee of ownership, a mark of identification, to all who see the inscription. In the day of glory, all shall see Christ's new name written upon those in Philadelphia who overcome.

Laodicea

There will not be time to say more than a word upon the unhappy subject of the Laodicean assembly. It is the close of the series, and marks the lowest point of spiritual declension in church

history. The final condition of Christendom is so contrary to the mind of the Lord that He must remove it from Himself. It is offensive to Him, and He spews it out of His mouth as a loathsome and disgusting thing. To this apostate company, the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." He is what they are not. Every promise of God is ratified and confirmed in Him. In every moment of His ministry He was the faithful and true Witness; as He said "I am . . . the Truth." But even in Laodicea there are faithful ones. The Lord addresses the company individually, coming to each heart, and saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." In Philadelphia, He has opened a door, but here is a closed door which He does not open Himself. The door is closed and held fast. He knocks and knocks, for He wishes to enter in and sup with him, but He is hindered and forbidden.

How hardened the heart that would shut out the Lord! Let us ask ourselves, Is it possible that I may close the door when my Lord seeks admittance? Could I refuse to open the door to my Beloved? Such is the word of the Lord Who knows our hearts. Oh, the grace of the Lord to seek admittance! Oh, the callousness of the heart that refuses Him entrance! The overcomer in Laodicea is encouraged: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." It is a distinction of power. To sit with Christ in His throne as a reward has a grand, glorious, majestic, dignified character. But it lacks the share of Christ’s personal affection that is promised to the Philadelphian overcomer. The Lord knows the works of each overcomer, and the reward is proportionate to the victory gained. In Philadelphia, he is given the name of Christ and of what is Christ’s. This satisfies the heart of one who had loved that name, gathered to that name, and had not denied that name. In the blissful regions of eternal glory, He will be seen and known as one bearing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In each of the seven epistles, the Lord holds out a reward to the overcomer. Victory, not defeat, should be the aim of all. The Lord Himself overcame the world, and so should those born of God (1 John 5:4-5). The young men in the family of God overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:13). And in the midst of ecclesiastical evil, the victory is, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

Victory is attached by the Lord to the individual: he that overcometh. It is possible, therefore, for us to be defeated and to miss the overcomer’s reward. The opposition to the truth, and the powers of evil are today seeking in every possible way to secure your defeat and mine. Though there is no present danger of our exile to a Siberia or of imprisonment for the faith, the enemy is not asleep in the British Isles.

Satan is more active than ever, as the astonishing progress of evil shows. In ten thousand ways, he is setting snares for the people of God, and raising barriers to their faithful testimony. His object is to sap their strength, so that they shall not be overcomers, but shall lose their crown. The Lord says to us all, "Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

Perhaps you are saying, "Will you not tell us how to be overcomers?" I can only tell you one thing, which perhaps may be sufficient. The Lord overcame, and is set down with His Father on His throne. If we follow Him, we, too, shall overcome. Let us not be concerned about others, but for ourselves, let us set our eyes upon the Lord, and follow to the end Him Who is the Leader and Completer of faith.

What a company of victors there would be, if every one in this hall even should in the day of reward stand before the Lord as those that had overcome by the word of testimony, by the power

of Christ, by a pure and faithful discipleship! Let it be our aim to become "more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and to be among those overcomers who shall inherit all things (Revelation 21:7).

04.04. The Altar of Worship

The Altar of Worship An Address on Leviticus 6:8-13; John 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 13:11.

W. J. Hocking. The scriptures read deal, for the most part, with the subject of the worship of God. The worship of God is an occupation of the highest character for the believer. A man who is a true worshipper of God in this world rises to the loftiest point of excellence to which his nature can go. It is a remarkable thing that in spiritual worship we should be able to be before God, consciously in His presence, realising His presence by faith, and that our hearts should go out to Him with all freedom, without outward restriction, without inward restraint, going out in adoration and praise to God because He is God, and above all, because He is our Father.

Worship, I say, is the highest and most sublime occupation in which we can engage here below. Moreover, worship comes within the province of the simplest and the youngest believer, as well as of those who are older and more acquainted with the love of God through His grace. Perhaps, the simpler the heart and the soul, the purer, and shall I say, the more acceptable is the worship that rises to God. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

We find that worship was laid upon the hearts of the saints all through the scriptural history. From the beginning to the end, those who pleased God on earth were those who worshipped Him. While in heaven above, the worship of God and of the Lamb will be developed to its fullest degree in the redeemed.

Worship on Mount Moriah

One of the earliest examples of worship, and a very instructive one, is found in the well-known chapter (Genesis 22:1-24), relating the experience of Abraham. This incident, which is presented there in full detail, is really an incident of worship to God. Abraham was called to go to the land of Moriah and there, upon one of the mountains of which God told him, to offer Isaac his son, his only son, as a burnt offering to God. It was a supreme test of his faith in God and of his love for God; but he was obedient, and was prompt and unquestioning in his obedience. He did not say, "I will not go," and then change his mind and go, but he obeyed at once, rising early in the morning.

Abraham knew what he was doing, as we find from his words to the servants with him. He said to them, "Abide ye here with the ass, while I and the lad go yonder and worship, and return again to you." There we have the act of worship before him actually mentioned.

Abraham and his son proceeded to that mountain, and there, upon the altar that was erected, Isaac was bound by his father to be the burnt offering. At God’s bidding Abraham emptied his heart and soul upon that altar, surrendering all to Him. Everything that made Abraham what he was as a depositary of divine promise to the whole world and a wanderer in Canaan, was found in Isaac, and now Isaac, the seed of promise, was upon the altar, and the father’s hand was uplifted with the knife to slay his son.

It was not the piteous vision of the boy upon the altar, and the tense features of the father as he was about to slay his son, that was so well-pleasing in heaven. It was the patriarch's act of worship; it was the act telling God that, to Abraham, God and His word were everything, that Abraham adored and trusted the One Who told him to take his only son and offer him as a burnt offering.

There upon the altar was the victim bound. There, too, near by was the substitute, the ram caught in the thicket, provided to be the substitute for the human life. It came about that the ram took the place of Isaac, but in God's estimation Abraham had fully performed the act of worship in the presence of His name; there at the altar he learned the name of Jehovah — in the mount of the Lord it was seen. Jehovah was the great Provider, the One Who was everything to Abraham, and this significance was expressed in his act of surrender, the act of worship. The patriarch's example lays it upon us that worship, in order to be acceptable to God, must be of the nature of a sacrifice. Worship must cost us something. In a measure, we are poorer, in some way or the other, because we worship God. We give something to Him, i.e., not something of ourselves, but something of Him Who lives in us, of Him Who is ever acceptable to God.

God expects our worship, the Father seeks worshippers. It is incumbent upon every believer to remember the claim God has upon this supreme act of our spiritual lives to worship and to adore Him. And let it be, not occasionally, not seasonally, but constantly, continually. Worship must be as a stream flowing incessantly, springing from God, if you will, but rising again to God, without a break. The heart of the true worshipper is ever in tune by the Holy Spirit, and engaged with praising and blessing God.

Worship and the Burnt Offering In Leviticus 6:1-30, we have what is called the law of the burnt offering. Of all the classes of sacrifice, the burnt offering is the one that speaks most vividly of worship.

Why does it speak most vividly of worship? Because of its contrast with other offerings in this respect that the whole of the burnt offering, whether it was a sheep or a goat, or a bull, whatever animal was offered, the whole of it went up to Jehovah. The entire carcase was placed on the altar, consumed by fire, and ascended up in fumes to heaven. Figuratively, it was to God as a sweet-smelling savour of Christ in His absolute devotion to the divine will, even so far as the death on the cross. But the worshipper brought the offering, and the worshipper laid his hand upon the sacrifice. The priest took it and offered it, but the worshipper beheld in the ascending column of smoke the acceptance, so to speak, of the worship of his heart. "Oh, Jehovah, Thou hast blessed me. Thou hast done wonderful things for Thy people! What can I render to Thee? What can I give to show how I esteem and love Thee, and desire to serve Thee? I will give Thee my best. I have searched my flocks, and my herds, and I give Thee the best of them. I can give no more. I give my best, and I give it all to Thee." This spirit of devotional worship was the essence of the burnt offering. In the first chapter of this priest's guide book, details are prescribed of what was due to Jehovah, but in Leviticus 6:1-30 you have the law of the burnt offering. In the first chapter, the words spoken were for the common people, for every worshipper in the convocation; but the law of the offering in Leviticus 6:1-30 was for Aaron and his sons, the priests. The priests were admitted into closer secrets, if I may so express it, in connection with the nature of this worship.

One feature that comes out in this law of the burnt offering is that a permanent character was given to it. There was to be a continual token of activity at the altar with regard to burnt sacrifice.

It was part of the ritual of the people of Israel to offer the burnt offering every morning and every evening. In the tabernacle, as well as in the temple, there was this expressive form of worship at the commencement and at the close of each day. But we have here that in the night seasons, when no worshippers were going to the temple, when the services of the priesthood had ceased, still there was to be evidence of worship upon the altar of the burnt offering. A flame was to be seen upon the altar continually throughout the night. There the flame flickered, and there the burnt offering of the day was still being consumed to ashes. The night watches passed, but the burnt offering sent up its sweet savour. The worshippers were asleep, but the flame still rose from the altar. They might be oblivious of this silent worship, but Jehovah was refreshing Himself with the sweetness, the excellence, the glory, the grace of His blessed Son, to whom the burnt sacrifice pointed. The sacrifice was ever smoking upon the brazen altar, and the God Who never sleeps, day or night, found His pleasure there, even in the darkness of the night. That burnt offering was always welcome to Him. Why do I refer to this feature of continuity? Does not this regulation speak to us plainly, if it speaks at all, of the value that God sets upon the worship of His people? According to His arrangement, worship must be a continuous thing; sleeping or waking, the hearts of His people must be in touch with Him, enjoying what His Son is, feeling how gracious and good the Lord is in His perfect devotion. This answers to the fire consuming the sacrifice, and causing it to ascend; and it must never be extinguished.

You must have observed, as I read these few verses, how this continuity is emphasised and reiterated. "It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning" (Leviticus 6:9). "It shall not be put out" (Leviticus 6:12). "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out "(Leviticus 6:13). Why do these words occur over and over again? God repeats nothing in His word, save to impress it more deeply upon our forgetful hearts.

God demands the worship of our hearts continually. The worship of our hearts can never go out to Him apart from the altar, apart from the place where the sacrifice was offered, apart from the excellence and value and glories that were exhibited when the sacrifice was offered upon the cross. All this we find in Christ, the offering of a sweet-smelling savour to God. The Altar and the Divine Name In connection with the altar of burnt offering, there is something else that does not appear here, but in Exodus, for instance. Wherever the altar was built, even though it were of earth, there God put His name. This was the place where He recorded His name; and His name and the altar are always linked together because it spoke of Christ. God was glorified and manifested at the cross of Calvary. God found everything that His loving heart sought and that His holy nature demanded there — at the cross. If this is so, if God found His all there, why cannot I find mine there? Is this altar not enough as my satisfying portion? Must I have the world besides? Must I have the temporal and trivial things of time and sense besides the name and sacrifice of His Son? I cannot have the world and be a true worshipper of God.

Worship in spirit and truth is to be engrossed with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I think how good, and kind and gracious and loving He is, how can I help my heart and my whole being rising in thankfulness and praise to Him? Such praise and worship I cannot formulate in words, but occupation with Christ is the basis of worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

It is not the spirit that speaks, though it should permeate our singing and our praying (1 Corinthians 14:1-40). Our spirit feels and thinks, and God looks for it in our worship. Do not overlook our responsibility as His children, as members of the body of Christ, to give unto God His due in worship and adoration, both individually and collectively. The Ashes of the Burnt Offering

Then the ashes even of the burnt offering were to be cared for by the priests. They were to be removed from the altar in the morning to make room for the new burnt offering; and they were to be put beside the altar, in a spirit of holiness, for the priest was to be clad with spotless linen. They were to be put at the side of the altar first of all.

Then the priest was to put off his garments and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp of the tabernacle into a clean place, into the place reserved for the ashes. The ashes were thus to be carefully handled and preserved. Why? Because they were a memorial of that sacrifice in the holy place. Beside the altar, the ashes were a witness to the priests themselves, to those whose habitat was in the court of the tabernacle, but outside, the ashes were a witness for the whole camp. So the death of Christ has its place in the life of the family of God, and in the worship of the people of God, while it has its place also as a witness to the whole world.

I do not dwell further upon this point, except to remind you that the burnt offering was inseparably connected with the brazen altar, the altar where the judgment of God fell upon the offering, where the sacrifice was made for sin. There it was at the door of the tabernacle, and God’s holy name was there too. To this place, the worshipper was to come with his burnt offering. The altar was the place where God’s name was, and there he must present his offering of praise. But a third thing in the law of the burnt offering was that it must be perpetual, not occasional, a continual offering throughout their generations. This permanence is emphasised in scripture. This continual burnt offering, morning and night and all through the night, was a prominent feature of Jewish worship. When Solomon set up his temple, a continual burnt offering was provided, and when Ezra set up his temple, there again the continual burnt offering was offered, even before the building again. Why? Because of Jehovah’s claim that this should be the main feature of the worship of His people. A Book of Praise Prepared

Now in the Book of Psalms we have a kind of transition from the Mosaic system of sacrificial worship. In a veiled way there is a reference to the fact that God was not well-pleased with the offering of bulls and goats. He did not find His pleasure in the sacrifice of an animal that had horns and hoofs. God was looking for something else; He desired what was in the heart. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required." Jehovah’s delight was in the language of the heart that said "Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will." There God in His Beloved and Blessed Son found His full satisfaction. But the law made nothing perfect, and there are intimations of something which would change the character of worship from formality to spirituality. You find such passages for instance in the Psalms (I commend the subject to your study). Something would take the place of the outward acts of worship which God had instituted under Moses. These material sacrifices were only temporal. God was pleased and would be pleased only with offerings of the heart and spirit.

Another feature of worship is made prominent in the Psalms. They do not speak so much of the continual burnt offering or of the daily offering of lambs, but of a continual attitude of praise on the part of His saints. "I will bless the Lord at all times — His praise shall be continually in my mouth —

I will praise the name of Jehovah for ever and ever." A constant stream of praise flows from the worshippers to Him. Throughout the Psalms, this spirit continues, and towards the end comes the recurrence of "Hallelujah," "Praise the Lord." Over and over it is reiterated so that the Book of Psalms closes as the book of Hallelujahs. It is expressive of the spontaneous praise Jehovah will receive from His earthly people during the millennial kingdom.

Worship in the Present Hour

Coming now to the New Testament, we have our Lord speaking about the new order of worship (John 4:1-54) and revealing its essential nature. He is speaking not to a learned man of the Jews, not to a teacher in Israel, but to a Samaritan sinner. To Nicodemus, He speaks of the necessity of the new birth, but to this fallen woman He speaks of worship, and shows her that the great heart of God, if I may so say, was hungering and thirsting for the worship of souls here in this world. And who but God could change a sinner into a worshipper to provide praises to His name? In John's Gospel, as in the Levitical economy, we see that worship is connected with the altar, at least I think this is so. In chapter 3 you find a reference to the cross, do you not? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." There is the cross, which is the righteous basis of all worship. It was the basis of worship for Nicodemus when he was born again. When the Son of man is lifted up, He will draw all unto Him, but He must be lifted up. So you cannot divorce worship from the altar, from the place of sacrifice. The death of Christ is the foundation of life and worship. All our worship must also be permeated with the thought of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit of life and truth. To the woman of Samaria, the Lord showed that the question of locality no longer came into the question of worship to the Father. God did not seek for worship in "this" mountain, nor in Jerusalem. God had certainly put His name in Jerusalem, and Mount Zion was the centre for Israel and the nations because Jehovah's name was there. But now the time had come, the hour was even present, when the question of an authorised locality for worship entirely disappeared.

Once a local centre for worship was needful. If you have a bullock and you want to sacrifice it, you must go somewhere to do it. If you have a material offering to bring, geography is a consideration; you must go to a place of worship. But when worship is restricted to the heart and spirit, does the place matter? We think sometimes that a special place for worship is essential, but we do not find it so in John 4:1-54. The Lord spoke of the necessity that worship should be "in spirit and in truth."

Worship in Spirit and in Truth The spirit is that part of our being which is altogether independent of locality. Our bodies may be here in the Memorial Hall, but our spirits may be in the heaven of heavens. The spirit that God has given us cannot be confined to one place or to another. This important feature of worship the Lord was showing to this poor woman. Sunken for so long in sinful ways, yet she had a spirit, and He would redeem it and make it His own, would cleanse her by water and by blood, and make her fit to offer praise and thanksgiving to His Father and God. Our Lord Jesus was in Samaria seeking someone to receive the love which was bubbling up in His heart, overflowing in the sands of the desert. He sought that this love might return again upwards whence it came, in the power of a life eternal. He could give this woman water, which would be in her a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. This is true worship. It is the outcome of a power within towards an object without. It springs upward from the heart to God. It is independent of all outward circumstances. The Holy Spirit plants the capacity within us, and by His working it

rises to the source from whence it came, to the God and Father of love and grace. Oh, beloved friends, how marvellous it is that we should be made vessels of the Holy Spirit in this way, to praise and worship God acceptably and continuously! And God is seeking this worship from the redeemed sons of men. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "That which is born of the [Holy] Spirit is spirit," and so we have a new nature given us. When with this spirit we have truth in us also, we have the two elements of worship to God.

We may sing a hymn of praise tunefully with our lips, but if our spirit is not with it, it is not acceptable worship to God. I must sing with the spirit and with the understanding. My heart must be right before my lips. Why? Because I am worshipping the Father, and He is seeking worship in spirit.

Worship must be "in truth" too, and if it is in Christ and of Christ, it will be in truth, because He is the truth, as well as the way and the life, in coming to the Father. By His Spirit Christ is the One Who clothes our words and thoughts with acceptance to God. He, as it were, takes of His own fragrance and beauty to attach to our poor thoughts and words and make them acceptable. All this service is independent of ourselves, and the Holy Spirit does what is needful for the simplest and youngest of saints who seeks to worship God. The fragrance of worship is not in what we say or think, but in what Christ is before the heart. The Holy Spirit does His part, and the whole is acceptable to God.

"The Father seeketh such to worship Him." The Son of God, the Good Shepherd, went out on the mountains to seek the lost sheep. He brings it home on His shoulders rejoicing; but the Father seeks worshippers. The Good Shepherd seeks sinners; the Father seeks worshippers. Shall He be denied? God the Father is seeking now. He is seeking in the City of London, in the world, for worshippers to worship Him. There are great public buildings and secluded cloisters, there is the ritual of aesthetic service and gorgeous vestments with all the outward show that the nature of man loves, but all the while the Father in heaven is seeking worshippers in spirit and in truth. It is possible for you and me to give God the Father what He seeks.

"God is a spirit." He is the Being Who is spirit in essence. It is not merely that this is His character, as would be expressed if the phrase were "God is spirit." But God is a spirit. It refers to His being, to the Person. He has no bodily shape. He is not circumscribed like ourselves, and He is an omnipresent spirit, and therefore though in heaven, He is here, and we being spirit are in His presence.

"God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." This is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. But apart from the action of the Spirit within us, and apart from that truth which Christ has expressed in His life, and in His death, we cannot worship Him thus. How simple, yet how solemn!

Worship and the Lord’s Supper

Now let us turn to the well-known scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 to show that some of the elements and essentials of worship are found in connection with the Lord’s supper. You certainly have the name of the Lord here. Israel had the name of Jehovah in connection with the altar of burnt offering. He recorded His name there, as He did in Zion afterwards. And so, we have the

name of the Lord in connection with the great Christian observance.

We gather together to His name, and the Lord has affixed His name to His supper. It is the Lord's table, and it is the Lord's supper in a special way. The original expression is such that it shows the supper belongs peculiarly to Him. His name is upon it as being His own supper, just as the first of the week is distinguished as the Lord's day.

There is a distinction made in the passage (1 Corinthians 11:1-34) between a brother taking his own supper instead of the Lord's supper. So that the name of the Lord is attached to this memorial supper as Jehovah's name was to the altar. The Lord's supper at His table is the great gathering point for the collective worship of the saints of God, particularly on the Lord's day.

Moreover, you find that the sacrifice of Christ is also expressed there. There is the loaf and there is also the cup. The loaf is the emblem of the body of Christ, and the cup of His blood. They are separate emblems, but both show that Christ's death is set forth in the supper. We show forth the Lord's death. This, under the Spirit's guidance, is the great motive power in connection with the worship of believers on this occasion. The Lord's death awakens the keenest emotions of thanksgiving and praise in His name to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God Who gave Him.

What a subject! How can we rightly comprehend that He Who was ever God, He Who created all and was the sustainer of all, even when here in this world, that He should offer Himself a propitiatory sacrifice for sins! We think about it, we sit together in silence under the influence of the Holy Spirit when we take the Lord's supper; and, above all things, we desire that the Holy Spirit may enlarge our hearts and give us greater views, grander thoughts, more correct ideas concerning the death of the Lord Jesus in its baffling beauty.

There before us, the subject of the obedience of Christ in His death looms in its grandeur and power. I am sure it touches every emotion of our being to think that He loved us to death and to such a death, glorifying God even at that point in respect of our sins. And this is God's way that our cold and unresponsive natures may not become callous and indifferent to the sufferings of our Lord. We meditate upon them over and over again. They never lose their power, though they do not stir us as they should. Still, it is God's way to awaken our worship by setting before us again and again the Lord's death, He the risen and ascended One being in our midst. Is it not because we often fail to apprehend the reason of our assembling that our worship becomes so strained and difficult, so formal, empty, and dead? In such a case, we have lost sight of the great object for which the Lord instituted His supper. It was to be a memorial of Him. It was to be the ashes of the sacrifice, set beside the altar bearing His name to speak to us, the company of priests, of Himself and of what He had done, of what had been undergone upon the altar of sacrifice. It is when we observe the true object of our gathering that suitable worship rises to the Father and to the Son in all the fragrance of His person, Who became dead and is alive again.

Moreover, you remember, the burnt offering was to be perpetual. There was to be a continual flame upon the altar, never to be put out, never allowed to die down. So we are to show the Lord's death "till He come." The supper is a constant occupation in the body of Christ, a continual observance. How many times have you remembered the Lord in His death? A great many times, some of us, but it is ever new to us; and the will of the Lord is that it should be so. It is the will of the Lord that the fire upon the altar should never go out, that it should be continued week after

week, and oftener if possible, until the Lord comes.

"Oh," you say, "we all eat the Lord’s supper when we gather together." Exactly, it is the collective remembrance and worship that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, the act of those assembled for that purpose; so I turn to Hebrews 13:15, for what is more general, and also individual. Our Continual Offering of Praise

"By Him" — that is, by the Lord Jesus, Who has sanctified us by His blood, and suffered without the gate — "by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips" — or calves, as we have in the margin, referring to the burnt offering — "giving thanks to" (or confessing) "His name." This injunction I take to be general, and it includes those who are unable to attend the commemoration of the Lord’s death at His supper on the first of the week. It applies to believers singly, and it applies to all seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. Every believer must offer a continual sacrifice of praise by Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. Worship must be an unbroken daily habit. The Lord Jesus is the Sacrifice and the Priest. As a great Priest over the house of God, He is ever active and ready. He is a continual medium, and wherever I may be, whatever the circumstances, however doleful or difficult, there I can sing a song of praise to Him, my God and Father, through Jesus Christ His Son. Is this not so? An Israelite was debarred for the most part from attending the tabernacle daily, but the appointed things were done for him, morning and evening. The priest was there, and he saw that the flame never went out. We have our priest, our minister of the sanctuary. He is ever there, waiting to take the little expressions of our hearts, even as we acknowledge with thankfulness God’s grace and goodness and care, making them burnt offerings of praise, acceptable to God, through Christ Jesus.

Perhaps you are doubting the possibility of fulfilling this Christian precept. You may think it is impossible. You may say to me, "You do not know my circumstances, or else you would never think that I could offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually." What I am certain of is that God in His word never enjoins us to do what we cannot do. If He lays upon us a duty or a responsibility, we must not say, "I have no power to do it." God sees to the means. The point is, do you want to do it? Satan would take the sacrifice of praise out of our mouths and fill them with words of complaint, or bitterness, or reviling: but we must see that God’s name is praised first of all, as He enjoins.

We shall always find a subject of praise. There is One Who is a perennial object of praise, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you say I have nothing to give thanks for? God has given me His Son and with Him He has freely given me all things, so at once my mouth is filled with praise. This is true not only today, but yesterday, and the day before, and will be in the days to come too.

It is God’s will that we should offer the sacrifice of praise continually. "The fruit of our lips" is to tell God what beauty and satisfaction we have found in Christ according to the scriptures. This delight in the Lord is bound to be acceptable. God never refuses to receive such words. They are well pleasing to Him, Who delights in His well-beloved Son.

"Confessing His name." He has attached His name to His supper and He has also attached it to ourselves. We are called by His name. We bear the name of the Lord. We are not our own, we belong to Him. The Son has made known to us the name of the Father, that it may be embodied in our worship to the Father and the Son.

We are known in this world as those that are Christ's, as those who bear His name, and we ourselves become, as it were, an altar of thanksgiving. His love, His grace have kindled a fire within our hearts. He has kindled it there, and His Spirit will keep it burning; it will never go out. But the flame of devotion might burn more brightly than it does. It would be more acceptable to Him, perhaps, if our hearts were fuller of Christ, if we read more about Him, and sought to live more like Him, reproducing Him here in this world. Then our lives, and so our lips, would habitually bear the name of Jesus, and so they would be ever acceptable to God our Father in a living sacrifice of praise. May it be so, for His name's sake. W. J. Hocking.

04.05. The Sin of Achan

The Sin of Achan The Substance of an Address on Joshua 7:1-13; Joshua 7:22-26.

W. J. Hocking.

Memorial Hall, London, 23rd October, 1937. The incident of Achan's sin and its unexpected consequences is of a very instructive nature, while at the same time it is of a very solemn character. But solemn events such as this are needful for us to consider now and again, because by them we may learn, strange as it may seem, what is the right method of taking possession of the choicest of God's blessing for His people. We learn, also, that sin may hinder the accomplishment of God's purpose in this respect, though it cannot frustrate it altogether. This chapter is a moral reflection upon the conduct of the children of Israel, and particularly, as we shall see, upon the sin of one man and its widespread consequences. Achan's sin changed Israel's victory at Jericho into shameful disaster at Ai. One person's failure was sufficient to intercept the flow of blessing and favour and power, and we may even say glory, towards himself and those with whom he was linked nationally.

I suppose there could scarcely have been at this juncture anything more humiliating to the children of Israel than their experience before this little town of Ai, especially when it is compared with their very recent experience when they paraded round the walls of Jericho. Then, at the given moment, the walls crumbled down before them, and the whole city was delivered into their hands. Then, through their astonishing victory, God's name was honoured in the eyes of all the Canaanites.

During the previous forty years, Egypt and the adjacent nations had witnessed much of the glory of Jehovah's name in connection with His redeemed people. They beheld His might and His glory when He brought Israel so marvellously through the Red Sea, while their enemies were overwhelmed in its depths. Then again, the flooded Jordan was held up, as the white-robed priests bearing the ark stood in its bed, and a dry pathway was made for Jehovah's nation — for the men, women, children, cattle, and all belonging to them.

These mighty deeds were so astoundingly impressive that the hearts of the Amorites and the Canaanites and all the indigenous peoples of the promised land were filled with fear and dread. Their hearts melted to water within them because God was so evidently working in an irresistible way for the progress of a nation of slaves. These victories glorified the name of Jehovah before the eyes of the heathen, and His glory was plainly associated with the nation of Israel. At all times, God's glory may be seen in the heavens, but when His glory is suddenly displayed in a nation of emancipated slaves, the fact strikes the hearts of the nations who know not God with feelings of terror and awe. The Defeat at Ai But now an entire change had come upon the Israelites. An unmistakable contrast was seen. At Jericho, they were magnificently victorious; at Ai, they were ignominiously defeated. God had promised His people that they should overcome their enemies, that one of them should chase a thousand; but at Ai, the reverse was the case; they were chased by their enemies, and more than ten in every thousand were slain.

Such a defeat was shameful, not so much for its magnitude, as for its morale. Why had Israel suffered the defeat? Let us ask. What had been their secret of victory? Without considering the answer very fully, two significant facts may be mentioned; first, the people had honoured God's word, and secondly, the ark of Jehovah was with them.

First then, the children of Israel, before their victory over the stronghold of Jericho, had submitted to that ordinance of God which marked them out as the seed of Abraham and the heirs of promise. They were all circumcised at Gilgal, and the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. The act was a public testimony that they had no confidence in the flesh. By that rite, they were rendered impotent. They thereby owned their entire dependence upon God. The reproach of Egypt disappeared. Their confession was, "We are a people who trust only in Jehovah for victory, and not in ourselves." Circumcision expressed this attitude towards God, and was for His eye alone. The second fact was also expressive of Israel's attitude before God, but this came prominently before the eye of their enemies. The ark in their midst was a visible token of their faith in Jehovah. In their daily processions for a week round the walls of Jericho, the ark was a conspicuous feature. The ark of God was behind the advance guard, and before the rearguard. It was the very centre of their daily parade before their foes. It was evident to all in Jericho that Israel looked to the ark for guidance, and depended upon it for victory.

What was the significance of the presence of the ark? The ark of God is a plain type of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His grace and glory. The shittim wood in its structure spoke of His incarnation; God was here, manifest in flesh. But those looking upon the ark saw the golden surface. The shittim wood was enveloped with gold; the divine, incorruptible righteousness of God was displayed in Christ. The precious little coffer was of comparatively small dimensions — just a little box, so to speak — but how great its significance! The Christ of God here below! There, too, upon the ark were the golden cherubim, overshadowing the mercy-seat, the emblems of power, of judgment, and of glory. But all this detail was concealed during the procession by a blue curtain or covering, so that the eyes of Jericho saw only what was the type of the heavenly glory of Christ, and indeed the Israelites who followed it saw the same. The ark, then, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, made that procession unique. Match it, if you can. There was but one ark in the world, and it was in the midst of the children of Israel who carried it round Jericho. Here lay the secret of their victory. In their hearts they had absolute faith in the word of Jehovah. They were confident that this great stronghold, blocking their entrance into Canaan, would, in God's way, and by some means or other, be overthrown. And the ark in their midst was outward evidence of their faith in Jehovah. The faith of the people was well proved. Each succeeding day of the week, the procession took place punctually. Their faith was maintained, and it reached maturity. For seven days the city walls saw their faith. God saw it, too. God does not commend an intermittent faith, that is, a faith bright on the Lord's day, for instance, but fading away from the first day to the seventh of the week.

God is not well pleased with a faith which is active only when the sun shines. He wants our faith in times of wind and tempest, fog and obscurity. Faith, like patience, must have its perfect, unbroken exercise. When the seven days' trial of the people's faith had proved its preciousness, then the victory came, the walls fell, and Jericho was in the hands of the children of Israel.

Now let us pause for a moment, and think of ourselves and of our Jericho. What is the secret of Christian victory over what the New Testament calls "this world"? The world is the enemy's great stronghold which prevents us from entering into our spiritual possessions in Christ Jesus. The world hinders us from taking full advantage of our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The power of the world in which Satan rules is the great obstacle before our progress. The prince of the power of the air and the wicked spirits with him in the heavenlies are the foes that oppose our dwelling there by faith.

How then are we to gain the victory and go forward? When we own our weakness, we become strong, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. When we are in communion with Him, and are walking by faith with Him, like Israel with the ark, then we can gain the victory. Our strength is in Him, Who said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The apostle John, writing to the family of God, also spoke of this subject and revealed the secret of victory. He said, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith follows the ark and conquers. By faith, we see Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. So we read in the context, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" By seeing Jesus with us in His full power and risen glory, by believing that the Son of God is with us and for us, we overcome the world. Faith was the secret of Israel's first and typical victory in Palestine, and faith is the secret of victory in our heavenly relationships today. We know the continual presence of the Lord Jesus, we follow Him by faith, trusting in His omnipotence and omniscience as the Son of God. The Cause of Defeat But why was the striking victory at Jericho followed by the ignominious defeat at Ai? In the narrative, we read of no reference to Jehovah by the people, there was no recorded prayer, there was no seeking of wisdom and direction from God for the enterprise. True, they sent out spies, keen observant men to take stock of the enemy and his resources, just as any military force would do before an attack. The people had become self-confident. Trusting in their own prowess, they said, "There are only a few inhabitants in Ai. It is a little place. Just a few of our best men can overcome it. It is an easy task. There is no need for all the people to go against it." They under-estimated the valour of the men of Ai, and they over-estimated their own strength without the ark of God, without the power and blessing of God. Hence the men of Israel were defeated. They ran before their enemies, and returned to the camp at Gilgal in shame and confusion.

Need I dwell further upon this failure of the ancient people? Has it not an obvious lesson for ourselves? Is it not a fact that sometimes, instead of our overcoming the world, the world overcomes us? Victory gives place to defeat. We offer occasion to the enemy to mock us. Men sneer and laugh, and say, "There is your Christian. There is one who pretends to have an inheritance on high, and to be much better than other persons on earth. He who trusts God is no better than we." Thus the name of God is blasphemed because the world has been too much for us. But why did you fail at all? Did you not exaggerate your own strength, and did you not forget that the power you needed for victory was in the Lord Jesus, the Captain of your salvation? Your eye turned from Christ. You viewed the world, its pursuits and attractions, from the standpoint of a worldly man. Then, not having a single eye to follow Christ, you yielded to the world's resistance and dishonoured His name. Let us learn this lesson at Ai. But now let us turn from the causes of individual failure, and consider the cause of collective failure, as it is here exemplified. One unhappy man in the camp of Israel had secretly sinned, and thereby he had brought disaster upon

his brethren. Achan was not an obscure person in Israel; he was of the royal tribe of Judah. He was the great-great-grandson of Judah himself, from whose tribe Messiah Himself would spring in due time.

Achan was a prince of his tribe, and therefore he must have been well acquainted with all that God had spoken to the people by Moses before they crossed the Jordan. He knew how strictly they were charged to have nothing to do with the abominable ways of the Amorites. They were to avoid defilement by their filthy idolatrous practices. They must have nothing to do even with the goods and possessions of the people of the land.

These restrictions were laid before them by Moses, speaking with the authority of God, while they were still in the wilderness. And then in the camp at Gilgal, Joshua was instructed to remind the people of these stringent prohibitions. Joshua told them that Jericho and everything in it was accursed. All was devoted to God exclusively. The city must be destroyed utterly, and its defilement purged by fire. Such things as withstood the fire, the silver and the gold, were to be brought into the treasury of Jehovah, because He had said, "The silver and the gold are Mine." He claimed the imperishable metals as His own perquisite (Joshua 6:17-19).

These commandments of Jehovah were recited in the ears of the people before the downfall of Jericho, and Achan must have heard and known them fully. But he sinned in respect of them. He flatly disobeyed them. Led away by the lust of his eyes, he did the very thing he was forbidden to do. He took of the spoils of Jericho, and hid them in his tent. And the expedition to Ai proved a disaster for his people.

Joshua’s Concern

Leaving Achan for the moment, let us see what effect the national calamity had upon Joshua and the elders of Israel. At the sight of their fugitive brethren, pursued by their enemies almost to the camp itself, they were all ashamed. They felt that all Israel was humiliated, as indeed they were, before the inhabitants of the land.

What did Joshua do? He did the right thing. He went to Jehovah about it. He cast himself down before the ark until eventide. There with the elders of Israel, he put dust on his head, and lamented before the Lord. I use that word deliberately, because it is often said that Joshua confessed before the Lord. I do not think he did confess. He did not, like Daniel, say, "We have sinned."

No; Joshua was most concerned that the nation for which he was responsible as its leader should have come back from Ai like beaten dogs. He said, as it were, "All our prestige is gone. The victory at Jericho was glorious, but this defeat at Ai is shameful. Why has the Lord God humbled us in the eyes of the Canaanites?"

But, though Joshua took the right attitude, he said the wrong thing. He put the blame of the defeat upon Jehovah! He said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us?" What language! The Lord had done nothing of the sort. He did not bring the people over Jordan to destroy them. Destruction of the seed of Abraham was not His work. Neither was it His will that Ai should triumph over His redeemed people. But Joshua, good man as he was and faithful, had his eye for the moment solely upon the confusion in the camp, and he came to a hasty and wrong conclusion about it. We

often do the same, when we get into difficulties with the world. The world gains the upper hand in our private affairs, in our homes perhaps, or maybe in the assembly. Our shame cannot be hid, and then we go before the Lord, and speak to the Lord about the matter.

How do we put the case? Do we pray as if the Lord had done it? Or do we take the blame to ourselves? Joshua did not take a particle of blame to himself for Ai. Yet he was the responsible chief in Israel. He made the mistake of blaming God for what had taken place. He was at first far from viewing the defeat as God viewed it, and had to learn the truth. Do we not sometimes go astray in a similar manner? In the circumstances of daily life, trials and sorrows and insurmountable obstacles recur again and again. At such times, the heart may whisper, like Joshua, Why has the Lord done this? Why does He permit this? Why do I appear among men as one stricken and smitten of God? Why is His hand so heavy upon me? Secretly, in the heart, even in the sanctuary, our deepest thought may be that God is a hard Master, and is not doing His best for us.

Let us examine ourselves very carefully when we are before the Lord in moments of defeat. He is the God of truth. Let His word of truth correct us, and teach us to speak according to His mind. You may say, This is difficult to do. So it is, but not impossible. However, it is delightful to observe that Joshua got right in the end. He was a sound man whose heart was right before the Lord. If he was wrong in assuming that the defeat was the will of Jehovah, he was right in asking Him to take care of the glory of His own great name.

What Joshua said last, he perhaps ought to have said first. He said, If the Canaanites "cut off our name from the earth, what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" He turned from the plight of his people to the honour of Jehovah’s name. He looked no longer upon the discomfiture of Israel as they fled from the warriors of Ai, but upon the effect of this overthrow in the eyes of the Canaanites. Jehovah’s name was dishonoured before their enemies. When the fortified city of Jericho fell, the fame of Jehovah spread all over the land. But at Ai His name was humbled to the dust. So Joshua asked, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?"

Then Jehovah answered, as He always does when His name is set in the first place. True prayer is when self is forgotten, and the glory of the Lord fills the desires. Do we always say, "O Lord, do what Thou wilt to establish the glory of Thine own name in Thy beloved Son"? The man that says this is on the sure road to receive blessing from His hand, for God always answers the desire after the glory of the name of His Son.

Jehovah spoke, and set Joshua right. His name had been dishonoured at Ai, but this was because it had been previously dishonoured at Gilgal. The cause was in the camp itself. His solemn words to Joshua, were, "Israel hath sinned." The light of the glory of Jehovah’s presence revealed the truth. The Shekinah flashed, as it were, throughout the camp, shining even into Achan’s tent, where the defiling treasure was hidden. Here was the secret of failure. Sin was in the camp, and how could Jehovah give victory to the people when sin was in their midst? The incident shows us the serious nature of Achan’s sin in the sight of the Lord. Its heinous character was not according to the value of his theft in pounds, shillings, and pence. After all, what had he taken? A Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, valuable but not priceless.

Why, then, had the anger of Jehovah fallen upon the nation? Where was the enormity of this sin? Achan had disobeyed God, and transgressed His express covenant. The command was that all the perishable goods in Jericho should be burned with fire, and the silver and the gold devoted to Him in His treasury, but Achan had disregarded this command. No doubt there was a vast amount of valuable treasure in Jericho, and Achan took but a small fraction of the whole. But this act of disobedience occurred at the conquest of the very first of the many cities of Canaan, and was the act of a responsible man in Israel. All must now learn the gravity of ignoring the word of Jehovah their Saviour, and that the sin of one man may leaven a community.

Secret Sin Brought to Light

Achan had yielded to the temptation of the moment. He regarded "iniquity in his heart." Seeing the articles of beauty and value, he coveted them. The Babylonish garment attracted him. He felt how well the garment would suit him as a prince of his people, what a distinction it would add to his appearance among the elders of his tribe. He took it to himself secretly, burying it in his tent that none might know, except perhaps his family.

Achan’s case is an illustration of the origin and progress of evil in departing from the living God. The last of the ten commandments is, "Thou shalt not covet." It is by the greedy desire to possess, the covetous wish arising in the heart, that the act of sin begins. The effect of these evil desires in a converted man is vividly described in Romans 7:1-25. And there is a period in the life of most Christians when they learn by practical experience, the sinfulness of their irrepressible desires, not so much desires after what is positively evil in itself, but after what God in His wisdom has prohibited. In Achan’s case, what harm was there in the garment, or in the silver and gold? The harm was not in the articles, but in Achan’s desire to possess what God had withholden from him. From the wrong desire the sinful act springs. The desire must be stifled and crushed. Recall the will of God, take delight in His word, turn away the eyes from beholding the attractions of the world. Paul said, "I had not known sin . . . except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Let us watch when the germ of covetousness sends up its first shoots, and judge it then and there, looking to Jesus Christ our Lord.

Achan then failed through seeking something for his personal adornment in the garment (literally, one from Shinar Genesis 11:2), and for some addition to his wealth in the silver and gold. Self came first, and not the word of the Lord, nor the treasury of the Lord. The "wedge" of gold is in the margin called a "tongue" of gold, meaning a small ingot shaped something like a tongue. Molten gold is frequently poured into a mould roughly conical in shape, for ease in removal from the mould when solid. Such an ingot would be described in commerce as a tongue of gold.

Now, as Achan’s theft is a warning lesson to us, so also is his subsequent conduct. After he had successfully appropriated this treasure and concealed it in his tent, there occurred the expedition to Ai, and its defeat. And there would be a great outcry in the camp when the fighting men returned. Everyone was wondering why this disaster had happened. But what did Achan think? Did not his conscience speak to him of his secret sin? Did God usually allow the enemies of His people to triumph over them? I think Achan’s conscience must have accused him when he saw his brethren coming into the camp with downcast faces and torn garments, and bearing all the marks of a stampede from Ai. Did it not say, "Achan, Achan, you have sinned. You stole the treasure, now hidden in your tent. Though none in the camp knows, God knows"?

Then, too, Achan knew that Joshua, whom all the tribes loved and respected as their leader, was lying upon his face before the ark of Jehovah, with dust upon his head, remaining there hour after hour. Did not his conscience say, "Achan, it is your fault that Joshua is mourning before the Lord, and lamenting over the defeat of His people. You are the cause of it all"? But Achan steeled his heart, and refused to admit even to himself that he was responsible for the catastrophe at Ai. The night passed, and Achan did not confess his sin. Jehovah had ordered that on the morrow lots should be cast, and by His own disposing of the lots, the secret sinner would be discovered. Accordingly, the twelve tribes assembled before the Lord in the morning. Surely Achan is now trembling in his shoes. Surely, he knows he will be soon detected, that the lot will fall upon him. "Oh, Achan, why not even now confess thy sin? why not acknowledge thy guilt? why not own before Jehovah thou hast broken His command, and that the stolen goods are in thy tent?" But his heart was obdurate. He had resisted the first whisperings of his conscience, and now he would not listen to its shouts. He hardened his heart, and his lips refused to confess his sin. But look, Achan’s tribe, the tribe of Judah, is taken by lot. Will he not confess now? No, his mouth is closed. Then, his family is taken; and then his household; but he still refuses to come forward. Then the lot falls upon him. His opportunity for confession is lost. All Israel knows that he is the offender. His was the sin that brought disaster upon the nation. The World Under the Tent Floor

Beloved friends, surely this solemn event has its lesson for us at this present juncture. I do not speak of the series of striking defeats suffered by the Christian profession in early days, but I refer to recent overthrows of which most must be aware. In countries, not so far from us, we know what those who name the name of the Lord are enduring for their faith. Testimony to the truth is being attacked by "the powers that be." In our own country, rationalism and superstition are sapping the vitals of Christianity. The name of the Lord is trampled in the dust. The shame of Ai is in our Gilgal.

Why is the world thus triumphant? Is it not because there is sin in the camp? The power of the world puts to flight the stalwarts of the faith because the lust of the world is secretly working in some hearts. Buried in some tents are stores of avarice and greed. Wealth and fashion have supplanted the word and will of the Lord in the soul. These unconfessed personal sins blight the testimony of the Lord, and lamentable failure spreads through the ranks of the witnesses for Christ.

What are we doing in the face of this widespread failure and disorder? We see the sad results plainly enough; do we seek the cause? The love of worldly gain, the love of ostentatious display must be somewhere at work in the homes, in the families, in the lives of those that profess the name of the Lord, and forget the honour due to it. By such indulgences of the lust of the flesh hidden perhaps from the assembly of God, the strength to overcome the world is paralysed. Is it not time to humble ourselves before the Lord? to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" "Is it in my family? in my tent?" Do not say you are not responsible for your family. Achan’s whole family, his sons and his daughters, were brought into the valley of Achor, but one man, the head of the family, was stoned. Achan was held accountable. His sin wrought shame upon his family, upon his tribe, upon his nation, and above all upon the name of Jehovah. His sin had changed his associations from holy privilege into sinful defilement and national dishonour.

Jehovah made manifest Achan’s secret sin. What had been done in secret was proclaimed upon the house-tops. The lot fell upon the guilty person in sight of all Israel. By the lot, the truth was

made manifest morally, as later Jehovah, by the casting of lots at Shiloh, made known His will regarding the partition of the land among the twelve tribes. Today the lot is superseded because God works by the Holy Spirit through the written word. The living word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and makes everything naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:12-13). If we judge ourselves by that word, we shall not be judged publicly by the Lord. But the light of the word should be allowed to shine upon our motives, not only upon our acts. God watches our desires, our purposes. These we can conceal even from our dearest. And because we can lock them up so securely, we may forget the eye of God. He knows our inmost intentions. How terrible if within the privacy of our own breasts there should be, as in Achan's tent, the treasures of the world hidden for our personal gratification! The truths involved in this chapter need practical application by us. Let us not disguise the fact that at this present time there may be in me, in you, something which is a positive hindrance to the spiritual well-being of our brethren. Something, not yet manifested, which prevents the power of God working effectually in our testimony to our fellow-saints and to the world, needs to be brought to light. May God reveal the cause of our present failure and our shame, and may our secret sins be confessed in the light of His countenance.

There are those who blame God for the spiritual disasters that have overtaken the assemblies in our day. They echo the language of Joshua, Why hast Thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us? Why hast Thou brought us into the place of witness against an apostate Christendom that our gatherings should crumble to pieces and our light be extinguished? God, they say, in His providence and government, has allowed scattering and division and disorder to eclipse the endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

What a shameful attitude! Joshua was prostrate upon his face, yet blaming the Lord. The word was, "Get thee up . . . Israel hath sinned." Neither can we blame God for our broken and shattered condition. We are wrong, we have failed, we have sinned. Let due confession be made by us before disaster spread still farther.

It must be carefully observed that the disgraceful rout at Ai is traced to the secret sin of one man at Jericho. Had Achan confessed his sin earlier and made reparation to the Lord, the public shame of his people would have been averted. Let us then begin with the person whose inner history we know best, and freely own before the Lord, "In this and in that, O Lord, I have sinned."

Achan's Memorial Stones

Achan confessed too late. After the lot had exposed him to his brethren, he said, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus have I done." He stood publicly convicted before his brethren, and he could do no less than admit his guilt. Had he confessed before, he would have been forgiven and cleansed, but now his confession could not screen him from the judgment of the Lord. If he had judged himself in his tent, he would not have been judged in the valley of Achor.

Let us beware of hidden things of deceit and dishonesty in our lives. Let the light of life shine into the inner recesses of our heart that we may confess all selfishness and pride and the work of the Lord be not hindered. Remember that the secret thoughts of the heart will be judged by Jesus Christ at last. We all shall be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ, and everyone will receive of the things done in the body. If we confess our sins now, we shall not be exposed then. If we are

cleansed now day by day, our radiating influence upon our brethren will be for their good and blessing, and not for their downfall and shame, like that of Achan.

Achan's secret sin found him out, and brought its penalty. His days were short in the land of promise, and he lost his inheritance there. His name was cut off from Israel, and he perished as a witness for Jehovah against the iniquity of the Amorites. He might have had his allotment in the territory of the tribe of Judah, but all he had was a heap of stones over him in the valley of Achor. He sowed to his flesh, and of the flesh he reaped corruption.

What a woeful ending for a man who had shared in the crossing of Jordan and in the downfall of Jericho! Achan was a troubler in Israel, and the memorial of stones in the valley of Achor proclaimed his folly and his sin to succeeding generations. He might have played a useful part as an elder of his people in Immanuel's land, but he perished on the very threshold of the blessings of divine promise. His burial-place remains as the valley of Achor, of trouble, unto this day, and will do until God in restoring mercy to His scattered people makes it a door of hope for their establishment in the land, and they will sing there as in the days of their youth (Hosea 2:15; Isaiah 65:10).

Achan should have been a witness for God in his life, but he only became a witness in his death. Lot's wife might have been the salt of the earth in corrupt Sodom, but it was in her death she became a pillar of salt, a terrible witness of warning amid the desolations of the smoking plain. Witness rendered in the life of a believer is witness to the love of God, to the grace of Christ Jesus, and to the power of the Holy Spirit; such is the life lived in the flesh by faith in the Son of God Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Witness in death after a misspent life is witness to the righteous judgment of God. Ananias and Sapphira because they lied to God in the sale of their land, keeping to themselves part of the price, both died under His hand. Their names stand on the earliest page of the church's history as a solemn warning to the gatherings today that God is not mocked, and that He Who walks in the midst of the candlesticks is He that is Holy and He that is True.

Let us take heed to these solemn examples, and beware of hidden sin. Sin concealed in the tent means blessing withheld in the camp. But sin confessed and judged before the Lord means victory throughout the tribes. After the discipline in the valley of Achor, the children of Israel utterly destroyed the wicked inhabitants of Ai (Joshua 8:1-35). A cairn of stones at the gate of the city was raised as a monument of their victory. It marked the burial-place of the king of Ai, who perished upon a tree of cursing. Like the memorial heap in the valley of Achor, it silently spoke of the sure judgment of evil. While the first was a witness that judgment begins in the house of God, the second testified that the ungodly and the sinner shall not escape (see 1 Peter 4:17-18). But Achan was of the seed of Abraham, the blessed of God, while the king of Ai was of the seed of Canaan, cursed of old (Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 9:25).

Let us humble ourselves, therefore, in the valley of Achor, and profit by the sin of Achan, who took of the accursed thing, and made the camp of Israel a curse, and troubled it (Joshua 6:18). A secret hoard of the silver and gold of Jericho and of the garments of Babylon leads to the curse of God upon our blessings, because we fail to give glory to His name (Malachi 2:2). The wealth of Canaan and the fashion factories of Shinar were associated with the worship of idols, and they must be anathema to those that call upon the name of the Lord, the one and only God. But Achan defiled himself with the accursed things, and, though he acted privily, he defiled his people also. Again, I

say, let us heed the lesson. But let us look at home. When Israel turned their backs at Ai, Achan was not expected to search the tents of his brethren for the cause; it was under his feet in his own tent, where he himself had put it. Depend upon it, the cause of the blight upon the gatherings of believers at home and abroad is locked up in your heart and mine. There can be no revival of assembly, vitality and power until the secret sins of morality and spirituality are brought to the light and judged individually before the Lord. Let him who is guilty of the sin of worldliness like Achan confess it in his own tent and forsake it lest he be publicly exposed and judged in the valley of Achor.

Chapter 39

04.06. The World against Christ and the Christian

The World against Christ and the Christian An Address on John 12:23-33; John 15:18-24; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 John 4:1-6.

W. J. Hocking.

Memorial Hall, London, 15th January, 1938.

It would be impossible in the time available to speak in detail upon the passages we have read together. It may be possible, however, to draw your attention particularly to what the word of God in them says regarding the world and its relations to Christ and the children of God. The subject of the world constitutes a real practical difficulty to most believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, because a great variety of solemn utterances about the world are found in the scriptures. They can hardly fail to realise their importance, but they become confused with regard to their exact meaning and application. For instance, reading the injunction, "Love not the world," they are puzzled in deciding what the world is, where it begins, and where it ends.

Instead of pursuing the scripture teaching of the subject, they set it aside as something beyond them and of very little importance for daily living. But this neglect is a great mistake. They are damaging their own souls. The difficulty they discover really lies with themselves. They approach the subject of the world in a wrong manner.

There is, without doubt, great difficulty in defining or describing in so many words the scriptural meaning of this term, but without a definition it is an easy matter for even the babe in Christ to decide for himself what the world is, if he regards it from the scriptural point of view. The scripture brings into prominence the world’s essential feature, which is an attitude of hostility to God and His Son. And this spirit of hostility was shown very bitterly towards the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. For the child of God, therefore, the world is made up of whatever is opposed to God and Christ. This character of enmity to divine Persons by the world is very evident in the Gospel and Epistles of John, where it appears side by side with the wonderful revelations of the Father by the Son, and with those made by the Holy Spirit of the adorable Person of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The true nature of the world is taught there by contrast, like the blackness of darkness made known by the brilliance of light. This vivid contrast between God and the world is of immense practical value to the believer. The world’s boundaries are easily determined. If I am walking with the Lord, imbibing His thoughts and His teaching, I know that what is not of Him is of the world. All that I have as a child of God is not of the world. The blessings of grace that are mine as a vessel of the Holy Spirit are in sharp contrast with the things of the world, as things of darkness are opposed to things of light. Is it not easy for those who are of the day to distinguish between light and darkness? The "World" is Moral not Material

John at the beginning of his Gospel makes the distinction between the world in a material sense and in a moral sense. He opens with the Lord Jesus as the Word made flesh, the Maker of all things that were made. He came into the world that He Himself had made, but the world that man

had made knew Him not. In the material world, He found a moral world, a world of spiritual darkness. The Light shone in this darkness, but contrary to the law of the material world, the darkness in the moral world did not comprehend the Light, and was not dispersed (John 1:5). The presence of Him Who is the Light of the world revealed without removing the density of the world's darkness and blindness. And throughout this Gospel, it is emphasised in a variety of ways that the Son of God was in the world, but the world knew Him not.

Thus, the evangelist John uses the term, "world," to describe the moral condition of that vast organisation, which man built up for himself after he was driven out of the Garden of Eden. By his skill and his learning, man gradually formed a great system for managing all the affairs of this life without the help or the recognition of God. Sinful indulgence and selfish ease became the primary elements of man's world, and when the Son of God came into it, He was despised, hated, and crucified.

There is an analogy between John 1:1-51 and Genesis 1:1-31. In Genesis, we read of a state of chaos in the world of creation. The earth was without form and void. Darkness was upon the face of the deep. After its original creation, it had fallen into this condition of disorder and confusion, and then it was that the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters. In John, we are shown a moral waste, a moral confusion. Darkness covers the face of the world. And we also see the most astonishing fact of all; when the light shines upon this darkness, the darkness resists its approach. Such a thing was unknown before. When the sun rises daily in the heavens, the darkness flees away, but when the Lord Jesus came into the world as its Light, the darkness of the world remained, and even deepened. The utter obduracy of man's heart in the individual and in the community was made manifest once for all. And the inveterate enmity of the world-system to God and His Son was finally established at the cross of Calvary. The Son's Testimony to the Father The Son's presentation of Himself to the world as the Revealer of the Father is set out with divine fullness in the Gospel of John. Therein the Spirit of God selects a few of the heavenly marvels of His mercy and kindness, isolating each one and attaching to it the conversational discourse of our Lord. The teacher in Israel and the Samaritan at the well, a sinful woman, a cripple and a blind man, all are made occasions for the Son to pour out upon this weary, thirsty earth, the fountains of grace in God the Father. But the Gospel shows this display of heavenly light shining upon the dark background of human sin. Chapter after chapter witnesses that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The world knew not its Creator; the world did not recognise the Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, when He came into the world. Always and everywhere the Son testified of the Father, but the world did not receive His testimony. On leaving the world, the Son confessed to the Father, "The world hath not known Thee." His perfect testimony had only aroused the world's deep-seated anger against the Father and the Son, as the Lord Himself said, "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." The Father's Testimony to the Son

Because the Son was doing the will of Him that sent Him, His service was accompanied by the Father's testimony to the Son. Without considering this testimony throughout the Gospel at length, we think of the beautiful and striking instance in John 11:1-57, John 12:1-50. Death had come into the family where the Son had revealed the love of the Father, and where it was enjoyed. The bereaved sisters were stricken with sorrow, but the dead Lazarus was soon called forth from the tomb at the bidding of the Son. By that act of resurrection, the name of the Son was glorified, but the Holy Spirit shows in the chapters that the Father's hand was throughout directing the

movements of the Son with this end in view. When the Lord received the urgent message from the sisters of their brother’s sickness, He tarried where He was beyond Jordan. He knew what was before Him to do, and what was before Lazarus and Martha and Mary to suffer, and that all was planned for the glory of God. At the appointed moment, He proceeded with the dignity inseparable from the obedient Son of God to the house of mourning in Bethany. The Lord knew that He was about to be declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection of dead Lazarus, nevertheless, His sympathies were in fullest exercise towards the sorrowing sisters. They did not understand His slowness in responding to their appeal. They were dull in believing that the delay was part of the Father’s plan to glorify His Son, not at the bedside of Lazarus, but at the graveside. But the knowledge of the Father’s purpose to raise Lazarus in no wise diminished the exquisite sympathy of our Lord for the mourners. His tears flowed spontaneously, if I may with reverence say so. He wept, not mechanically as part of a plan, but because His loving heart was moved with compassion for the sorrows of bereavement. His tears told the Jews how Jesus loved Lazarus, and they, like the sisters, could not understand why He had not prevented him from dying. In a human fashion and in a worldly way, they reasoned that the love that showed such sympathy might have shown its power at the first by healing the sick man. But unerring wisdom and unfathomable love had ordered the circumstances. The Father was directing, the Son was obeying, and all was working together for good, that is, for the glory of God. At the graveside, the Son bore testimony to the Father’s guidance and His own dependence. "Father," He said, "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and . . . hearest Me always." This He said that the people might know He was the Sent One of the Father. He had come to the tomb at the very moment the Father would have Him there. Obediently to the Father’s will, He raised Lazarus, and delivered him to his sisters. And by the act of resurrection, the Father glorified the Son in Bethany, having heard His prayer. In John 12:27, we again find witness that the Father in heaven heard the Son on earth. When the Son said, "Father, save Me from this hour . . . Father glorify Thy name," there was an audible voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." This august communion was another testimony by the Father to the eternal Sonship of the Son of man, as blessedly significant then as when previously the Father spoke to Him by the waters of Jordan and upon the Mount of Transfiguration. The Character of the World Elicited At this juncture, the Lord’s solemn utterance is introduced: "Now is the judgment of this world." Its hostility to the Son was implacable. The world would not receive the witness of the Father. "This voice came not because of Me," the Lord said, "but for your sakes." No weightier evidence to the Son’s claims could be given them. Earlier the Lord had said, "The Father Himself, Who hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape" (John 5:37). The Gospel records the Father’s testimony, and also the Son’s. The Son of God Himself is shown, speaking words that are spirit and life, doing works that no other had done. These the world had heard and seen, and could not deny their truth. But the world refused to accept the Son or to receive His ministry. With the Father’s voice from heaven, the Son’s presentation to the world was completed. And with this refusal of the Father’s witness, the omniscient Son declared, "Now is the judgment of this world."

Historically, the Lord was speaking immediately before His apprehension by the officers of the Jews in the garden. So that the world’s testing-time had now expired, and the world had displayed its true character. It was not merely passively blind to the beauty of Christ, but actively hostile to Him and His claims, hating Him and thirsting for His blood. The plans for His arrest and crucifixion

had been made, and accordingly, the Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world."

He had not come to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Nevertheless it had been judged, not by the Son of man sitting upon a throne, but by the Son of God walking through the world in grace and truth. Thereby, its moral and spiritual condition was revealed, and its hatred is recorded in the scripture for the guidance of the children of God, who are to walk through it even as He walked.

Having passed sentence on the world for its rejection of Himself and His Father, the Lord said further, "Now shall the prince of this world be judged." The world that knew not God was under the dominion of a rival ruler. And with the judgment of the world, there was the virtual expulsion of Satan, its prince, who had sinned from the beginning. Every doer of sin in the world is of the devil, and the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Now, speaking from the divine standpoint, the Son sees the ruler of the world cast out of it. Historically, Satan was not then expelled. But as the death of Christ was the hour of the world's judgment, so that death nullified the power of Satan and ended his dominion in the world (Hebrews 2:14). The basis for delivering the world from the presence and power of the devil for a thousand years was laid at the cross when the Son of man was "lifted up." In the Apocalypse, we have a further testimony to the ejection of the prince of this world. First, John sees him as the great red dragon cast down from heaven to earth by Michael and his angels (Revelation 12:1-17). The devil is filled with great wrath, knowing his time is short.

Next, the prophet, beholding the coming of the Son of man as the Warrior King, sees the ruler of this world cast out of the earth into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-15). An angel binds him with a great chain, and he is imprisoned for a thousand years. The world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ is established. The Son of man reigns in glory over the world, which is freed from the power and subtlety of the old serpent, the devil, whose end John sees also, for he is eventually cast into the lake of fire, prepared for him and his angels. This hour of triumph the Son of God saw in the hour of His rejection by the world, and announced it before He departed out of this world, as a warning to His foes and a comfort to His own. We need not fear the power of the great adversary, nor the world in which he rules. The Lord assures our hearts by these words. He tells us that the world which will hate and persecute us is judged, and that the great prince who governs and guides its affairs is deposed. His power is already broken and neutralised, and he himself doomed to everlasting punishment. The Son's Lifting Up

We come now to the Lord's third solemn statement. He spoke concerning the death He should die. "And I, if be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Three times in this Gospel, reference is made to His "lifting up." As Son of man He was to be lifted up, even as the serpent was lifted up in wilderness. Thus He would become the object of faith to men everywhere (John 3:14-15).

Again, the Lord, speaking to the disbelieving Jews, said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He" (John 8:28). After they had crucified Him, they would know, not immediately, but eventually, the glory of His Person, and that He had come to them as the Spokesman of the Father. In passing, I may mention that Isaiah twice uses this expression of Christ in the sense of exaltation in glory. He saw the Lord on a throne, "high and lifted up," His

train filled the temple, and the whole earth was full of His glory (Isaiah 6:1-13). It was a vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the same chapter Isaiah foretold the gross darkness and blindness that should come upon the people through their unbelief in the Messiah. Reference to this prophecy occurs in the chapter before us (John 12:39-41).

Isaiah also uses the term when speaking of Christ as the Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah 52:13). Speaking of the glory God will give Him, the prophet said, "He shall be exalted and extolled," that is, "exalted and lifted up." This was fulfilled when God raised up the crucified Jesus, and made Him Lord and Christ at His right hand. As such, the Jews will believe on Him, and acknowledge Him as the great "I am." Seeing Him lifted up in glory, they will confess their sin in lifting Him up on the tree, and will mourn in the touching language of the next chapter (Isaiah 53:1-12). The Lord here speaks for the third time of His being lifted up to die, and says that this will be the centre of attraction for all men. As the crucified Son of man, He will draw to Himself, not merely the Jews, not only the Greeks, like those who had just desired to see Him, but all men in the widest and fullest sense. Now the gospel is preached in all the world, and whosoever believes is saved, but the Lord’s words look to the future time when the whole world will bow beneath the sway of His sceptre. The World and Christ’s Own

Let us pass to the second part of our subject — the world and believers. We have seen that when our Lord came into the world, He was received with unmitigated hatred and with a resolute determination to end His unwelcome testimony by His death. Now we are to consider what is the attitude of the world towards His disciples. Would the world be content with the death of the Master, and adopt a policy of liberty and toleration towards His followers? The Lord Himself before His departure made it perfectly clear to His own what would be the future relation of the world. During His own presence in the world, His disciples had been immune from the attacks of the Jews. But He was going to the Father, and the little company of believers in Him would remain in the world. What would be their experience? As we read in the verses from John 15:1-27, the Lord showed them that the world would in His absence oppose them as it had opposed Him. The radical moral principles of the world-system do not change. The antipathy of evil to good is seen from the beginning. Cain’s malicious hatred of righteous Abel appears in the deadly enmity of the Jews against Christ. The same spirit of animosity would remain in the world against those that bore the name of Christ. As the world hated God and His Son and His Holy Spirit, so the world would hate that which belonged to Christ.

It is important to observe that in these verses, the Lord attributes the world’s hatred of His disciples to the fact that they belonged to Him. They were His servants, and the servant is not greater than his Lord. "If they have persecuted Me," He said, "they will also persecute you." The world would not hate them because they were law-breakers, or because of objectionable features in their moral character, but because the Lord had chosen them out of the world to be His own. The resemblance of their demeanour to Christ’s would rouse the world’s ire. The Lord had spoken to them of this resemblance to Himself in the allegory of the Vine, found earlier in this chapter. He was the True Vine, bearing fruit for the Father. "Ye are the branches," He said, and the branches of the Vine were to be fruitful even as He was. Their fruit would show they belonged to the Vine. Grapes could not be borne by the thorn or the thistle, or even by the fig tree or the olive tree. A special feature of the fruit of the Vine was that it was appreciated and valued by the Husbandman. The life of our Lord was a continual source of enjoyment to the Father. All that He desired was in

the Vine. Even during the hours of darkness upon the cross, the Father found what was in His own heart fully expressed and reciprocated in the heart of the Son.

Now the disciples, as branches of the Vine, were admitted into close communion with the Son. The fruit He bore for the Father they must bear for the Father also. As the living branches abode in the Vine and were inseparable from it, so the fruit of the branches would be indistinguishable from the fruit of the Vine. They were to keep His commandments and abide in His love, as He kept His Father’s commandments and abode in His love.

Moreover, as His disciples they were to bear much fruit, and His joy would abide in them, and that joy would be full, giving the fruit an attractive appearance and beauty for the eye of the Father. And just as such fruit in them would awaken the good pleasure of the Husbandman, so it would awaken the bitter enmity of the world against them.

They themselves were to love one another. The world would hate them and persecute them for seeking to please the Father and for loving Christ, following Him, and bearing fruit in His name as branches of the True Vine. Such conduct proved they were not of the world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own," the Lord told them. Apart from the Vine, the world has its associations, societies, and brotherhoods, for which it cares. Those that stand aloof from its social activities are misjudged, despised, and persecuted. The disciples of the Lord, immediately after His departure, experienced this persecution. The forces of the world arrayed themselves against them for their extermination, as they had done against the Lord Himself. He had warned them of what was before them. Was not the world’s persecution part of the Father’s purging that the branches of the Vine might bring forth more fruit? But the Lord would not have His own fear the power of the world. They had His example of submission before them. He would not ask them to endure more than He had endured. Do not be alarmed, He says, as it were; what they did to Me, they will do to you. "If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also." "All these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake because they know not Him that sent Me." Could we count it a hardship today, if we had to pass through persecution? By the mercy of God, Christians in this country have been immune from persecution for two or three centuries. But the world has not lost its persecuting spirit. And violent persecution by "the powers that be," may spring up again. We may have to face it because we belong to Christ, and endure its hatred because we bear a likeness to our departed Lord. Should such fiery trial arise, may we be found faithful. The World Not to be Loved But the relation between the world and believers has another aspect, which appears in the verses read from 1 John 2:1-29. There we find the converse of what we have been considering. As in the Gospel we saw the attitude of the world to the followers of Christ, so in the Epistle we see the attitude of God’s children to the world. They are not to love the world nor its things. This exhortation is there addressed particularly to those in the family of God whom the apostle calls the "young men." Of this class, he says, "ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The last of these three clauses is repeated from the previous verse, showing that overcoming the wicked one, the ruler of this world, is the outstanding feature of the young men. This class had grown up from the state of spiritual infancy. They had acquired spiritual strength and spiritual intelligence. Moreover, they had withstood the persecuting power of the wicked prince of this world, and they were overcomers. They had resisted the terrifying agencies of Satan, and were victorious in the onslaught. Had these young men, who had resisted the devil, and from whom he had fled, nothing further to fear? In seeking to

overthrow the faith of those that are Christ’s, has Satan no other tactics to employ than those of persecution? We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. If, as the roaring lion, he fails to devour the saints, he will, as the deceitful serpent, seek to lure them to destruction. If his terrors are met in the strength of the Lord and the power of His might, he will endeavour to mislead and deceive and ensnare. The young men are to beware of the seductive influences of the world. Satan will bring before them its many pleasant and attractive things. By such means, the old serpent beguiled Eve in the garden. He pointed out the attractive qualities of the forbidden fruit. His persuasive speeches deceived the woman, and she took of the fruit herself, and also gave of it to her husband. They both were overcome by the wicked one, not by force, but by fraud.

Hence, those who had overcome the power of the wicked one are warned against his earliest artifice. The enemy would set before the young men worldly objects cunningly designed to excite the affections of the heart and the desires of the mind. Therefore John’s exhortation is, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The love of the world is the service of Satan, its prince. The apostle’s prohibition is most comprehensive in its terms. The entire world-system and its various component parts must be excluded from the range of the believer’s affections. The love of money, for example, is a root of every evil. The love of gain is a canker to the soul. The advantages of the well-watered plains of Jordan led Lot to the gate of Sodom. The young men were not to love the world in this respect, nor in any of its things. Is this admonition as weighty with us as it should be? Have we heard it so often that it has lost much of its force? It may be that we take care not to allow our hearts to run after the world as a human organisation, and that we avoid those things in it that do not directly appeal to our particular tastes. But, forgetting that the injunction covers all that is in the world, we permit ourselves a little indulgence in what we consider a minor matter. Reversing the practice of the scribes, we get rid of the camel, but swallow the gnat. For instance, we read in private what we would not listen to in public. We love that little indulgence, for it seems to us but a little thing. Yet our relish for it proves our love of the worldly thing. The apostle is emphatic that the love of the world and the love of the Father are incompatible. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Only here, I think, do we read of the love of the Father, that is, of our love of the Father. We read of the love the Father has bestowed upon us, and also of our love of God and of Christ. But in this passage our love of the Father is set in contrast with our love for the world. They are mutually exclusive. The love of the Father is the height of Christian privilege. In the Son the Father is seen and known. In Christ the love of the Father’s heart for us is revealed, and in Him our love of the Father is consolidated. This revelation of the Father is concealed from the world. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee," the Lord said at the close of His ministry. But to His own He had manifested the Father’s name, having chosen them out of the world. For any of His own, therefore, to love the world was to quench the love of the Father in them. They would be loving what hated the Beloved of the Father.

Nothing in the world is "of the Father." The things of the world, the desires of the flesh within, the desires of the eyes without, and the pride or vainglory of life are "of the world;" all exclude God and exalt self. The Father’s object is the glory of the Son, and the world’s object is the gratification of selfish lust. No heart can love and serve both God and mammon. But while the world and its lust is passing away like a vain show, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The World’s Recent Encroachments The discernment of the world by believers is a simple process, and presents no

difficulty to us as long as we use the criterion given us in scripture. What is not of the Father is of the world. For our undoing, Satan seeks to mystify us about the nature of this distinction. Many argue the vague question how far a believer may go in the direction of the world without endangering his soul. Some have been induced to take up worldly associations and occupations, and settle the question by actual experiment.

There is, alas, no doubt that the world and its things have encroached upon the lives of brethren in the Lord in a marked degree during the last few years. Without attributing this departure from the love of the Father to any particular persons, those who can look back, say, forty years know perfectly well that the world has gained a decided foothold among us. The world has influenced our words, our actions, our habits; it has come into our gatherings, our worship, our service, our homes, our occupations. Worldliness is even now eating like a canker into the spiritual life of many who belong to Christ. The result has been disastrous. Fruit for God has withered. Weakness cripples the gatherings. There is no power to recover some who have drifted openly into the world. Pious families have been broken up by the love of the world and its things. I need not continue this harrowing recital.

Why is this widespread ruination? Is it not due to love of the world? Have not the brethren succumbed to the deceitfulness of Satan? The great world-ruler had his eye upon them as a company of brave witnesses for the truth of Christ. He sought to destroy their testimony — not by violent persecution, at first, but by deceit and flattery, by the pride of life. And by introducing the things of the world, he has caused the love of the Father in many to wax cold.

You know how spiritual weakness prevails, not only in your immediate association, but widely throughout Christendom. You know it best perhaps in your own heart and life. Where is fidelity to the truth? Where is the spirit of true piety? Where is the holy life that appeals to those that know not God or Christ? The Holy Spirit is grieved, and is hindered in His working through the ministry of the word and the preaching of the gospel. Why is this? is it not because of the defiling and paralysing influences of worldliness among the children of God? The World’s False Teaching

Let me now say only a little on the verses read from 1 John 4:1-21. They also are of practical importance to us. Those in 1 John 2:1-29 related to conduct, these in 1 John 4:1-21 to teaching or doctrine. The former deal with our love, the latter with our faith.

John writes, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." And he goes on to show how those that are of God may protect themselves from the effects of false doctrine, the teaching of the spirit of antichrist which is already in the world.

He says that many false prophets have gone out into the world, that is, men who pretended that their words were uttered with the authority of God, but who were liars and deceivers, and therefore, emissaries of Satan. It is generally thought that because they went out into the world, the reference must be to teachers of evil doctrine who leave the assemblies for the world. No doubt the description includes this class, but it surely applies also to those who do their deadly work in the gathering itself, where the children of God are, and are liable to be misled. "World" in John has, as we have already seen, a moral meaning more often than a local one. Going into the world may not mean moving from one place to another, but the adoption of worldly principles and ways of acting and thinking. The false prophet is guided by worldly habits of thought, and not by

the Spirit of truth. For example, the teacher of evil doctrine approaches the scriptures from a worldly standpoint, regarding them as merely human documents. The result is that he misreads and misunderstands the revelation of God, and he, consequently, teaches what is false, not true, evil, not good. By such doctrine the children of God are led astray from the truth. Thus, the world can, by religious teaching, not only turn away the affections from the Father to itself, but also turn away the mind from the truth of God to the lie of Satan.

Because of this danger, John warns the children of God, and bids them try or prove the spirits before believing them. Do these men speak according to God or to the world? Because the false prophet has a worldly mind, he has a worldly voice; he therefore speaks against Christ, not for Him. He is not loyal and true to the Son of God. Hence I know he is a deceiver and an anti-christ, though I may not be able to confute his arguments. By using this test, even the babes in the family of God will be preserved from error, their hearts being full of love and reverence for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

False doctrine invariably affects the spiritual life and communion of those who imbibe it. The worship of God is affected. How can I rightly worship God in spirit and in truth, if I hold a doctrine which is false? Evil teaching poisons the mind and heart of the one who believes it. In prayer and worship, the introduction of the elements of the world destroys the sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Prayer is no longer a power with God; it loses its intimacy and fervency, and becomes formal and idle. The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

Plainly, we must avoid error in divine teaching — that error which is one of the things of the world. We are not to confuse the spirits that are not of God with the Spirit of God. And the apostle gives us the mark whereby we may distinguish the one from the other. The teaching of the Spirit of God is marked by the confession of Jesus Christ come in the flesh; while the spirit of anti-christ which is in the world lacks this confession. "Hereby know ye," John says, "the Spirit of God." We are to test every spirit and all teaching by its fidelity to Jesus Christ, come in flesh.

It is well to mark the exact rendering of this important passage, which should be, "Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God." The omission of the little word, "is," gives fresh force and significance to the test. The confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh might imply no more than the acknowledgement of the historical advent of Jesus Christ, which an infidel or heretic might do. But the confession of Him come in flesh is another matter; this is owning Jesus Christ, come in flesh in all the majesty of what He is in Himself, the Eternal Son of God. This distinction is most helpful in understanding the truth involved in the verse. We are not to look merely for the confession of the historical event, as the ordinary translation implies, but for the confession of the Deity of Jesus Christ in His incarnation. The Man Jesus Christ must be acknowledged as God manifest in flesh, the Word made flesh. In Him, come in flesh, was and is the full Godhead. This mark is inseparable from the teaching of the Spirit of God. The absence of this hall-mark in any doctrine proves it to be of the spirit of anti-christ, and not of God. But the apostle would not alarm his little children; they were of God, and had overcome the false prophets, because the Spirit of God was in them, and He is greater than the spirit of anti-christ which is in the world. False teachers are of the world and speak of what is worldly in order to please the ear of the world. We have the apostolic teaching which is of God, by which we may discern what is the spirit of truth and what is the spirit of error. In closing, let me remind you of what our brief reference to

these passages has taught us about the world. In the Gospel we saw the world's rejection of the testimony of the Father and the Son, and its bitter hostility to Christ Himself and those that are His. In the Epistle, there was, first, the warning against the attractive things of the world and making them the object of our affections. Then, we were exhorted to take heed what we hear and to prove all things we hear by the infallible test, that is, the confession of Jesus Christ, come in flesh.

Let us walk with Christ, and not with the world. Let us keep our garments unspotted from the world. Let us love the truth which is in Christ Jesus that we may be preserved from the errors which are in the world. Let us seek to be counted friends of the Lord Jesus, and avoid the friendship of the world which is enmity against God.

Chapter 40

05.00. Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

W. J. Hocking.

05.000. Contents

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Chapter 42

05.01. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

01. — "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

(Mark 1:1)

It is both interesting and instructive to observe what guards are set in holy Scripture to prevent our misapprehension of its main object. For while all divine communications are didactic and disciplinary (2 Timothy 3:16-17) in a general sense, their supreme characteristic, in the New Testament at any rate, is that they constitute the revelation of the Father and the Son, and on this account such precautions are rendered the more necessary. In that sacred monologue to which we are graciously made privy in the Fourth Gospel, the eternal Son, speaking to the holy Father concerning His followers, said, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). How shall we not then prize such utterances, given by the Father to Jesus, given by the Son to us, that we might know both the Sender and the Sent One! But then we are in danger of missing the lofty nature of these communications. Do we on all occasions realise the personality of the Author, speaking Himself and of Himself to us as we read the Bible? This, however, is the aim of our spiritual education — that we should, above the din of controversy and the bustle of the marts, hear habitually the voice of Him who saw us "under the fig-tree." We shall find an abundance of smooth stones in the stream, with which our Goliaths may be smitten down. But we cannot slake the thirst of our spirits with pebbles. We need to drink "of the brook in the way," of the water of the well in Bethlehem. Truly, the power of God can make such stones bread; but we are not entitled to expect that Christian vigour will be maintained by perpetual miracle, and in order to live we need "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," as our Lord Himself said. And the construction of the phrase just quoted is highly significant. This vivifying power of the word of God is here intimately associated with its reception direct from "the mouth of God."It was the breath of the Almighty that infused the spirit of life into Adam’s inanimate clay at the beginning. Through grace we have been created afresh in Christ Jesus, and it is the theopneustic scriptures which sustain the new man. And their special value in this respect lies in the fact that in them we receive a personal communication from Him who is the Life.

Men labour zealously, but fruitlessly, to invent a definition of the inspiration of the Scriptures which shall be alike agreeable to the "honest doubter" and to the simple believer. But light and darkness may be as readily reconciled as doubt and faith. And after all, the definition of a fact is of negligible importance in comparison with the fact itself. And while few are qualified to judge of the adequacy or otherwise of a proposed definition of inspiration, it is within the power of the humblest saint to hold to the invincible authority and the incorruptible truth of God inherent in the Scriptures, both being qualities which are inseparable from a communication made by God to man. The foregoing remarks have been necessarily somewhat abstract in character. It is proposed, therefore, to illustrate their general drift by examples from the Bible itself — one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

Abraham was a man who understood what it was to receive personal communications from God. One such instance in his career of faith is recorded in Genesis 15:1-21, and this will suffice to indicate the principle involved. Abram had arrived at a critical epoch in his history. For nearly ten years he had now been wandering as a pilgrim and a stranger in a land definitely promised to his seed, he himself to become the channel of blessing to all the families of the earth. After all those years of patience, these promises still seemed but a mirage of the desert. Abram was a childless man of eighty-five, the apparent heir to his possessions being Dammesek Eliezer.

It is at this juncture that the word of Jehovah comes to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." But this reassurance only awakens a fretful plaint from the man of deferred hopes as though he had failed to judge Him faithful who had promised. And how is this flickering flame of faith rekindled? It is significant to note that again we read, "The word of Jehovah came unto him [but not in a vision this time], saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." This, however, was not an impersonal word, but such a communication as brought Abram into personal intercourse with Jehovah Himself; for it is added immediately, "And HE brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and HE said unto him, So shall thy seed be." This was a confirmation in amplified terms, though not yet with the oath given on mount Moriah (Genesis 22:16-18;Hebrews 6:13-18), of the initial promise to Abram, whose faith and hope now needed "encouragement." How it would revive and strengthen his faith to hear the voice of Him who had promised, and to be assured that though long years had passed He had not forgotten! Moreover, to accomplish this result the more thoroughly, the Lord Himself conveyed this reassurance to His patient but not perfect servant. Accordingly we gather that the desired end was attained. The faith of Abram, impressed by the authority and faithfulness of Him who was speaking, laid hold of the living God, so that we find it written, "He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." And here we have the cardinal principle, which must ever underlie the life of the just, as the New Testament fully shows, wrought in the heart of this ancient saint by the word as it proceeded out of the mouth of God. In Mary of Bethany we have a New Testament instance of one whose inner life received sustenance and nourishment by personal communications from the lips of the Lord Himself. On a memorable occasion she sat at His feet, and heard His word (Luke 10:39), selecting this attitude of her own free choice, impelled thereto no doubt by some sense within her of the real personality of the lowly Prophet of Nazareth. She received His words at first hand, choosing in this "the good part"; and they were not received in vain. Living, as we thus see her, by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God’s Spokesman, she learned what most seemed to have missed, that the way of the Lord to the hill of glory lay through the valley of death. Six days before the Passover Mary came to the house of Simon the leper to anoint His body beforehand for the burial. Neither did she undertake the vain errand of seeking that body at Joseph’s tomb on the first of the following week. She knew He was not there, but risen as He had told her and many besides. But was not her superior intelligence due in great part, if not entirely, to the fact that her teaching wasviva voce,while she, realising in some degree who the august Person her teacher was, received His instruction in all faith and reverence?

Only in like manner can the maximum value be obtained from the Scriptures today. Those alone who humbly and prayerfully seek Him who is the Author and Subject of the Bible will hear His voice. To seek Him apart from the word is to be cheated by the vain imaginings of our deceitful

nature. To read the word apart from Him is to expose ourselves to a similar cheat. He who is the Truth is to be found only in the word which is truth.

These reflections have been awakened by the phrase standing at the commencement of Mark's Gospel — "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Its abruptness has occasioned much divergent opinion as to its exact meaning, though in this particular it accords perfectly with the terse and staccato style of Mark. The simplest and most acceptable view seems to be to regard it as forming the inspired title to the whole book that follows. For what is the object of an inscription to a given volume? Is it not to prepare the reader for what is to be found therein? And this divine title to the Second Gospel is preparatory, informing the reader of its sacred contents, that with reverence and godly fear he may receive the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is easy to forget that it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came forth from Nazareth in Galilee, who ate with publicans and sinners, who was accused by the scribes of blasphemy and of casting out demons by Beelzebub, who was mocked, scourged, and crucified. But can any believer doubt the deeper significance these facts assume to us as we read them in the remembrance of the eternal Godhead of the holy Sufferer, and even more so when in the communion of the Holy Spirit we receive them as it were from His very lips?

Jesus Christ is presented in this Gospel as the Servant of Jehovah, who, according to the ancient prophecies, was to come into the world. How fitting before we read an account of His ways in lowly service that we should be reminded of His Deity, lest we should in heart detract from His glory! He who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, learning obedience by the things He suffered, was Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Php 2:6-9;Hebrews 5:8). But adequate testimony to His Sonship is recorded in other parts of this Gospel. There is a double witness from on high. At the baptism in Jordan a voice out of the heavens declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11), a testimony repeated from the "excellent glory" on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:7). There was also a double witness from beneath. Unclean spirits fell down before Him, saying, "Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:11). So also Legion says, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7).

We may also refer to His own recorded witness before the high priest. When the latter asked Him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" and received the reply, "I am," he understood the nature of the claim thus made. "The high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death" (Mark 14:61-64). The remarkable expression of the Roman centurion at the crucifixion is also given in this Gospel. "When the centurion which stood over against him saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). There has been some discussion as to the exact sense in which the soldier used these words, and whether he is to be regarded as a confessor of Christ like Simon Peter (Matthew 16:16). But it is sufficient to see that he rebutted the charge of the Jews who said to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). After witnessing the portentous signs of His death, the centurion was constrained, impartially if not unwillingly, to declare, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Thus we see that in this Gospel which portrays the Servant of Jehovah in His ways of perfect obedience, His eternal Sonship is jealously guarded, and that this character is given Him from its opening sentence. Incidentally, we also gather that there is cogent internal evidence for the retention here of the phrase, "the Son of God," which some critical editors of the text have rejected on insufficient external grounds.

05.02. The Quotations from the Old Testament

02. — The Quotations from the Old Testament

"Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet,* Behold, I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way.** The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready*** the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mark 1:2-3, R.V.).

{*A.V. in the prophets." **A.V, adds, "before thee," ***A.V. "prepare ye,"} In the abrupt manner characteristic of this Gospel a citation from the ancient prophecies is placed as a preface without any such introductory phrase as is used, for instance, by Matthew: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet," etc.; and again, speaking of John the Baptist, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice," etc. (Matthew 1:22;Matthew 3:3). Luke also, like Matthew, places the historical fulfilment before the prediction itself. He records that John came preaching the baptism of repentance, "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, The voice," etc. (Luke 3:3-4). Mark, in contra-distinction from these two, first quotes the written prophecy and then relates the historical fact of John's preaching and baptism. Why is this inversion of the usual order which we find in John's Gospel (John 19:24; John 19:28; John 19:36), as well as in the two Synoptists? Believing as we do in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, we believe this reversed order is designedly so arranged.

Before, however, seeking to discover the purpose of this arrangement, another noteworthy circumstance must be mentioned which can hardly escape the diligent student of this Gospel. The quotation is singular in this respect, viz., that it is the only reference made by Mark, in the course of his narrative, to the Old Testament as prophecy, or authority. The other Evangelists, especially Matthew and Luke, make more frequent reference. Mark's first word almost is the recital of an inspired utterance, but it is the only instance. Many examples occur in which this Evangelist gives the words of our Lord Himself containing His quotation of the scriptures (see Mark 4:12; Mark 10:6-8; Mark 10:19; Mark 12:1; Mark 12:10; Mark 12:19; Mark 12:26; Mark 12:29; Mark 12:31; Mark 12:36, et al.), while he also in the course of the narrative makes more or less evident allusion to Old Testament phrases (see Mark 1:44; Mark 2:26; Mark 4:29; Mark 4:32; Mark 6:34; Mark 11:9; Mark 11:19; Mark 15:24; Mark 15:29; Mark 15:36; Mark 16:19); but in the latter instances the fact that the phrases occur elsewhere is not mentioned.*

{*The quotation from Isaiah 53:12, "He was numbered with the transgressors," prefaced by "and the scripture was fulfilled" (Mark 15:28), is omitted in the critical texts, and therefore, does not affect the statement above.}

Here, however, the quotation is made by Mark himself, and is introduced impressively by the statement, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet," showing (1) that it is a written record, not an oral tradition, and (2) that it is an ancient prediction by a prophet of God. Then the terms of the prophecy having been recited, its historical fulfilment in the preaching of John the Baptist is duly

stated.

Let us now consider why this Old Testament scripture is brought before us here, and why it is placed before, rather than after, the notice of the event to which it is shown to relate. And the first general consideration is that this passage, so strikingly emphatic by its singularity, establishes before the history begins an unmistakable connection between this "gospel of Jesus Christ" and the burden of ancient prediction concerning the coming One. It is true that here in Mark "there is no blowing of trumpets to usher in the King in due style and title" as in Matthew. Neither have we the fulness of detail concerning the birth and early days of the Son of man amid circumstances of lowly Jewish piety such as are given by Luke. In John, human genealogy would obviously be out of place in the Gospel that treats of. Him as the Word who was God, as it would equally be, for contrasted reasons, in Mark's Gospel, where He is portrayed as the Servant. As another has said, "Mark is devoted to the details of His service, especially His service in the gospel, accompanied by suited power and signs. . . . Hence as the Lord was the perfect Servant, so the perfect account of it says nothing here of a genealogy; for who would ask the pedigree of a servant?" But if the genealogy of a servant is not an essential preface to an account of his labours, is it not fitting that his credentials should be stated? Here was the One from God, even "as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70). God, "having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless the people in accordance with the testimony of the prophets of Israel (Acts 3:26, R.V.). Jehovah's guarantee that Jesus was the promised Servant should have ensured His acceptance by the people who were the chosen guardians of the prophetic oracles. And the gravamen of Peter's charges against the Jews for their guilt in delivering up and denying in the presence of Pilate God's Servant Jesus was that they did so in face of the united testimony of the prophets, who had, moreover, testified of this particular guilt of theirs (Acts 3:13; Acts 3:18; Acts 3:21-26). Here, in Mark, a couple of pregnant sentences are sufficient to indicate that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Jehovah's Servant, is the One whose coming had been long foretold, and these should be ample to awaken our adoring contemplation of Jesus Christ come in flesh.

But, in the second place, as we consider the position of this citation in relation to its context, are we not entitled to ask whether it may not be connected with the antecedent verse as well as with the subsequent one? The words of the prophecy quoted have certainly a general reference to One whose advent was imminent as well as to one who was to herald that advent. This coming One is referred to in the first verse, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"; and His forerunner is introduced in Mark 1:3-8. In this view the Gospel opens not only with the assertion of the deity of the Servant by the Evangelist himself (Mark 1:1), but with the confirmatory prophetic testimony that He was Jehovah (Mark 1:2-3).

Let us now examine this passage more closely, and in our further consideration notice:—

1. The phrase, "as it is written";

2. The phrase, "in Isaiah the prophet" (substituted by the Revisers for "in the prophets");

3. The quotation (Mark 1:2) from Malachi;

4. The quotation (Mark 1:3) from Isaiah.

(1) The phrase, "as it is written"(kathos geg.Rev. Text), is that occurring frequently in the N.T. as an introduction to scriptural quotations, and it is found about fourteen times in the Epistle to the Romans alone. The general sense in which it is used seems to be that the written words cited have a direct bearing upon the person or event named in the context. The historical event is thus authoritatively declared to be in accordance with what had been prophesied of old, while it is not thereby necessarily implied that the prophecy has received its complete fulfilment. It may, or it may not, have done so, but this is to be determined apart from grounds afforded by the words "as it is written." On examination of the various occurrences of this phrase, it will be found that this is not the only instance in which it precedes a composite quotation. InRomans 9:33,Isaiah 8:14is combined withIsaiah 28:16; inRomans 11:8-10we findIsaiah 29:10,Deuteronomy 29:4,Psalms 69:22-23; and inRomans 3:10-18 several passages are united. Here in Mark,Malachi 3:1andIsaiah 40:3are conjoined.

(2) "In Isaiah the prophet" is the accepted reading in place of "in the prophets." It may be mentioned that this is the only case in which the name of a prophet is given after the phrase "as it is written." InLuke 2:23we have, "As it is written in the law of the Lord," and inActs 7:42; "As it is written in the book of the prophets"; but in all other places no personal reference is made. The amended reading obviously creates a difficulty, as the passage is cited partly from Malachi and partly from Isaiah. Scriptural difficulties, however, only call for patient waiting upon God for light, which when given reveals the hidden beauty and subtle perfections of Holy Writ. To regard the words as a blunder on the part of the Evangelist is unthinkable. In the words of another, "Even on human ground it is absurd to suppose that the writer did not know that the first words quoted were fromMalachi 3:1, and, if inspiration be allowed, the only question is as to the principle of thus merging a secondary in a primary quotation. Compare the somewhat different use of Jeremiah (from that ofIsaiah 40:3) inMatthew 27:9-10. There is purpose in both, which cursory readers have not seen, and so they have been as quick to impute a slip as the later copyists were to eliminate it. But it is as irreverent as unwise and evil to obscure or deny the truth even in such points as these, because the modes of scripture application differ from those of ordinary men, and we may not at a first glance be able to appreciate or clear up the profound wisdom of inspiration." The author goes on to say: "Küster’s conjecture that the reading was originally in the prophet seems a mere effort to get rid of what he did not understand, which really, like such attempts generally, leaves the chief point where it was." Dr. William Lee’s suggested explanation is also inadequate. He assumes that Malachi’s prophecy is no more than a quotation from Isaiah. He says, "Malachi is merely theauctor secundarius;and the Evangelist points out that this is the case by ascribing both commentary and text to Isaiah, whom he thus represents as theauctor primarius,the commentary being placed first, as it serves to elucidate the text."* Whether Malachi only echoes Isaiah’s prediction, as here stated, we will now proceed to inquire.

{*The Inspiration, of Holy Scripture, by W. Lee, D.D., 9th ed. p. 399, note.}

(3) The quotation from Malachi. "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way." (The words, "before thee," are here omitted, though they are quoted in Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27.)

Now there are two very striking features prominent in this prophecy — (1) the personality of Jehovah’s messenger, who is honoured and dignified by being such; and (2) the personality of the

coming One who is declared to be Jehovah Himself. In regard to the first of these points, it will be remembered that the passage from Malachi occurs in Matt. and Luke, not in connection with John's preaching, as is Isaiah's prophecy (Matthew 3:3,Luke 3:4), but with John himself. When the Baptist's testimony was past and he was in prison, and to outward appearance he and his work had failed, the Lord said definitely, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:10-11;Luke 7:27-28). He was the "prophet of the Highest," and indeed much more than a prophet — the immediate forerunner of the Lord, going before His face to prepare His way. But it is well to see that while he abased himself in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah (John 1:23), the Lord exalted him in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi. In the second place we have here Jehovah speaking, and Jehovah sending — "Behold, I send my messenger." And as it is Jehovah sending, so it is Jehovah who is coming. In Malachi the language is precise as to this, "Behold, I send my messenger before my face." The pronoun in Mark is changed from the first person to the second "beforethyface" because of the incarnation. He who sends had taken the place of the sent One, but the Sender and the Sent are one. "I and my Father are one." Thus He who is before us in this Gospel as Jehovah's Servant is the One who sends the greatest of all servants beside Himself. Elsewhere we read John was a "man sent from God," while the Servant-Son was God.

It is further to be observed that the prophecy of Malachi is in particular connection with the day of Jehovah. The One predicted is the coming Judge, for the prophet continues, "Behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." This looks forward to a day of judgment yet future; but the same Person who is then to come as supreme Arbiter came to John to be baptised of him in Jordan.

(4) The quotation from Isaiah. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." A scrutiny of this passage in comparison with the previous verse makes it plain that there are such differences as forbid the thought that the later prophecy is a repetition of the earlier. In the first place, while Malachi foretells the messenger who was to usher in the promised One, Isaiah prophesies of the message which should be proclaimed in anticipation of Messiah's advent by a nameless and obscure "voice" crying in the wilderness. In Malachi the messenger prepares the way; in Isaiah the voice calls upon the audience to make ready the way. The later prophet looks on to coming judgment, the earlier to corning salvation — "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). Each prophet has therefore a distinct point of view; and Dr. Lee's theory of one being an echo of the other is not tenable. Neither can Malachi be regarded as amplifying the prophecy of Isaiah, though it is clear from the coupling of the two passages by Mark that there is a connection, but surely not that of commentary and text, as has been alleged. Such an explanation is confessedly a weak one, since it states that the Evangelist names Isaiah because the quotation from Malachi which is prefixed "only serves to elucidate the text." But is not the true connection between the two passages to be traced in the manner and measure of the fulfilment of the prophecies in question? What was the preparation made for the coming Jesus Christ? John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Those who confessed their guilt were those who were most truly ready for the coming of Him who had

power on earth to forgive sins. This moral preparedness therefore as the result of the strenuous call to repentance by the voice crying in the wilderness is the burden of Isaiah’s prophecy. And this prediction was actually fulfilled before the coming of the Lord. And because it was accomplished, a specific reference is made to Isaiah by this Evangelist, as also in a similar connection by Matthew and Luke. But Malachi’s prophecy, on the other hand, only received a partial accomplishment. John was the messenger to prepare Jehovah’s way, but not yet as the Judge of Israel. And the very omission of the prophet’s name to this prophecy, making it appear to be an interpolation, becomes significant of some special sense in which it is quoted. And this sense is, it is submitted, that of its partial accomplishment in John the Baptist, somewhat in the same way that Malachi’s other prophecy (Malachi 4:5) concerning the coming of Elijah the prophet received an anticipatory fulfilment in the same person (Matthew 11:14;Matthew 17:11-12) so far as relates to the inward effects of his testimony for God. The application of the two prophecies quoted by Mark to the Baptist is also seen in the words of the angel to Zacharias, "He shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient [to walk] in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared [for him]" (Luke 1:17, R.V.). In the last clause we have the words of both Malachi and Isaiah, as given by Mark. John was to prepare the way; the people were to prepare their hearts; even as those holy men of old foresaw and snake accordingly, being moved by the Holy Spirit. To sum up: the moral preparation which was the result of John’s preaching being the subject of the Evangelist’s history, the prophetic reference is accordingly made, by name, to Isaiah who prophesied of this rather than of the future day of judgment which will be heralded by a messenger of Jehovah even as the present day of salvation. And from this point of view, the deliberate and evident exclusion of Malachi’s name, although his words are quoted, becomes as strikingly emphatic as the Lord’s abrupt closing of the roll of Isaiah’s prophecies in the synagogue at Nazareth. Most, if not all, of His hearers must have known that He had suddenly ceased in the middle of a sentence. He would thus impress upon them that He had notcome to introduce "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:1-2;Luke 4:16-21). Similarly the omission of Malachi’s name here is eloquent of the truth that "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," is in accordance with the prophecies of mercy rather than with the prophecies of retribution.

05.03. The Baptism of Jesus and the Witness from Heaven

03. — The Baptism of Jesus and the Witness from Heaven

"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway coming* up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder,** and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him; and there came a voice out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased***" (Mark 1:9-11, R.V.).

{*"going up," J.N.D.; W.K., **"parting asunder," J.N.D.; "cleaving asunder," W.K. ***"have found my delight," J.N.D.; W.K.}

All three of the Synoptical Gospels record the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, and also the heavenly testimony which accompanied it. The Fourth Gospel refers only to the descent of the Spirit which attested His divine Sonship, this being the main theme of this Evangelist, rather than the Lord's coming in accordance with prophecy, as is so carefully shown in the first three Gospels. The testimony of John the Baptist to the Lord is divided chronologically into two distinct sections by the baptism of Jesus; the first being his announcement that the Messiah was about to come, as Paul said — John "first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts 13:24); and the second being his declaration that the promised One had now come "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me." "I saw and bare record that this was the Son of God" (John 1:29-30; John 1:34). The first part of this testimony is recorded exclusively by Matthew, Mark and Luke; the second part by John only.

It is evident therefore that the event of Christ's baptism coincided with the conclusion of prophetic (that is, predictive) testimony to Him. And it will be remembered that the prophecy of John was singular in respect of the entire absence of any accompanying miraculous voucher. Moses' rod becoming a serpent, the long drought at the word of Elijah, the brackish springs at Jericho purified by Elisha, Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream recalled and interpreted by Daniel, are all instances of signs given to show that the men so acting were servants of the most high God. But John's testimony lacked support of this nature, and was attested by its immediate fulfilment and verification. Thus it was said, "John indeed did no sign, but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true" (John 10:41). Those who heard his prophecy also saw its accomplishment.

John was divinely instructed to look for the specific fulfilment of his own prediction. He said, "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." "I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11;John 1:33). This descent of the Spirit was therefore the appointed sign to John that the promised One was come, and that He was moreover the Son of God, for none beside could baptise with the Holy Spirit. As soon as John the Baptist had witnessed this sign from

heaven he was thereby qualified to commence the second part of his ministry. This he did, pointing so definitely and effectively to the Lamb of God in their midst that his own disciples left him for his Master (John 1:35-37). But John based this testimony upon what he himself saw at the Jordan. Apart from this, speaking officially no doubt, he says, "I knew him not." He does not hereby deny any previous acquaintance with Jesus, but he does deny that his declaration that Jesus was the Jehovah, whose way he was sent to prepare, was grounded upon any deductions he himself had drawn, or upon any estimate of His personality he himself had formed. * It rested upon a heavenly revelation he had personally received, just as Saul’s preaching of Christ as the Son of God (Acts 9:20) was founded upon the heavenly voice and vision that came to him on the road to Damascus. In neither case was the testimony humanly derived; and this the Baptist implied, when he said, "I knew him not."

{*Compare "whom ye know not," and "I knew him not" (John 1:26,John 1:31,John 1:33); that is, Jesus, previously to His baptism in Jordan, was not known as the "Spirit-Baptist."} But while the divine seal was set upon John’s ministry at the baptism of Jesus, it must not be supposed that his preaching was previously without effect upon men. The fiery words of the Baptist penetrated the consciences of many, so that they not only repented, but reasoned in their hearts concerning John himself, whether haplyhewere not the Christ (Luke 3:15); while all the people held him to be a prophet (Matthew 21:26). Can one number the publicans and sinners who were baptised of John in Jordan, confessing their sins, and were afterwards received by the Lord, so that they said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*"? These were they who "justified" God, being baptised with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him (Luke 7:29-30). Though he came unto them in the way of righteousness, they believed him not, but said, "He hath a demon" (Matthew 21:32). And as the leaders of the people rejected the prophet of righteousness, and refused to own that his baptism was "from heaven" (Matthew 21:25), so they rejected a greater than he Him by whom grace and truth had come (John 1:17).

{*See also John 10:40-42; the Lord went away "beyond Jordan" where John had baptised, and many of the baptised came to Him to hear for themselves, and "believed on him there."}

It is well to see, however, that scripture shows that a great moral work of preparation was wrought by John’s preaching, and in consequence a company gathered around him, who exhibited deeds "worthy of repentance," mainly in their confession of sins and submission to baptism. The ploughing had been done; it was time for the Sower to come forth to sow. A little flock of straying sheep had been collected in the sheepfold. Accordingly the Shepherd of the sheep appeared at the door of the sheep-fold, and to him the porter opened (John 10:1-42).*

{*He did not stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), or appear suddenly in His temple (Malachi 3:1), as He will do in a day yet to come; but He presented Himself outside the favoured land.} This formal act was not undertaken, however, without remonstrance on the part of the Baptist, when Jesus "came from Nazareth of Galilee" to be baptised of him in Jordan. "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? exclaimed the astonished prophet, seeking in his ignorant impulse to oppose the divine will by his notions of human propriety. But whatever John might think, the way of Jehovah lay through Jordan. Jehovah-Jesus was looking towards those who were poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembled at His word through His messenger

(Isaiah 66:2). The way of righteousness was that by which John had come to the people (Matthew 21:32). And the Lord meant by a public and unmistakable act to own that way, and, graciously answering the one who sought to hinder Him, said, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This was indeed a gracious reply, and in it the Lord at once maintained His authority and illustrated His grace. There was the gentle insistence that His will must be done, while at the same time with peculiar grace He yoked John with Himself in that submission which godly service ever involves. "Itbecometh us"* are His words, for He was now stepping forth into the public eye, as the Servant of Jehovah, and this initial act was proper both to the baptiser and to the Baptised.**

{*It was a strange notion of Bengel's that by the pronoun, the Lord meant the Father and Himself. The baptism was the point in question, and in this Jesus and John were the actors.

**In this connection readers are counselled to peruse carefully pp. 34-47 of J. N. Darby's "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," Vol. 3.}

We now come to the testimony rendered to Jesus from heaven in the hour of His baptism. This witness was of a double character, viz. (1) the visible descent of the Spirit upon Him, and (2) the audible voice out of the heavens acknowledging Him. And in this character the witness was to be considered as valid and adequate from a legal standpoint, since, as the Lord reminded the Jews on a subsequent occasion, it was a written axiom of their law that the testimony of two persons is true (John 8:17). Here then the Father and the Spirit attest the Son.* Can such witness be exceeded? The Spirit witnessed to the unblemished and impeccable humanity of Jesus, and anointed Him for service. The Father acknowledged the Man, Christ Jesus, to be His dearly-loved Son. Thus we see in this context the Evangelist establishing on divine testimony the titles given to Jesus in the opening sentence of the Gospel, viz. (1) Christ (the "Anointed"), and (2) the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

{*Compare Isa. 48:16: "And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and his Spirit."}

Considering then first of all the outpouring of the Spirit upon Jesus, we may remark how it witnessed (1) to His holy humanity, and (2) to His anointing for service. In lowly grace He submitted to the baptism of repentance, but with no need for repentance. He publicly joined those who had confessed their sins, having no sins Himself to confess. Will unbelieving and carnal hearts think otherwise of Him, misconstruing the act of grace? To check such a hateful imputation, immediately as He emerged from the water the heavens were rent asunder, and the Father, jealous for the glory of the Son, gave the Holy Spirit to abide upon Him. Of all others baptised, though sins were confessed, their consciences were still unpurged from dead works and sinful stains, and must remain so until He came who had power on earth to forgive sins. But Jesus was the Anti-type of the meal-offering of fine flour mingled, and anointed, with oil, apart from the cleansing and atoning blood, and was thus in contrast with the Aaronic priests who received the anointing oil subsequent to an application of the blood. Here was a holy temple in which God the Holy Spirit could and would dwell. He was the Second man, the Lord from heaven, and on Him alone in this polluted earth the dove-like Spirit found a resting-place, as God the Father's seal (John 6:27), altogether apart from atonement. But the descent of the Spirit had an official as well as a personal significance. The formal induction of kings, priests, and prophets into office was by anointing with oil, and prophecy as well as type indicated that the promised One would be so

distinguished. Indeed He was expected in that character. Accordingly, when Andrew heard the testimony of the Baptist that the Holy Spirit had descended upon Jesus, he communicated the good news straightway to Simon, his brother, saying, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ*" (John 1:32; John 1:41). The Samaritans had a similar hope, hence the woman said of Jesus, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? (John 4:29).

{*"Messiah" is from the Hebrew, and "Christ" from the Greek word, both of which signify "the officially anointed one."} The "Anointed" was the burden of the oracle of prophecy. Hannah looked forward to the day when the horn of Jehovah's anointed would be exalted (1 Samuel 2:10). The royal Psalmist foresaw a dark day when the rulers of Israel and Gentile kings would enter into an unholy alliance against Jehovah and His Anointed (Psalms 2:2;Acts 4:25-27). Daniel predicted the date of the corning of Messiah the Prince, and its result (Daniel 9:25-26). According to another Psalm, God would anoint Him "with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (Psalms 45:7;Hebrews 1:9). As the "Rod out of the stem of Jesse," it was predicted that "the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah" (Isaiah 11:1-2). It was also stated specifically that Jehovah's Servant should receive the Spirit. In words fulfilled at the Jordan, Jehovah said, "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isaiah 42:1;Matthew 12:18). The dove-like form symbolised the meekness, lowliness, and absence of self-assertion, which were the particular characteristics in which the energy of the Spirit would manifest itself in Jesus. And all this came about. God "anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38). And the Lord made allusion to the unimpeachable credentials furnished by this unction, when He announced at Nazareth the fulfilment of another prophecy concerning Himself — "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek [poor]," etc. (Isaiah 61:1;Luke 4:18). The Servant of Jehovah therefore entered upon His ministry in the full consciousness that everything was in due order according to the scriptures. This is indicated here, so far as the anointing is concerned, by a statement peculiar to this Gospel. Jesus Himself is said to have seen the Spirit given: "Coming up out of the water, he [Jesus] saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him." John the Baptist also saw (though we know of none besides), as we find inJohn 1:32; John 1:34, andMatthew 3:16, no witness being named inLuke 3:22. John bare record of what he saw, and others believed because of his testimony. But let us pass on to consider the testimony of the heavenly voice out of the opened heavens, succeeding and silencing the voice crying in the wilderness. The heavens were not opened to disclose an object there, as in the case of Stephen. On the contrary, heaven had found an object upon earth — the sinless and obedient Jesus. To Him came the voice, not of an angelic choir as to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, but of the Father Himself, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." As Man He was hereby assured of the divine complacency in Himself, and thus He commenced His ministry as the Servant of Jehovah in the full personal consciousness of His own Sonship. "Though he was Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8), and He continued to abide in the sense of His Sonship throughout (John 10:33). He said to the Pharisees, "I know whence I come, and whither I go," and, again, speaking of His Father He said, "I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me (John 8:14;John 7:29). So that the whole of His multifarious service was ennobled and enriched by His

divine nature as Son of God, which gave it a character absolutely unique. The voice from heaven was, in Old Testament times, familiar as a vehicle of direct communication from Jehovah. That voice was known in Eden, and is there associated with the presence of the Lord God Himself (Genesis 3:8). Moses reminded the Israelites of the manner in which Jehovah promulgated His law; "the LORD spoke unto you," he says, "out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of words, but saw no form; only ye heard a voice" (Deuteronomy 4:12, R.V.). The glory and majesty of this voice is the subject ofPsalms 29:1-11. It came to Elijah and Isaiah as servants of Jehovah (1 Kings 19:9-18;Isaiah 6:8). Now it is heard saluting the newly-baptised Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God.

It will be observed, that as it is here stated that Jesus saw the descent of the Spirit, so it is also stated, as in Luke, that the voice was addressedto Him.On the mount of transfiguration, the voice which then came forth from the cloud, the "excellent glory" (2 Peter 1:17), spokeof Himto the auditors — "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is so also in the account in Matthew of His baptism (Matthew 3:17). But in Mark and Luke the words recorded are, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." This personal address was in accordance with Messianic prediction in the Second Psalm: "I will declare the decree; Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Psalms 2:7). Paul, in his discourse at Antioch, applied the passage to the "raising up"* of Jesus (Acts 13:33), as he did again in his Epistle to the Hebrews in two connections (Hebrews 1:5;Hebrews 5:5). The divine Sonship is therefore predicated of Him at His birth in time (Luke 1:32; Luke 1:35), throughout His service, and also in resurrection.

{*Not the raising up from the dead, or the resurrection. This is the subject of Acts 13:34. But in Acts 13:33 the sense is that of preparing, providing, commissioning, sending. God raised up deliverers and prophets of old to Israel (Judges 2:16,Judges 2:18;Judges 3:9,Judges 3:15). See alsoActs 3:22,Acts 3:26;Acts 7:37.} But in Mark an addendum is made to the declaration, "Thou art my Son." He is also styled "the dearly-loved"; "in thee," says the voice, "I have found my delight." God had found His good pleasure(eudokia)in man, according to the angels' song (Luke 2:14, R.V.). And who shall measure this ineffable joy between the Father and the Son, from which the Spirit was not excluded? No wonder we read, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35;John 5:20). The words of another, by way of brief summary, may well conclude our meditations on this passage. "Though truly God, He was man; though a Son, He became a servant, and was now about to enter on His ministry. He receives the Spirit as well as the recognition of His Sonship. He had justified God's sentence on, and call to, Israel yea, He had in grace joined the souls who had bowed to it in the waters of Jordan; but this could not be without the answer of the Father for His heart's joy in the path He was about to tread. The one was the fulfilment of every kind of righteousness, and not legal only (this in grace, for there was no necessity of evil in His case); the other was His recognition thereon by the Father in the nearest personal relationship, over which His submission to baptism might have cast a cloud to carnal eyes."

{*Exposition of the Gospel of Mark," by W. Kelly, p, 18.}

05.04. The Wild Beasts and the Angels

04. — The Wild Beasts and the Angels

"And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth* into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13, R.V.).

{*"out," instead of "forth," J.N.D. and W.K.} The real nature of the sin-stricken world into which the Servant of Jehovah had entered to do in public the will of Him that sent Him is thus briefly indicated by the Evangelist. And emphasis is given to his concise statement by the dark contrast in which it stands with the verses that precede. There we read of the effulgent glory emanating from the rent heavens upon the lowly Jesus come forth from Nazareth of Galilee, of the dove-like Spirit of God anointing and sealing the Servant of Jehovah, and of the Father's voice declaring His complacency in the Baptized One, His beloved Son. Here we read of Him hurried by the Spirit into the wilderness, tempted there of Satan forty days, and with the wild beasts. From the scene of heavenly light Jesus passed immediately to encounter the power of darkness, for this He had come to do. As yet the heavens could open thus upon but One Man here below, though this transient gleam afforded an earnest of the coming day of glory for the whole earth, when the service of Jesus, which was then beginning, should be fully accomplished.

It is thus impressed upon us by the brief reference in the verses before us that Jesus was anointed to serve, not as angels do in the purity of heaven, but in a world of sin, where all creation is groaning together and travailing in pain because of present evil (Romans 8:22). The wilderness was there; the wild beasts were there; Satan was there. The whole world was in subjection to that wicked one, that arch-rebel against God and arch-enemy of man (1 John 5:19). But the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

It is to be noted that in each of the three Synoptical Gospels the temptation in the wilderness is recorded immediately after the baptism and the anointing. For forty days Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of men, was alone in the wilds with Satan, who is Apollyon,* the destroyer of men. He who had entered the strong man's house to spoil his goods must first bind the strong man (Matthew 12:29). Accordingly Jesus, marked out of old as the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, met the ancient adversary of man alone in the solitudes of the wilderness. Soon He would effectually annul the power of Satan, but now He withstands his subtleties, and is victorious.

{*If the angel of the abyss (Revelation 9:2) is not Satan himself but his representative, Apollyon is not an unapt title for him who comes only to steal and to kill and todestroy(John 10:10).} In the preceding, and the succeeding, Gospels the three final efforts of the enemy at the close of the forty days' temptations are narrated in detail, Matthew placing the three in strict chronological sequence, while Luke reverses the second and third for moral reasons, consonant with the purpose of that Gospel. Mark, however, states simply, "He was in the wilderness forty days

tempted of Satan." He records the fact of the temptation, but states nothing regarding its nature, nor the manner in which the obedient and dependent Man overcame the wiles of the wicked one. It was sufficient here to let it be known that at the outset the Servant of Jehovah, apart from human view or aid or interference, joined issue with the enemy of God and man. The struggle was upon the question of His own personal allegiance to the One who had sent Him. But this character of the temptation is not mentioned here, nor even His victory and Satan's departure at the close. Two figures loom upon the sombre canvas — the elect Servant and Satan, with the wilderness and wild beasts in the background, while ministering angels shed light upon a scene otherwise of darkness.

Any further remarks that may occur on this passage may, for convenience' sake, be grouped under one of the following heads: —

(1) The energy of the Spirit.

(2) The temptation by Satan.

(3) The company of the wild beasts.

(4) The ministry of the angels.

(1) "Immediately the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness." The phrase is one expressive of intense energy and instant action. The Father had bestowed the Holy Spirit upon Him "without measure," and Jesus, in the plenitude of that Spirit,* took the pathway which led into the wilderness. In that He was driven forth, it is proved how perfectly and fully He was possessed of the Spirit; in that this was done immediately, it is proved how swift was the Lord's response to Him by whom He had been anointed for service. There are two marks of perfection in service — complete, unrestricted obedience, and also ready, unhesitating obedience. They both characterise the Lord at the beginning of His service; they are not less conspicuous at its close.

{*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4:1, R.V.).} But such a quality as obedience is not appreciated in a world where all naturally are the sons of disobedience. Submission in the eyes of men is only weakness, a lack of fibre and force. Yet with what moral magnificence was the obedience of Christ invested as He, the dearly loved Son of the Father, is pleased to yield Himself up in the fullest degree to be led of the Spirit into the wilderness, as later to Calvary. It is a fruitful and practical subject for our meditation, since we are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ, and exhorted to be filled with the Spirit. And what is inculcated by precept and doctrine in the Epistles is enforced by illustration and example in the divine biography of the Gospels, where the moral glory and beauty of the subjection of Christ shine forth at every step. The life itself was for the glory of God; the record of that life is for the comfort and joy and emulation of His people. But this driving forth of Jesus recalls, by way of sad contrast, the history of Eden and the expulsion of our first parents. Of them we read, after the fall, "Jehovah God sent him [Adam] forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:23-24). This ejection was the penalty of Adam's disobedience; the passage from Jordan to the wilderness was the obedient act of Him who was the incomparable Servant of God, because He was His Son.

(2) The way of service for John the Baptist brought him into the wilderness to cry to guilty Israel to repent, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The way of Jesus, the Servant of Jehovah, led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan forty days. Misguided men have sought the wilderness to evade the power of evil. Jesus sought it with the express intention of meeting the evil one. He alone was perfect within, and while He Himself was led up to meet the tempter, He taught His disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one]" (Matthew 6:13). And when a self-confident apostle of His was about to venture into the midst of the temptations of the foe He made supplication for him. "Simon, Simon," He said, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32).

Man always underrates the power and subtlety of Satan, but the Lord, who fully knew, and also measured by experience the strength of the "strong man," went forth to meet him and to endure from him every form of temptation* (Luke 4:13, R.V.). Though "in the likeness of sinful flesh" He was "without sin," and "knew no sin." The temptations, therefore, came to the Lord exclusively from without, as was also the case with unfallen Adam, though true of none on earth besides.

{*Compare Hebrews 4:15, "For we have not a high priest unable to sympathise with our infirmities, but having been tempted in all things in like manner apart from sin" (W. Kelly's translation).}

It was made known at the beginning that the manifestation of the Son of God would be for the destruction of the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Jehovah said to the serpent in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). In the Gospels we are shown historically that this was so. We find that when Jesus was born, Satan, using Herod as his tool, attempted to destroy Him (Matthew 2:16; Revelation 12:4-5). Satan also sought, through Simon Peter, to stumble the Lord in the way to the cross (Matthew 16:23). For His betrayal Satan himself, not a demon or unclean spirit, took possession of Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). "This is your hour," said the Lord to the chief priests, "and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). And though Satan seemed for a moment to triumph in the death of the Lord, thereby bruising His heel, by that same act his own head was bruised, according to the saying of old. For the power of Satan was annulled not by incarnation, but by death, as the Scripture declares. He became flesh "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

It is clear, from these scriptural references, that the Servant-Prophet whom Mark delineates would have in His service to meet the devil, the adversary of man, and especially the foe of Him who had come to be the deliverer of man, and to heal those who "were oppressed of the devil." Accordingly the Evangelist records that immediately upon His baptism Jesus encountered the prince of this world, being subjected to his temptations for forty days in the wilderness. It was not consonant with the special object of his Gospel to specify in detail the three final assaults of the evil one. It sufficed to state the fact of the encounter, while the personality of the tempter is emphasised here by the use of the name, Satan, rather than the more general term, "the devil" (diabolos), as in Matthew and Luke.

(3) "He was with the wild beasts." While Mark omits many details of the Lord's temptation which are found in Matthew and Luke, this circumstance is peculiar to the account by the Second Evangelist. Its mention here is the more noteworthy because of the succinctness of the whole

paragraph. The theorists on the subject of the origin of the Gospels find it difficult to invent a plausible theory to fit this awkward phrase on the assumption that the Gospel of Mark is an abridgment orprécisof those of Matthew and Luke. Besides this phrase, there are miracles, a parable, and some incidents also, peculiar to this Gospel, and to account for the presence of these it is imagined by others that all the Evangelists compiled their accounts from an "original" or "primitive" Gospel, or that Mark's Gospel was the earliest; for when it is a question of the imagination, "historic" or otherwise, you cannot expect general agreement among the various theories advanced. To illustrate how these various hypotheses leave one still groping in the dark, I quote from a writer of much acumen, whose remarks are based on extensive research into the subject in hand. He says "I believe, therefore, that the compiler of the Second Gospel could not but have been acquainted with the tradition [of the temptation] recorded by Matthew and Luke, of which I look onMark 1:13 as an abridgment. Yet the mention of wild beasts leads me to thinks that in the case of the opening, as well as of the concluding verses the abridgment was made by one who wrote so early as to be in independent possession of traditions."*

{*"Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament," by G. Salmon, D.D., F.R.S., 8th ed. 1897, p. 143.}

Without here discussing this theory of abridgment, it may be pointed out that Dr. Salmon admits that the presence of this phrase requires a special explanation. He suggests feebly that Mark acquired it from some independent source. How does such a supposition help us? To regard the phrase as one supplied by Mark, either from memory or from some special source of information, and that it was added here just because it is not mentioned in the other Gospels, is virtually to rob the Holy Record of all aim and purpose, and to suggest that the Evangelist was most inefficient even as a compiler! Besides, if he added the circumstance of the wild beasts, because it is not recorded elsewhere, why does he mention along with it the ministry of the angels, which occurs also in Matthew 4:11? The truth is that in this account, as we have it, the Evangelist wrote as "moved by the Holy Spirit," and it is to be feared that this fact is overlooked in discussions as to "Petrine tradition" and "double" or "triple tradition." The question of the origin of a given phrase in the narrative is altogether a subordinate and unimportant detail, when the Holy Spirit has been pleased to weave it into the fabric of the Gospel. It is possible that we may be slow to perceive its exact bearing in the scheme of the Evangelist. It is, in any case, becoming on our part to seek to learn this by patient inquiry, and by diligent waiting upon the Spirit for His illumination.

Jesus "with the wild beasts" is a graphic touch of the inspired penman to indicate the fallen world which was the sphere of service for Jehovah's Servant. Adam was created to rule for God over the terrestrial works of His hand. All beasts of the field were subject to him, not in fear and dread as afterwards was the case (Genesis 9:2). They were brought to him in the garden of Eden, and by him named (Genesis 2:19-20). In the wilderness of Juda, however, they were wild, needing to be tamed by the power of man, and formed in themselves so many witnesses of the desolateness of a sinful earth, utterly devoid as the whole scene was of any of those alleviating circumstances known as human comforts.

Man, by his departure from the knowledge of God, has brought himself morally to the level of the beasts that perish (Psalms 73:22;2 Peter 2:12); and, in prophetic imagery, a wild beast is employed as the symbol of worldly power and kingdom. This is so notably in references to Gentile

rule, for when dominion was taken from Israel and placed into the hands of the kings of the earth, none of them ruled in the fear of God. Nebuchadnezzar, as an example and warning to others, who, like him should, in the vanity of their hearts, forget God, was driven from men to dwell with the beasts of the field, until his understanding returned and he blessed the Most High (Daniel 4:1-37). In Daniel's vision of the four great world-empires he saw them as wild beasts (Daniel 7:1-28), and John beheld the revived Roman Empire of a future day under the figure of a beast (Revelation 13:1-18); for, like wild creatures, none of these kingdoms carry out the will of God except under His direct coercion. The wild beast is one that has shaken off the yoke and bondage of man. It is not, therefore, a stretch of imagination to see in the picture of Jesus among the wild beasts a shadow of the perfectly obedient Servant of Jehovah come into a world of fallen men, who owned no authority higher than the strongest or the most cunning among themselves.

(4) "The angels ministered unto Him." Here we have a lovely contrast with the dark desolations of earth, amid which the Son of man is displayed to us in the wilderness. The ministering spirits of heaven attend upon Jesus in the scene of His temptation. Though surrounded by the darkness of this world, the light of the glory above is seen still to shine upon Him. Jesus had come as the Servant of Jehovah to serve the lowliest and the wickedest of men, but the highest celestial being would find it a joy to seek Him out in His solitude to do Him homage, and to serve the One who was learning what need was, though He possessed all things. In His subsequent pathway, others gathered round Him to wait on Him, though He Himself was among His own as One who served. The twelve were His chosen bodyguard, but He did not treat them as servants knowing not what their Lord did. Martha of Bethany served Him in the house of Simon the leper. Galilean women ministered to Him of their substance. He Himself asked a woman of Samaria to supply Him with a drink of water. But was it not fitting that the first to serve the Servant of Jehovah in His public service should be those august servitors whose functions lie in heavenly courts? Indeed, it was but in accord with an ancient prophecy that when the First-begotten was brought into the world all the angels of God should worship, as well as serve, Him (Deuteronomy 32:43;Psalms 97:7; Hebrews 1:6). On this occasion the heavenly service was rendered in private, unseen of man. But in the coming day of glory, when the Anointed appears in His majesty, every eye shall see Him and His angelic retinue too (Matthew 25:31;2 Thessalonians 1:7). This future attendance will be public, and unmistakeable even by unbelief. But while the service in the wilderness seems to have been personal and unwitnessed, angelic homage to Himself was announced by the Lord in the earliest days of His ministry as a form of testimony which His own should receive in the days of His flesh, the ampler witness awaiting the millennial day. To Nathanael He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, [Henceforth] ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51).

{Mark 1:12. — To translate here ekballo by "driveth," appears to go beyond the due requirement of the context which in all cases is the true arbiter of its force. Suitably rendered for the most part by "cast out," there are instances nevertheless, in our A. and R.V. where our translators have justifiably presented a more congenial rendering. Take the following: — Matthew 9:38 "send forth," Mark 1:43 "sent away" (or, "out," R.V.), John 10:4 "putteth forth" (or, "hath put," R.V.), Revelation 11:2 "leave out" (or, "without," R.V.). In this very chapter (Mark 1:43) did our Lord ("moved with compassion," Mark 1:41) immediately after "drive" away (!) the cleansed leper? Why then "driveth" in Mark 1:12?}

05.05. Jehovah's Servant Preaching

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"Now after that John was delivered up,* Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel** of*** God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand**** repent ye, and believe in***** the gospel**" (Mark 1:14-15, R.V.).

{*"put in prison," A.V.

**"glad tidings," J.N.D. and W.K.

***"the kingdom of" is also omitted by W.K., who says "it is an addition borrowed from Matthew, whose Gospel it suits perfectly."

****"has drawn nigh," J.N.D. and W.K.

*****"in"; so also J.N.D. and W.K.} At the appointed moment, the anointed Servant of Jehovah commenced His public service by announcing the good news that God’s promised kingdom was imminent. And who shall ever know with what ineffable joy the obedient Son whose ears had been "digged" for service (Psalms 40:6, margin) performed in this as in all else the will of Him who sent Him? We are, however, permitted to know some of the intimacies of the Father and the incarnate Son, wherein this mutual-satisfaction is expressed. We are, for instance, made privy to the Father’s declaration from heaven, "Thou art my dearly-beloved Son, in whom is my delight." This personal complacency was fully reciprocated by Jehovah’s Servant, who, entering into the world, says, "Lo, I am come; in the roll it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have published [preached] righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalms 40:7-10). And this delight thus expressed in regard of the service of preaching in the great assemblies of Israel was maintained even when His obedience led Him to lay down His life (John 10:17;Hebrews 10:5-7), thereby fulfilling to the uttermost, as He had previously made known, God’s will.* We have a notable example of His joy in the path of service on that memorable occasion when the obdurate unbelief of Capernaum, the centre of His Galilean ministry, was brought before Him. We read, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced [exulted] in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21). Such a spirit in the moment of apparent failure was the perfection of service, and how contrasted it was with that of the preacher to the Ninevites, seeking first to escape from the path of duty, and then angry that the repentant citizens believing his message were spared. Jesus, who rejoiced in presence of the unbelief of Capernaum, rejoiced also overonesinner who repented.** For He was the good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with

me, for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:5-6). Blessed Saviour, in any service of ours, feeble and unworthy as it must ever be, may a like joy possess us and bring us in our measure with like equanimity through victory or what seems defeat!

{*It is noteworthy that in the quotations from Psalm 40 in the Hebrews, the expression of "delight" (or "desire" as the LXX. reads, from which version the quotation is literally made) is deliberately omitted by the Spirit of God, probably because the sacrificial aspect of the death of Christ is there presented by the apostle, and with this aspect the "strong crying and tears" of Gethsemane are more in accord than the expressed joy of obedience, though both were then equally before His God and Father.

**This was a heavenly joy (Luke 15:7, Luke 15:10), not earthly; from the latter, as the true Nazarite and the Man of sorrows, He was then separate, though in His Father’s kingdom, yet to come, He will drink that cup also (Matthew 26:29).}

It is proposed to group some fragmentary thoughts relating to this passage under one of the following heads:

(1) The signal for the preaching to begin;

(2) the scene of the preaching;

(3) the subject of the preaching;

(4) the declarations of the Preacher.

(1) The signal for the commencement of Christ’s preaching. There is "a time to keep silence and a time to speak" — a precept never exemplified so perfectly as by the Lord of all. The time for Jesus to come forth into the way of public service was indicated by the imprisonment of John the Forerunner and Baptist. "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum" (Matthew 4:12-13, R.V.). There had previously been blessed ministry by the Lord to individuals in Judea and Samaria, as the early chapters of the Gospel of John show (John 3:24). But this ministry was the manifestation of His personal grace and glory which is above all the limitations of the times and dispensations which mark the ordered government of the world, and 3uch manifestations form the special subject of the Fourth Gospel. Mark, however, like the other Synoptists, sets before us the beginning of His Dfficial service in introducing the promised kingdom, and this initial act synchronized with the removal of John, who was a witness to Jesus as the Christ, from the sphere of public testimony.

John had preached of Jesus as the One who was about to come, and after baptizing Him in Jordan, had testified to Him as being then present in Israel. This work of the prophet of the Most High, the messenger of Jehovah, the herald of the Messiah, was now accomplished. And what distinguished service was his! His was the unique distinction of being the first to own the coming Saviour and King (Luke 1:41), and this by divine prompting of altogether a special nature, while his was the first voice to call the sinful sons of men to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Lord said of him, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). So powerfully did his work and testimony, though unaccompanied by miraculous sign, work in the hearts of men, that many seemed to be prepared to accept John himself as the Messiah (Luke 3:15), in spite of his utter

repudiation of any such claim, and his clear testimony to Jesus: "He must increase, and I must decrease."

While men were thus ready to be misled as to the personality of the Christ, we may be sure that Satan, failing to destroy the royal Seed in the massacre of Bethlehem's babes (Revelation 12:1-5), and foiled in his temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, would welcome such an opportunity to set up a rival to Jesus, Israel's promised King and Saviour. He who would use Simon Peter, the honoured witness to Jesus as the Son of the living God as a stumbling-block in His way to the cross (Matthew 16:23), would seek to use the Baptist as a counter attraction when Jesus should offer Himself to the people as the sent One of God. If Satan had such a malevolent intention, it was frustrated by the shutting up of John in prison. The prophets of old had their contemporaries. The voice of Jehovah came to Israel through Micah the Morasthite as well as through the more brilliant son of Amoz of his day; while subsequently God spake simultaneously through Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. But He who had spoken in days past in many measures and in many manners to the fathers by His prophets was about to speak to them by a Son, the only-begotten. No prophet, not even an angel, can for a moment be compared with God's spokesman in His unapproachable dignity as the Son. And John, the last of the prophets, though himself more than a prophet, was withdrawn by God from the scene of public testimony, that the Son might stand alone, an Object supremely worthy and sufficient to engross the hearts of all mankind. How could God have a servant contemporary with His Son? As He has no peer, so this Servant needs no coadjutor. Even Moses and Elias must vanish directly Simon Peter seeks to class them with Jesus; so that he and his astonished companions may see "no one save Jesus only," teaching them and all men that the Son is incomparable.

John then, having borne faithful witness to the truth, was removed to make way for Him who is the Faithful and True Witness. When the Light of the world shines forth, no place is found for the burning and shining lamp (John 5:35, R.V.), welcome as it was in the dawning. He was not, however, like his prototype Elijah, carried up to heaven by a whirlwind. He was carried to a prison and to death under the power of a dissolute Idumean king. He had preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But it was not for him to know in his own experience the beneficent sway of the sceptre of righteousness. For him the earthly throne was one of iniquity, and its sword was the sword of cruelty and revenge. Truly his eyes saw the King of Israel in the beauty of His grace, but notwithstanding, his headless corpse was soon to lie martyred in the kingdom of "this world." This was a fitting prelude to the coming tragedy when "the kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed" (Acts 4:25-27).

(2) The scene of the preaching. The Lord began His service of preaching in Galilee, not in Judaea. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Messiah had its favours according to the prophet — "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall One come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2, R.V.). But there is no record of any visit by the Lord to Bethlehem during His ministry. Galilee, the despised region in the north of the land, was privileged to have more than any other place His gracious and marvellous service by word and sign. This, too, was in accordance with the prophecy of olden time, as the Evangelist Matthew shows: "He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of

Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up" (Matthew 4:13-17, R.V.). This prophetic promise (Isaiah 9:1-2) was one of comfort for the faithful remnant in a day when Gentile powers should oppress the land and Messiah should be a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel." It was promised that in such circumstances a bright and glorious light should shine forth in the most obscure and despised part of the land. And so it came about, for into Galilee Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God; and this was a reason with the Pharisees of Jerusalem for despising Him. Ignoring Jonah, who was of the land of Zebulun, they said, "Search and see; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52).

Galilee "seems to have been originally confined to a little circuit of country round Kedesh-Naphtali, in which were situated the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre, as payment for his work in conveying timber from Lebanon to Jerusalem (Joshua 20:7; 1 Kings 9:11). They were then, or subsequently, occupied by strangers, and for this reason Isaiah gives to the district the name Galilee of the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1). It is probable that the strangers increased in number, and became during the captivity the great body of the inhabitants; extending themselves over the surrounding country, they gave to their new territories the old name, until at length Galilee became one of the largest provinces of Palestine."

"It was outside the regular allotment of Israel, in that part of it which is yet to belong to Israel, which certain of the tribes had taken possession of, though, strictly speaking, it was beyond the proper limits of the promised land. The Lord goes through Galilee of the Gentiles; and in all that He fulfilled the prophecy [of Isaiah]. The Jews ought surely to have known it."

"It is shown afterwards in this prophecy that (while the Gentile affliction upon the nation would be heavier than ever, and the Roman oppression far exceed the Chaldean of old), the Messiah would be there, despised and rejected of men, nay, of the Jews, and that at this very time, when thus set at nought by the people that ought to have known His glory, great light would spring up in the most despised place, in Galilee of the nations, among the poorest of the Jews, where Gentiles I were mixed up with them people who could not even speak their own tongue properly.* There should this bright and heavenly light spring up; there the Messiah would be owned and received."

{*They said to Peter, "Surely, thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto" (Mark 14:70; Matthew 26:73).}

It was therefore appointed of God that in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, who had shut up John the Baptist in prison, the Lord Himself should begin to teach and to preach. And this He accordingly did.

1909 371 (3) The subject of the Lord’s preaching is here stated to be "the gospel of God." "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God," for it was the day of the fulfilment of ancient promise and prophecy now announced by Him in whom they were all fulfilled. This, therefore, was the beginning of the gospel, the true "Proto-evangelium," the source of that river of grace which, deepening and widening in its onward course, should eventually carry its blessing to the uttermost part of the earth (Mark 16:15).

Isaiah’s prophecy refers to this day of good tidings in more places than one. After foretelling the preparatory testimonies John the Baptist should render, he continues, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come as a mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that give suck" (Isaiah 40:9-11, R.V.). This prophecy, it is true, includes the coming of the King of Israel in power for deliverance and blessing and the establishment of the kingdom in glory. But, nevertheless, Jehovah Jesus was there, bringing to Zion in His own person the good tidings of His presence, which He began to announce in Galilee of the Gentiles. Would Zion receive these good tidings and believe Messiah’s report? Alas! the ears of the people were stopped and their hearts hardened, and they would not hear and believe. Not until a yet later day will they say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then will the people with ecstatic joy break out in the language of the same prophet, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchmen! they lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, when the LORD returneth to Zion" (Isaiah 52:7-8, R.V.). But whether Israel would hear or whether they would not hear, it was equally the part of the Servant of Jehovah to go forward in the work committed to Him. Jehovah had anointed Him to preach good tidings to the poor (Isaiah 61:1). He accordingly commences this ministry in the most despised town of the most despised region in the land of Israel (Luke 4:18). The phrase used here, "the gospel of God," is striking in its comprehensiveness; for "the kingdom of" is an unwarranted addition, foisted into the text fromMatthew 4:23at some period subsequent to the.apostolic day by misguided harmonists, zealous to introduce uniformity where the divine Author had ordered variety. "The gospel of God" implies the heavenly origin of the gospel. It was God’s gospel, emanating from Him, and, in consequence, possessing a paramount authority. This Servant of Jehovah, Son of God as He was, brought no independent message of His own devising. The gospel He preached was the gospel of God. And we cannot fail to observe the beautiful propriety of this phrase, peculiar as it is to this Gospel, which, before we are permitted to hear a word of the preaching of Jesus, the Servant-Prophet, points us upward to heaven and to God as its source. And what is here stated by the inspired Evangelist was stated more explicitly and emphatically by the Lord Himself. "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or [whether] I speak from myself." "I spake not from myself, but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me" (John 7:16-17;John 12:49;John 14:24, R.V.).

It is noticeable that while the phrase — the gospel of God — only occurs once in the Gospels, it is of more frequent occurrence in the Epistles. The great apostle to the nations, in his Epistle to the Romans, speaks of himself as separated unto the gospel of God, and also of ministering it to the Gentiles (Romans 1:1;Romans 15:16). Twice he speaks of preaching the gospel of God to those at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9); while the apostle of the uncircumcision uses it in a solemn warning which he utters to unbelievers — "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of

them that obey not the gospel of God" (1 Peter 4:17)?

Thus Paul and Peter united in the service of spreading the heavenly evangel; but it is a fruitful theme for meditation that God’s gospel was first proclaimed by Him who was both its Essence and Fulness. Well might the apostle exclaim, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3)?

(4) We now come to the declarations of the Lord as they are summarised in this Gospel. They contained a twofold announcement, and a twofold exhortation. The Servant-Prophet announced(a)that the time was fulfilled, and(b)that the kingdom of God was at hand; while He called upon men(a)to repent, and(b)to believe the gospel. By the fulfilment of the time (kairos) it may be supposed that the Lord made reference to the fact of His own public appearance in Galilee as the Servant-Prophet at a moment which was predetermined by Jehovah who sent Him. We find a similar expression used by the Lord elsewhere, implying how perfectly His life was regulated from above, and in no sense the outcome of unforeseen circumstances. When the brethren of the Lord urged Him to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, His reply was, "My time (kairos) is not yet come, but your time is alway ready. . . . Go ye up unto the feast; I go not up yet unto this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled (John 7:6; John 7:8). At the last paschal feast, the Lord sent this message to the man in Jerusalem, "The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples" (Matthew 26:18). Speaking also of the second coming of the Son of man, He says to His disciples, "Ye know not when the time (kairos) is" (Mark 13:33), warning them also of those who would raise a false alarm of the approach of that day, saying, "The time (kairos) is at hand" (Luke 21:8). To everything, therefore, in the life of the incarnate Son there was an appointed time. Of this He, as the obedient Man, was conscious; and it was an exemplification of the perfection of His service for God, not only to know this for the joy of His own heart, but to declare it publicly, as in this instance, in the hearing of those who were naturally the sons of disobedience. The theme of His announcement was that the kingdom of God was nigh. This constituted His glad tidings. Clearly this gospel was not that of the Acts and of the Epistles; only that Jehovah the Saviour was there, even then, in His fulness for empty and needy sinners. But until His death and resurrection, neither the utter depravity of man was proved, nor was the incomparable love of God towards guilty sinners manifested. Here, however, it is declared that "the kingdom of God was nigh." This was a word of hope and gladness, uttered to this saddened and sin-stricken world. And what a disordered spectacle the world then afforded to those that "feared Jehovah and thought upon His name"! The chosen people were divided and scattered, and the returned remnant of the Jews under the heel of the Roman oppressor. The Gentiles were "without God, and without hope in the world"; while the whole creation was groaning and travailing together in pain. At such a juncture the inspiriting cry is raised "The kingdom of God is at hand." This kingdom is not to consist of a fallen man ruling fallen men. When the blind lead the blind the ditch must be their destination. Such, in fact, is the history of man’s kingdoms, as the Old Testament fully shows. Now God’s kingdom is to appear, originating with God, governed by God, maintained by God. The sphere of influence of this kingdom is not confined to Israel, but to extend to all nations, to the uttermost parts of the earth; and not over man only, the head of creation, but all suffering creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Such beneficent and assured effects the word of God recites elsewhere, though these effects are not realised even yet.

Here the King appears. How near, therefore, must God’s kingdom be, when God’s King was among them! Only a short while and Jesus would present Himself to the daughter of Zion as her King. He would go up to Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zechariah’s prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." Alas! that the King should hear Himself denied by the sages of Jerusalem, who sat in Moses’ seat "We have no king but Caesar! "Away with this Man! Crucify him!" He was indeed crucified, and this of necessity changed the aspect of the kingdom for the time. But while this is so, "the kingdom of God" is yet to be established upon the earth, and all rule and all authority and power shall be eventually abolished according to His infallible word (see1 Corinthians 15:24). But were the hearers prepared for the gospel? For the due enjoyment of the blessing of God’s kingdom, whether in its moral or material form, an inward change is essential. Hence the Lord calls upon men to repent. He was not here to subjugate men by the exercise of irresistible force. He came to "call sinners to repentance." In this the Lord reiterated the exhortation of His forerunner; for John the Baptist called upon men to repent. And those who received his testimony were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins. It was no less necessary that men should repent and accept the gracious witness concerning the coming kingdom, trusting simply to the word of Him who brought the good tidings.

05.06. The Call of the Four Fishermen

06. The Call of the Four Fishermen

"And passing*1 along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting*2 a net in the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto*3 them, Come ye*4 after me, and I will Make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets*5, and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also*6 were in the boat mending the nets.*5 And straightway he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went*7 after him" (Mark 1:16-20, R.V.).

{1"walking," J.N.D.; 2"casting out," J.N.D., "casting round," W.K.; 3"to," J.N.D., W.K.; 4"ye," omitted by J.N.D., and W.K.; 5"trawl-nets," W.K.; 6"themselves too" (for "also"), W.K.; 7"went away," J.N.D., W.K.} The Evangelist has in the immediately preceding verses shown the Servant of Jehovah commencing His ministry of the coming kingdom of God. He thereupon shows that this Servant, in the execution of His momentous. mission, was pleased to associate with Himself some of the godly and believing ones of Galilee. Not that there was need on His part for such, or for any associates. Feeble and fallible man does, as a prudential, and even necessitous, measure, seek to counterbalance his own inherent defects by the strength of "big battalions," or by the wisdom of a multitude of counsellors. But this Servant was without limitations (save those that were self-imposed), and competent to carry out all that was given Him to do; and yet we are invited by the Evangelist to remark that directly He stepped forth into the path of public service, He called some fishermen to follow Him in that pathway. It is a circumstance which surely we cannot consider without advantage, since every detail in that divine biography is the exemplification here upon earth of a heavenly principle, for our wonder and instruction, as well as for our humble imitation. The details of this historical incident, fraught with such far-reaching consequences to the disciples personally and to multitudes of millions through them, are of the scantiest, though, having regard to its important nature, we might have expected an exuberance. By the call of Jesus these men were elevated out of that nameless obscurity in which Galilean peasantry were wont to live and die. This call involved, not indeed that their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, though this be true (but not truer of them than of every redeemed one), but that their names are recorded in the inspired and imperishable archives of the church on earth, of which church they, with other apostles and prophets, formed the foundation, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Possessing, as we do, the light of subsequent history upon this event, we can consider the high destiny of these humble men. Founders of world-empires there have been; great as the world counts greatness. But where are Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and their founders? The names of Simon and Andrew, of James and John, however, are hewn in the rock-foundations of that church against which the very gates of hales shall not prevail. Nay, when earth-kingdoms shallallhave perished, and Messiah reigns gloriously, then shall these righteous ones shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. When the holy city Jerusalem descends from

heaven to be the seat of government of the kingdom of heaven, manifested in all the glories of fulfilled prophecies, earth shall read the Galilean names again. In the dazzling vision of the prophet of Patmos, where all is glory and perfection and brilliance, amid the blazonry of heaven itself, brought down for terrestrial view, we can see twelve names only (Revelation 21:14), and they include these four, once scored, as proof of ownership, on a couple of fishing cobles on the Galilean lake. This is a marvellous record, and where shall we match it? But if we consider for a moment longer we shall see what an excellent example this affords of that heavenly perspective in which events are set in Holy Writ. Man writes in earthly perspective, that is, human events and persons to him loom large in the foreground, but as he turns from the temporal to the spiritual and to the eternal, these dwindle in importance until they reach a vanishing point. Man magnifies present things in all their uncertainty with a light borrowed from the historical experiences of the doubtful past; consequently the eternity of the future is minimised, and if not altogether ignored by him is lightly regarded and reduced to a point of undefined position and without importance. In Scripture we have a corrective of this false vision. Man is invited to look through heavenly lenses and to behold what a change divine perspective makes, and how entirely the relative importance of things is thereby reversed. As we look we see that the angle of vision isincreased with distance.Present things become petty, future things are magnificent. God starts with a feeble and sinful worm, and leads us on to behold His infinite and inscrutable grace covering his sin, and advancing the sinner to heirship with God and joint-heirship with Christ. We may also see a momentary suffering expanding into an eternal weight of glory. When we, through pressure of circumstances, are about to exclaim like a peevish saint of old, "All these things are against me," another examination of the case through this heavenly medium reveals to us that all these things "work together for good."

It would be easy to pursue this line of thought further to practical profit, but it is necessary to return to the simple narration of the call of the fishermen. Having in view the heights of peculiar eminence and distinction to which these men were to be raised in the future, a human historian would have invested their call with such legendary tales and mythical marvels as the Eastern mind is quick to imagine and skilful to invent. Circumstances of their early lives would be shown to constitute premonitory signs of their future destiny. And the reason for the adoption of such a mode of narration is that the historian would be, like others of his class, seeking to discover the cause of the future greatness of his subject in the subject himself and in his lineage or his early environment. In Scripture we have a contrasted method, and are shown that the cause of an ultimate position of extensive influence and grandeur in a servant of God is to be sought above rather than below. For God makes choice of human instruments not on the earthly principle of the unique and inherent fitness of the instrument itself, but rather because He sees there material that He can make fit for His purpose.* Clearly, therefore, the circumstances under which the actual call was made are of minor importance in a divine record. And in this instance we are certain all the future history of these men was before the inspiring Spirit, for He wroteRevelation 21:1-27as well asMark 1:1-45; yet the narrative is entirely divested of anything approaching earthly glamour. We just have the Lord walking by the sea; the fishermen at their work; His call, holding out to them no alluring prospects; their immediate response. Such simplicity was a deathblow to the pride of the Jew, who would have loved to have seen their lineage traced back to some ancient and honourable family in Israel, as well as to that of the Gentile who would have wished to see that they had been trained in the philosophy of the schools, or in the arts of war and legislation. Had

they such qualifications there might have been ostensible cause for glorying in them; poor and simple as they were, we can only glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

{*"I will make you to become fishers of men," said the Lord to Simon and Andrew. They would thus as servants be His workmanship.}

It may be useful in this connection to make some remarks on the relation of the narrative as given by Mark with those appearing in the other Gospels. In John we have what unquestionably is antecedent and even preparatory to the call as recorded by the Synoptists. But to the significance of this it may be necessary to recur at a later stage of these remarks.

Matthew and Mark use almost identical terms in their respective accounts. There are differences in some phrases, however,* all of which we may well believe have their significance and their suitability to the scheme of the Gospel in which they occur. But we leave these points in order to refer at once to Luke 5:1-11, where a narrative is given which contains at first sight such points of diversity from Matthew and Mark that sober men have without adequate reason declared that it relates to a different event, and that it is subsequent in point of time.

{*CompareMatthew 4:18-22andMark 1:14-20. Matt. (Matthew 4:18), adds, "called Peter"; has "ballontas amphiblestron" for "amphiballontas" and "eis ten thal." for "en te thal." In Matthew 4:19 "to become" is omitted. In Matthew 4:21 "with Zebedee their father" is added, and in Matthew 4:22, "with the hired servants" is omitted. These leading minor variations indicate that Matthew is no slavish imitator of Mark.} In Luke we read that the Lord saw two boats by the shore of the lake. He entered one belonging to Simon, and desired that he would push off a little that He might address the people who were crowding to the water’s edge in order to hear Him. After the discourse He directed Simon to push out into deep water and let down the fishing-nets. Simon obeyed, though dubiously; but an astonishing haul of fish was the result, so much so that his net burst, and he had to seek the help of his partners in the other boat. Peter was conscience-stricken in the presence of this Gracious Power, who, however, assured him that in the future he should catch men. When the boats returned to land, the occupants followed the Lord. This account, it is stated, presents points of absolute disagreement with Matthew and Mark. The latter make no reference to the preaching of Jesus nor to a miraculous catch of fish. They, unlike Luke, mention Andrew as the companion of Simon Peter, and that Zebedee and the servants were with James and John, who are said to be mending, not washing, their nets. They also record, while Luke does not, that Jesus definitely called the fishermen to follow Him, and that He addressed a separate call to each of the pairs. On consideration of these points of diversity it must be admitted that in no instance are they such as to render the narratives incompatible one with another. Luke does notcontradictMatthew and Mark, nor do they him. It must further be admitted that in no one of the accounts, nor in all of them taken together, have we the whole of the details of the incident. This is unnecessary, and would indeed be impossible (John 21:25). Details not essential to the purpose of the Gospel are omitted. And while these omissions may sometimes prevent us from piecing together the four narratives into one "harmonious" whole, we are not, in consequence, the losers. On the contrary, the Gospels, as we have them, present the truth exactly as it was intended by the Divine Author that they should. It is only shallow-minded man who regards it as a defect in inspiration that one Evangelist does not supply the historical omissions of his predecessor. He would have arranged them so, because they would then form a series of Sunday school exercises to fit the four one with another like parts

of a dissected map. What a poor idea of inspiration is in the minds of many!*

{*Do Christians really mean to hold that the four Gospels are not indivisible unities, but just four fragments, like, for instance, the Oxyrhynchus papyrus, only lengthier of course?}

It is, indeed, believed to be absolutely unnecessary to reconstruct any historical incident in the Gospels, to enable us to understand what each record was meant to convey. It is ours to seek in all humility to understand it in the form it has been given us.

Now, what is the object of this narrative as given us by the first two Evangelists? Does not this lie on the surface? In each case we have (1) Jesus Himself beginning His public preaching of the kingdom, (2) His call of others to follow Him, (3) His activity in preaching in the Galilean synagogues, and performing deeds of mercy. Clearly, then, we have set before us the beginning of Messiah's ministry in which He immediately associates others with Himself in His public service. The objective fact of the call of the four from their temporal duties is mentioned, but no more than this, because no more was necessary. The possible significance of such a brief reference has already been stated. In Luke, however, we have a great deal more than the bare fact of certain disciples renouncing their possessions to follow the Messiah. We are called to witness, in the case of one of them as a sample of the others, how the Lord, using temporal circumstances in His own gracious and inimitable manner as the media, wrought within the man, teaching him something of His own nature and something of his own evil heart. We are shown, in fact, the moral preparation of Simon for the step of renunciation. Thus, while in Matthew and Mark we have what is objective, in Luke we have the subjective side. The difference therefore of the standpoints is radical, and must lead to what we actually find in the narratives divergences, though not discrepancies.

Another salient feature of the narrative in Luke is that the event is displaced from its strict chronological position. Such a displacement is for moral reasons, and is not of infrequent occurrence in this Gospel. The call which in Matthew and Mark is in immediate sequence to the Lord's initial public testimony, is in Luke made to follow, not precede, the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, and the healing of Peter's wife's mother. The truth is that Luke gives us not only the general fact of the beginning of the Lord's preaching (as in Luke 4:14-15), but taking up the single case of His word in the synagogue at Nazareth, gives us to see how grace was poured into and from His lips, delighting many sad hearts, but alas! arousing many evil ones also. He goes on to show that same grace not only speaking, but working for man's blessing, grouping a number of His merciful acts, that the Saviour's wonderful grace may be the more impressively set out as the Stronger than Satan and the Deliverer of men from those disabilities sin and Satan have introduced. Luke 4:1-44 is therefore an example of the topical style which may be said to prevail in this Gospel rather than the chronological.

"And now we have, in the beginning of Luke 5:1-39, a fact taken entirely out of its historical place. It is the call of the earlier apostles, more particularly of Simon, who is singled out, just as we have seen one blind man, or one demoniac brought into relief, even though there might be more. So the soh of Jonas is the great object of the Lord's grace here, although others were called at the same time. There were companions of his leaving all for Christ; but we have his case, not theirs, dealt with in detail. Now from elsewhere we know that this call of Peter preceded the Lord's entrance into Simon's house, and the healing of Simon's wife's mother (Mark 1:1-45). We also know that John's Gospel has preserved for us the first occasion when Simon ever saw the Lord Jesus, as

Mark’s Gospel shows when it was that Simon was called away from his ship and occupation. Luke had given us the Lord’s grace with and towards men, from the synagogue at Nazareth down to His preaching everywhere in Galilee, casting out devils, and healing diseases by the way. This is essentially a display in Him of the power of God by the word, and this over Satan and all the afflictions of men. A complete picture of all this is given first, and in order to leave it unbroken, the particulars of Simon’s call are left out of its time. But as the way of the Lord on that occasion was of the deepest value as well as of interest to be given, it was reserved for this place. This illustrates the method of classifying facts morally, instead of merely recording them as they came to pass, which is characteristic of Luke."* {*"Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Gospels," by W. Kelly, p. 271.}

Sufficient has now been adduced to indicate that what seems at first so divergent in Luke is in perfect consonance with the character of that Gospel, which ever shows us the Lord of grace, though encountering and even arousing the evil of man, abounding over it with His compassionate love. It may not be necessary, therefore, to go on to show in detail the wealth of moral teaching and instruction contained in this section, profitable as this would be.

It may, however, still be asked, Are the particulars given in Luke altogether reconcileable with those named by the first two Evangelists? It has already been stated that this is not a question of vital importance, and by being led to consider it as such the believer is apt to be diverted from the profitable study of the Gospels. However, for the sake of any who find a difficulty here an attempt will be made to give the details recorded in the three Gospels in their strict chronological sequence. The four fishermen had spent a long night of fruitless toil upon the Galilean lake. In the morning Jesus came along the shore, where the boats were drawn up and men and women were at their work. He spake to them the word of God (Luke 5:1). So sweet was the heavenly message that they longed to hear more. It was so contrasted with that voice from Sinai which filled men with terrors, and they pressed upon Him in theireagernessto listen. Now the two fishing-boats were drawn up on the strand and were empty, their crews having left them to wash (Luke 5:2) the trawl-nets which had been used overnight in the deep waters, preparatory to another night’s quest. Simon and Andrew presumably had the smaller boat; Zebedee, the hired servants, as well as James and John, being apparently in the other. They had, therefore, finished the washing* of their large nets, and with characteristic energy were now wading in the water near the shore, endeavouring with a hand or casting-net** to supply something of the deficiency of the past night’s work. ThisMatthew 4:18 andMark 1:16tell us. They would be within ear-shot of Jesus, and can we doubt that they would draw nearer to hear Him the better?

{*The latter part of Luke 5:2, may be translated, "and had washed out their nets," according to "the well-known usage of the language, which gives to the aorist tense, on such occasions as the present, a pluperfect signification"; cp. Matthew 27:2, Matthew 27:60; Luke 5:4; Luke 13:16; John 18:14; John 1:1; Acts 12:17; Hebrews 4:8, etc. See The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, by Burgon and Miller, 1896, p. 212.

**The technical term used in Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16 (amphiblestron) implies a net manipulated with both hands, and used in shallow water. Only Peter and Andrew are said to have been using this kind of net.}

Jesus then selecting the smaller and more convenient boat for His purpose, bade Simon put it off from the shore. He finishes His discourse; then, knowing the natural anxiety of the breadwinners, He said, "Launch [in the singular, being addressed to Simon as captain of the boat] out into the deep, and let down [this is in the plural, showing that others were present in the boat] the trawl-nets for a draught." Simon let down a single net,* which was filled to bursting with fish. The partners in the other boat are beckoned to come to their assistance, and both boats are filled with the spoil. Simon, convicted of his own lack of confidence and of the Lord's omniscient power and grace, falls before Him in confession. The Lord assures him, saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." This, however, was not the call to follow Him.

{*Most of the recent Editors read "nets" inLuke 5:5-6; but there is considerable evidence in favour of the singular among the Uncials, Cursives, and early Versions. The unauthorised alteration of the singular to the plural by a copyist, is more likely to have occurred than the reverse.} The boats then came to land. Will not He who cared for the fragments of the multiplied loaves and fishes care that this harvest of the sea be duly garnered? This being done, He says to Simon and Andrew, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Matt. and Mark). And going farther along the shore, the sons of Zebedee are seen in their boat mending the nets damaged by the great catch, and He calls them also.

It is by no means affirmed that the order of events here indicated is absolutely accurate; but it is affirmed that such an order is neither impossible nor inconceivable, and that it also shows that the statements of the three Evangelists are, as thus regarded, consistent with one another.

Returning now to Mark after this digression, we may observe how the Lord in this call, humble Servant of Jehovah as He was, asserts His sovereign claim. In a peremptory imperative He bade them, Come. The command awoke within them the divine instinct of obedience. This word of authority for ever adjusted their mutual relationship as servants to the Master. Later on, in a critical moment, Simon Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." He had learned the absolute rights of the Lord over Him from that memorable day when he forsook all to follow Him.

We may here see the distinction between the earlier lessons of Andrew and Peter, and what they now learned. Andrew and Peter had found Him to be the Lamb of God, the Messiah of Israel (John 1:36-42). Their hearts burned within them as they listened to His discourses of love and goodness and truth. But now He had come down to them in the midst of their daily toil. He said to Simon, Give me the use of your fishing-boat as a pulpit," sitting in it with more majesty than Solomon upon his ivory throne; and then at a word filling it with leaping fish in payment of their scant service. Now He had come nearer still to them in the humdrum of their lives, and they heard Him say to them, Come after Me. The authority of the voice was irresistible, and they obeyed like the fish of the lake, which, hearing the call of their Creator, swarmed along the trackless paths of the deep to do Him homage where He sat in the old fishing-boat.

These fishermen recognised the voice of the King of Israel. They so thoroughly believed His gospel of the coming kingdom that they were ready to admit the absolute rights of the King over them. He of His own wisdom had sought them out, made the selection between them and others, and instructed them to follow Him, conscious of what in His own power He could make them. The anointed king may be obscured in the cave of Adullam; these men obey Him as implicitly as if He

were wielding the sceptre on the throne of Zion. Their ready response, however, is the result of previous workings within them. John shows us how they learned His personal glories as Saviour. A second lesson was to know Him as Lord. For this they were prepared, as we have seen, by the word He preached and the miracle He wrought. And consequently when His call was given they obeyed with promptness.

Such is the order usually adopted by the Spirit in the induction of a believer into the place of service. For the believer confesses Jesus who died for his sins and lives as his Lord. He is bought with a price to live no longer for self, but to Him who died and lives for him. There are necessarily but few called to a place of renunciation such as that taken by the apostles, but there are no concerns of any believer over which the Lord has not His unqualified rights. Do we all yield Him His own?

05.07. A Sabbath at Capernaum

07. — A Sabbath at Capernaum

"And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught.*1 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught*1 them as having authority, and not as the scribes. And straightway*2 there was in their synagogue a man with*3 an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying,*4 What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?*5 Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace,*6 and come out of him. And the unclean spirit tearing him and crying with a loud voice came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*7 And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee.*8 And straightway when they were come out*9 of the synagogue they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of*10 a fever; and straightway they tell him of her: and he came*11 and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them" (Mark 1:21-31, R.V.).

{*1 "was teaching," W.K.

*2 J.N.D., W.K. and others omit "straightway" here.

*3 "in the power of," W.K.; "possessed by, not merely had he one, but he was completely under its power, characterised by it, J.N.D.

*4 Some insert "Ha!" or "Eh!"

*5 "Jesus, Nazarene," J.N.D., W.K. (as also inMark 14:67;Mark16:6).

*6 "Be mute," W.K.

*7 "What is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him," J.N.D.; "What is this? A new teaching with authority! Even the unclean spirits he commandeth, and they obey him," W.K.

*8 "the whole region of Galilee around," J.N.D.; "the whole region round Galilee," W.K.

*9 "going out," J.N.D. W.K.

*10 "lay in a fever," J.N.D.; W.K.

*11 "went up to her," J.N.D.; "coming up," W.K. Many of these renderings by W.K. are taken from Vol. 2. of theBeliever's Monthly Magazine.} The Servant of Jehovah proceeds with His ministry of the kingdom of God. Only He is not now alone in it. We read previously that "Jesus came into Galilee"; we now read "theygo into Capernaum." He would necessarily direct all the service and provide and arrange all matters as the Master. It was their part to be ear-witnesses of His gracious

words and eye-witnesses of His miracles and signs, and some of them of His majesty also. But they, we may be sure, found their joy and their strength not in visions of the future, but in the simple satisfaction that arose from being in the company and under the direction of a loved One. Is it not so even now? Does not the renewed heart crave for a sense of the Lord's presence? And did not the Lord Himself answer that craving by His promise before His departure, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). And, if this assurance be said to have a special collective application, the wish of Paul for Timothy is undoubtedly individual, "The Lord [Jesus Christ] be with thy spirit" (2 Timothy 4:22). May we then, individually and collectively, walk with Him! The Lord was pleased to select Capernaum as His abode in Galilee, making from thence His circuits through the numerous towns and villages of that populous district. Capernaum was from this circumstance highly favoured as a place. Matthew, alluding to the Lord's residence there, speaks of it as "His own city" (Matthew 9:1). In the words often quoted from Chrysostom, "Bethlehem bore Him, Nazareth nurtured Him, Capernaum had Him continuously as inhabitant." The Lord Himself referred to this mark of outward privilege and its abuse in words of solemn and tremendous import, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell [hades]; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:23). Capernaum repented not at the preaching of Jesus, and while its unbelieving inhabitants must answer for themselves individually in a day of judgment yet to come, this, the Lord's own city in Galilee, has been so completely overthrown that its site cannot with certainty be identified. In the Lord's service on this Sabbath day in Capernaum, as recorded by Mark, He is shown (1) teaching in the synagogue, (2) expelling a demon, and (3) healing Simon's wife's mother.

Jehovah's Servant Teaching with Authority

Jesus straightway went into the synagogue, probably that one built by the Roman centurion (Luke 7:1; Luke 7:5), and began teaching. We are not told here the matter of His discourse. Matthew, in what is commonly known as the Sermon on the mount, has summarised in the words of our Lord the moral principles which should characterise the coming kingdom of heaven. Mark simply states that He who had preached the fulfilment of ancient promise and the gospel of God now commenced to expound the truth, so that those who were hungering and thirsting after righteousness might be filled. Many prophets and kings had desired to hear the things taught in Capernaum that day, but had not heard them. And many in the synagogue, the Simeons and the Annas, had waited for that day, and now they received with joy the welcome news of grace, saying in their hearts, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9; cf.Luke 2:29). But the Evangelist points out for our admiration and instruction that the teaching of the lowly Servant in the synagogue was "with authority," and also that this character was so evident in His words as to fill the audience with astonishment. His words carried with them the weight of divine credentials, giving them a distinction altogether superior to those of unauthorised teachers, so that not only the common people, but a learned rabbi was constrained to say to Him, "We know thou art a teacher come from God."

We may pause here to inquire more closely and particularly as to the exact meaning of this phrase used with regard to the Lord's teaching at Capernaum. "He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"; and again, "With authority he commandeth even the unclean

spirits, and they obey him." What was it for Him to speak with authority? Does this mean that when He spoke His words were followed by an immediate and irresistible effect in the conviction of the minds and hearts of the auditors, or in compelling the obedience of the unclean demon present? Or does it mean that when He spoke it was evident to His hearers that He had an adequate commission as the Servant of Jehovah to declare the good tidings that He did? The latter, assuredly, is the meaning most in consonance with the scheme of this Gospel, and also with the general usage of the original word(exousia)rightly translated "authority." This word(ex.)implies the possession of the right or title to act, and not only the capacity or competency to do so, the latter being expressed by the word often translated "power" (dynamis)Moses might be said to have had zeal and competency when he first set about redressing his people's wrongs in Egypt; but when his authority was challenged, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" he fled ignominiously. Later, however, Jehovah said to him, "Come now and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." He then went as a divinely accredited emissary. It is so that Jesus is presented in Mark. He had an indisputable right to speak.

It is not implied that His word in any sense lacked power. On the contrary, in Luke we have, in connection with this very incident, both words* used; "with authority (ex.) and power (d.) he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36). As a Servant, He was heaven's Plenipotentiary in the fullest sense of the word. He had the amplest title to speak, and His word was also effective, according to Isaiah's prophecy, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

{*These two words also occur together inLuke 9:1, where the Lord delegates both authority and power over demons to the twelve. It is well to note that in a great many passages in the Authorised Version the word(ex.)is translated "power" instead of authority; see, for instance,Matthew 9:6,Matthew 9:8;Matthew 28:18;Luke 4:6;Luke 10:19;Luke 12:5;John 10:18;John 17:2;John 19:10-11;Romans 13:1-3;2 Corinthians 13:10,et al.The Father gave authority to the Son to execute judgment (John 5:27), but Jesus withstood the temptation of Satan when he offered Him the authority(ex.)of the world-kingdoms (Luke 4:6).} The time soon came when men in resentment questioned this authority of the Lord. Did they not ask, "By what authority doest thou these things?" and, "Who gave thee this authority to do these things?" (Mark 11:27-33). But this question was the outcome of the stubborn will of man rebelling against the manifest authority of God; and Jesus vouchsafed no answer.

Here in Galilee were simple souls, thirsting for the word of life, desirous of having the great problems of an active conscience toward God settled with authority. They perceived with amazement such authority in the manner of the Lord's teaching, even before that authority was demonstrated in their midst by the expulsion of a demon. It must be observed that this character was recognised although His word was not prefaced by the phrase so frequent in the prophecies which were read in their hearing every Sabbath, "Thus saith Jehovah." Indeed, a false prophet might use such a formula, but here was One who spake in His own name and yet in the name of Jehovah of Israel and the God of all the earth also. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you," giving them thus, by virtue of His own right, the word of Him that sent Him. Can we wonder that it was said, "I perceive that

thou art a prophet"; and again, "We have heard ourselves, and know, that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (John 4:19; John 4:42)? While even the officers sent to arrest Him excused their failure to execute their task by the statement, "Never man so spake." The teaching of Jesus is placed in contrast with that of the scribes in so far as the former possessed an authority of which the latter was utterly destitute. "He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes." It is unnecessary to refer to the erudite speculations of professors of our day, at home or abroad, as to the theology of the scribes, in order to realise the force of this inspired contrast. We have all we need in this Gospel itself. The Lord Himself has characterised the scribes and their doctrine, and they therefore stand uncloaked in the presence of the Light of the world (Mark 7:1-13;Mark 12:38-40). Besides, the question here considered is not the one raised later, viz., what the scribes taught, but how they taught. The unlettered peasants, hearing the Faithful and True Witness, confessed how different His teaching is from that of the false witnesses. They heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, whose own the sheep were, and it had a ring of authority never heard in the voice of the hireling who cared for the fleece rather than the flock. The truth was that, though the scribes sat on Moses' seat, they neglected the commandments of God, and expounded and enforced the precepts of men. Hence their words were bereft of all authority in matters appertaining to the responsibility of man to God, and this lack was evident to the natural conscience. But now One spake upon whose words sinful men might rest with assurance, as He said, "We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen." "His word does not consist of arguments which evidence the uncertainty of man, but comes with the authority of One who knows the truth which He proclaims — authority which in fact was that of God who can communicate truth." It is no wonder then that the audience in the synagogue was filled with amazement, as they listened to the authoritative words of Jesus of Nazareth. Let us hope that many received His words in faith, and, believing, had life in His name. The Demoniac in the Synagogue

How soon the Evangelist shows that the ministry of the Servant-Prophet elucidated the true moral condition of things in Israel! The Light shone into the darkness, and there in the synagogue revealed the hypocritical scribes in the pulpit, and an unclean spirit in the congregation. Such ministry could never be popular, especially when its novelty was passed, because "men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved" (John 3:19-20). But if fallen man refused to own the light of life, the powers of darkness did not remain silent and irresponsive in the presence of the Majesty of heaven in human guise. He who was possessed by the unclean spirit acknowledged Jesus the Nazarene as the Holy One of God. It was a confession, no doubt, of apprehension and dread, for the demons "believe and shudder," but the declaration was real and true nevertheless, as indeed all such must be in the presence of Him who is the Truth. The unclean spirit hitherto concealed behind the personality of the man revealed himself by this public utterance, "What have we [the man and I] to do with thee, Jesus the Nazarene? The spirit of lying spoke truth, for "what fellowship has light with darkness," but not the whole truth, for Jesus came to deliver man from the authority of darkness (Colossians 1:13). The demon continued, "Art thou come to destroy us [the man and me]?" Yea and nay, foul spirit. "To this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). But as for the man, "the Son of man is not come to destroy, men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56). Then, without equivocation or ambiguity, the unclean and unholy spirit bore testimony to the Holy and the Just

One: "I [not now the man] know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

What a commotion such an outcry would create in the synagogue. The audience had not ceased to wonder at the gracious words of instruction from the new Teacher. They were now startled by the passionate outburst from the man with a demon. The two speakers afforded contrast of the widest possible nature. There was the Man, "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" (dyn.) "full of the Holy Spirit." There was also a man possessed by an unclean spirit, a power of evil. It was necessary that this existing contrast should be emphasized before all, and that it should be made clear to all that there was no association whatsoever between the Servant of Jehovah and the spirit of darkness. The Lord therefore, acting in His own authority, did what even Michael the archangel forbore to do when he durst not bring a railing accusation against the devil, but said, The Lord rebuke thee (Jude 1:9). Jesus rebuked him, quelling his riotous speech with a word, as with a similar word He did the howling winds, the tossing waves, and the raging, burning fever. Exercising His authority further than mere repression, He commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. The demon obeyed, speaking no more, only uttering inarticulate cries as he departed, his exit being attended by a paroxysm of physical pain to the possessed man (Cf.Mark 9:26). "What the devil cannot keep as his own, he will, if he can, destroy; even as Pharaoh never treated the children of Israel so ill as when they were just escaping from his grasp. Something similar is evermore taking place; and Satan tempts, plagues and buffets none so fiercely as those who are in the act of being delivered from his tyranny for ever."

Thus then did the Lord deliver the captive of Satan, and demonstrate that in His service He held no alliance with the evil one. The Servant of Jehovah who vanquished the prince of this world in the solitudes of the wilderness, unmasked him when, in the crowded synagogue, he came in the guise of one of the fallen sons of men, acknow ledging Him as the Holy One of God. In the power of the Spirit of God, Jesus, the true Nazarite, maintained His service in the unsullied purity of heavenly light. He who opened the mouths of dumb sinners to speak forth His praise closed the mouths of demons, forbidding them to say that they knew Him. And in this manner the Lord removed all occasion for stumbling as to His service, and anticipated that malicious spirit in the scribes and Pharisees which caused them to bring against Him the baseless and evil charge that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

Here, however, in the synagogue at Capernaum, the utmost amazement prevailed. Those present had felt the authority of His word within them; they now saw that authority exemplified in the person of another, a remarkable deliverance wrought at the simple word of Jesus. They questioned among themselves for an explanation, unready as yet to see a sufficient explanation in the Person of Jesus before them. They can but own, however, that this is a new kind of teacher and a different sort of teaching altogether from any to which they have been accustomed. For the word of Jesus evidently is of paramount authority even in the kingdom of Satan. The report of this incident, as it might well do, spread with rapidity throughout the Galilan district.

Simon’s Wife’s Mother Healed

Following directly upon the service of the Lord in the synagogue we are called to witness His service in the home. His activities and perfections which glorified God in the public synagogue are shown to have been equally in exercise in the privacy of the domestic circle.

Immediately He passed from the synagogue where such excitement had been awakened to partake of the hospitalities of the house of Simon and Andrew. James and John are invited also. They knew the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"; but could it be kept more holy than in the presence and company of Jesus?

Coming into the house, a shadow lay upon it. Simon’s wife’s mother was there, sick of a great fever, as Luke the physician states. With simple directness and with growing confidence in the love and sympathy and power of their Master they unite to tell Him of their trouble. They had seen His power in the physical world — over the fish of the sea. They had seen His power in the realm of darkness — over the unclean demon. But could He — would He — consider a private sorrow, a domestic affliction? The compassionate Lord dissipated once for all any uncertainty on this score. He had come to heal the diseases of Israel, and He vouchsafed a ready answer to their request.

Jesus came to the bedside. He stood over the patient and rebuked the fever. Taking her by the hand He raised her. The fever left her, and she immediately arose, the recovery being instantaneous and complete, so that she was able to wait upon them. The touch of Jesus is significant, indicating His personal contact with sorrowing humanity. He did not touch the demoniacs, but He touched the leper, the eyes of the blind, the tongue of the dumb, and the ear of Malchus. He also touched the bier of the dead, and the terrified disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. The hand of Omnipotence was laid upon the infirmities of man. He proved Himself a God near at hand, and not afar off. The principle is true now to faith, but will have a direct application when Messiah visits His enfeebled people, raising them up by His strong right hand. The restored woman used her newly-given strength in serving the One who had bestowed it and those with Him. This is an example for all time. What have we that we have not received? Let all therefore be rendered to Him who is the Giver.

05.08. Evening and Morning (First Day) at Capernaum

08. Evening and Morning (First Day) at Capernaum

"And at even, when the sun did set, they brought*1 unto him all that were sick,*2 and them that were possessed with devils.*3 And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and he suffered not the devils*3 to speak, because they knew*4 him.

"And in the morning, a great while before day,*5 he rose up and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.*6 And Simon and they that*7 were with him followed after him; and they found him and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils (Mark 1:32-39).

{*1"kept bringing," W.K.

*2"suffering," J.N.D.; "ill," W.K.

*3"demons," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4"had the inward consciousness who he was," J.N.D., note.

*5"long before day," J.N.D.; W.K.

*6 or, "while it was yet night was praying," W.K.

*7"those," J.N.D.; W.K.} The Jewish Sabbath was passed, and the first of the week began. The Mosaic day of rest was not such for the Servant of Jehovah. A captive of Satan was in the synagogue, and the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Weakness and pain, the effects of the presence of sin in the world, were present in the house of Simon Peter, and the Anointed One had come "to set at liberty them that are bruised." Hence it was a day of service for Jesus, who cast out the demon and healed the mother-in-law of Simon. And the necessity for such service proved unmistakeably the utter inadequacy of the law to relieve and bless the sinful and suffering Jew. But after Sabbath a new era dawned, a forecast of the kingdom come in power. Not now isolated cases were blessed, but all the sick and suffering of Capernaum flocked to the great Physician, who healed them all — every one. Those who had in weariness and painfulness passed many a sleepless night were freed of their infirmities to enjoy a rest Jewish ordinances could never give. It was truly the beginning of a new week for them. And it was also a happy augury of that millennial day for Israel when the glorious Sun of righteousness, even then present with healing in His wings, should arise and chase away all darkness, disease and death.

Shadows at the Sunset At eventide there was a great congregation of the afflicted of Capernaum at the house of Simon Peter. Those who had scruples in coming to be healed on the Sabbath now came freely. Those who feared the tyranny of an apostate priesthood came under cover of the

lengthening shadows. And prostrate ones, fearful of the fierce rays of a noontide sun, were brought to Jesus in "the cool of the day." And He who in the garden of Eden sought the guilty pair at eventide as they shrunk abashed from His presence (Genesis 3:8), had come from heaven to seek and to save their suffering and groaning sons. The Lord of glory held a great reception that night, but the throng was not such as is found in the courts of the world's great ones. He was indeed greater than Solomon, but no Queen of Sheba was there with her gifts. Truly the day is coming when all nations shall fall down before Him, but those who did Him reverence then were but a company of invalids. Nor did they seek His face in vain. They found that He whose sceptre shall in due time exercise its unchallenged sway over the governments of this world was supremely potent even then in the kingdom of affliction and pain. With the resources of His omnipotence blending with the exquisite sensibilities of His perfect manhood, He passed, while the twilight shadows deepened, through that motley assemblage, laying hands of beneficent healing on every poor sufferer (Luke 4:40), and expelling demons with a word (Matthew 8:16). How well did Jesus prove Himself that night the Servant of Jehovah! What occasion did He give for Capernaum to exchange the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise, and to take up the language of the prophetic Psalm and sing to God, "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalms 103:1-3).

We shall do well to reflect upon this vivid picture of the Lord's loving service, given in all three of the Synoptical Gospels. For we are still in the shadows. We form part of the creation which, in its entirety, groans and travails in pain even yet (Romans 8:22), waiting for a deliverance still to come. In our weaknesses we need an all-sufficient One to sustain and to deliver; "until the day break and the shadows flee away."

Truly we have no warrant for believing that the Lord has secured to His own a present exemption from the physical and mental disabilities common to mankind. Neither have we warrant for believing that the power He exercised in New Testament times over the sick bodies of men is continued to His present witnesses. In those miracles of healing He demonstrated once for all His power as the First Cause, dispensing with all material remedies as intermediaries, accomplishing His purpose with a word or touch. He was pleased to use a plaister of figs for the recovery of Hezekiah, but the king knew that it was Jehovah who had healed him, as he said, "He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it" (Isaiah 38:15). And we, encouraged by the personal activities of Jesus recorded in the holy Gospels, may use our medicinal remedies in the assurance of His equal activity today both in sympathy and in power to heal.

"Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old,

Was strong to heal and save;

It triumphed o'er disease and death,

O'er darkness and the grave;

To Thee they went, the blind, the dumb,

The palsied and the lame,

The leper with his tainted life,

The sick with fevered frame.

And lo! Thy touch brought life and health;

Gave speech, and strength, and sight;

And youth renewed and frenzy calmed

Owned Thee, the Lord of light.

And now, O Lord, be near to bless,

Almighty as of yore,

In crowded street, by restless couch,

As by Gennesareth’s shore.

Though Love and Might no longer heal

By touch, or word, or look;

Though they, who do Thy work, must read

Thy laws in nature’s book;

Yet heal and quicken, soothe and bless,

With Thine almighty breath;

And be our great Deliverer still,

Thou Lord of life and death."

Though Israel did not know the Messiah, the demons were inwardly conscious of the personality of this Servant of Jehovah, and would have declared it aloud. This the Lord forbade, as in the synagogue. He did accept the fourfold witness of the Baptist, the Father, His own works, and the Scriptures (John 5:32-47), but He, the Holy One of God, disclaimed all testimony from beneath. In that wisdom which He possessed so perfectly as a Man, He, anticipating the unfounded charge against Him of complicity with Beelzebub in the expulsion of demons, and to give no occasion of stumbling to any of the Father’s "little ones," publicly renounced all association with the works of darkness, so that all might know that these things were wrought by Him in His Father’s name alone.

Morning Prayer The work of mercy over, the healed ones and their friends retired to their homes. Capernaum was soon wrapped in a healthy slumber not known for many a day. Was it so in the house of Simon Peter with the faithful and devoted Servant of Jehovah? We know not whether the long night watches were spent by Him in sleep or not. We know He slept in the storm-tossed boat when His disciples were filled with terror. We also know when His apostles fell asleep "for sorrow," the silence of Gethsemane was broken by His agonized pleadings to His Father. As to this particular night, however, while we recognise that what others did was no rule for Him, since Scripture is silent, it will profit us nothing to speculate further. But this we are informed that He rose up a great while before day, and leaving the sleepers to sleep on, He went away into a place of

solitude, and there was praying. In the parallel passage in Matthew, though no reference is made to the Lord's morning vigil, a prophecy is cited from the Old Testament which may therefore rightly be considered in this connection. "When the even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" (Matthew 8:16-17). This passage is taken from the prophecy relating to Jehovah's righteous Servant, as it was translated from the Hebrew in the Greek Septuagint Version. It is a prophetic utterance of what the believing and suffering Jewish remnant will penitently confess in a future day when they recognise their guilt in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. "Surely he hath borne our griefs [sicknesses] and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." The passage in Isaiah evidently does not refer, as the verses which immediately follow do (Isaiah 53:5-6), to the atoning and substitutionary sufferings of Christ, but to the effects of His service among men which the Jews, blinded by unbelief, regarded as a visitation from God, so that they said, "He is mad"; "this man is not of God"; "He hath a demon," esteeming Him to be a Gehazi, a Uzziah, "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." The Spirit of God, however, in Matthew records this instance of extensive healing energy at Capernaum as an illustration of the manner in which the prophetic oracle was fulfilled. So that we are left in no doubt as to its true application. In the narrative of His taking the infirmities and bearing the diseases, there is not only the sense that the Lord removed these things from the sufferers, but also that He took them upon Himself; so that He became a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief [sickness]" as stated in the verse preceding the quotation (Isaiah 53:3).

It was thus Jesus was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15), and thus that He qualified Himself to be our sympathising High Priest on high. Not that He took these physical infirmities upon His own body, but He bore them upon His spirit. His acts of healing were not acts of power solely, but acts of sympathy also. He as none else could fully estimate the physical pain, the mental anguish and the moral ruin represented before Him. When the deaf and dumb man was before Him, He looked up to heaven and sighed (Mark 7:34). At the grave of Lazarus He groaned in the spirit, was troubled, and wept copiously (John 11:33-38), so that even the Jews said, "Behold, how he loved him."

It was therefore not only Omnipotent Power, but Infinite Love concerning itself intimately with the physical disabilities of our race, coming into contact therewith, and exhibiting His matchless sympathy. There was a partial expression of this loving regard in the Old Testament, when Jehovah brought His people through the wilderness. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9). More could not be till the incarnation, and Jehovah was now present in Israel in the person of the sorrowing and sympathising Son of man. How keenly affected therefore was His spirit as the suffering Galileans crowded to Him as their great Physician for healing. It was an evening of sorrow, and how much there was for Him to do and to suffer before the morning came, the morning without clouds. Did not He look on to that morning of liberty and glory? Did He not say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50). Was then this burden upon the Lord's spirit throughout the long night-watches? Were the Psalmist's words fulfilled in Him; "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with tears" (Psalms 6:6)? and

again, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3)? This may have been so, but the specific subject of this early communion between the Servant and the One who sent Him is not revealed, only the fact is certain, that He sought the solitudes "to pray." As on another occasion He was "alone praying" (Luke 9:18), exemplifying what He also taught the importance of secret prayer (Matthew 6:6). This privacy was only to be secured by such an act of self-sacrifice as this. The needy crowd surrounded Him in the evening, and a similar throng would seek Him in the early morning. The Lord therefore went out into the night-chills, always keenest in the hour before the dawn, to secure a period free from interruptions, thus subordinating, the activities of His service to the confession of His dependence upon God. What an example for us in the strenuous life of today! The following extract relates to our subject: "Here also we have the dependence of the Lord in all this. We must modify this by no specious pretext, as if the Lord’s prayers were the only untrue ones* ever offered among the assembly of saints. His arm was not shortened; He clothed the heavens with blackness, and made sackcloth their covering; He dried up the sea, so that their fish stank; He could do what He pleased, but this state of things [shown by the Lord’s prayers] is easily and blessedly explicable. The Lord God had given Him the tongue of the learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. He wakened His ear morning by morning. He opened His ear to hear as the learned, and now, with this early-wakened ear He went forth to hear, and to hold that blessed communion with the Father, where, in a world of evil, alone His soul could find delight and refreshment, and where He renewed the strength of His joy — the conscious ground of His coming forth into the world; and in the apprehensions of His soul, all [this] passed in intercourse with His Father. [It is] the most blessed, perhaps the most interesting, part of all our Saviour’s life, and where He brings us in spirit with Him, into His Father’s presence, into His Father’s bosom, where He pours all His request, and passes through the evil [of the world] in the strength of it. Oh, it is a blessed portion! Are we to suppose the Saviour the only Man who never had it?"

{*The writer in this sentence, somewhat obscurely worded, is evidently combating the notion that the prayers of our Lord were affected, and not a real expression of felt dependence. How can we think of the Lord pretending to pray?} Popularity Shunned

Simon Peter the host was disturbed to find his gracious Master had departed. And he with others sought His whereabouts with an anxiety we can well imagine. A crowd also collected from near and far, all anxious for further knowledge of the Prophet who had wrought such mighty and merciful deeds of healing for the sons of Israel. When the ardent disciple found the Lord, he said to Him in his excited impetuous way, "All are seeking thee." Bright visions of the glorious kingdom were before this newly-called fisher of men. Did it not say in the prophets that all should know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest? His exuberant fancy saw in the Capernaum crowd the earnest of the thousands of Israel flocking to confess themselves subjects of the Saviour-King. The Lord did not rebuke Peter for vain thoughts, or crush his enthusiasm as ill-timed and misplaced. But the Lord’s hour of triumph had not yet come, and He knew what was working in the hearts of the populace, while Peter did not. Jesus did not commit Himself to men in Galilee any more than in Jerusalem (John 2:23-25). Not seeking popularity or importance in the eyes of men, He expressed His will to go forward in the service of His Father. "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth." Preaching, not miracles, was the

chief end of His mission, and accordingly we find Him continuing His blessed service throughout the synagogues of Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.

05.09. The Leper Touched and Cleansed

09. The Leper Touched and Cleansed

"And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, [and kneeling down to him], and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean. And he strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded,*1 for a testimony unto them. But he went out,*2 and began to publish*3 it much, and to spread abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city,*4 but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter"*5 (Mark 1:40-45, R.V.).

{*1 "what Moses ordained," J.N.D.; "what Moses enjoined," W.K.

*2 "having gone forth," J.N.D.; "having gone out," W.K.

*3 "proclaim," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "into town," W.K.

*5 "every side," J.N.D.; "everywhere," W.K.}

We now approach what may be regarded as a new section in the general scheme of Mark's Gospel. And in this section the incident of the healed paralytic which immediately follows, is coupled with that of the cleansed leper. The change in subject here will be the more readily seen after a brief review of the preceding portions of this first chapter. It has been observed (1) how this Gospel opens by stating circumstantially the credentials of Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah (Mark 1:1-13); going on to record (2) His public announcement of the good news that God's kingdom was at hand (Mark 1:14-15); (3) His association of others with Him in His ministry (Mark 1:16-21); (4) His zealous and active beneficence in Capernaum, and indeed throughout Galilee., among those possessed of evil spirits, and those diseased in body (Mark 1:22-39). And the last-named account of this service of the Lord on the Sabbath and the first of the week is stated in such terms that it forms a tableau of the coming millennial day with its deliverance from temporal ills, which is connected in the prophecies with the personal presence of Jehovah's Servant, and which will be preceded by the casting of Satan into the abyss where he will be bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-15).

Now the Evangelist passes on to illustrate how the Lord was present to relieve a deeper and more serious human need than any yet mentioned. His Galikean ministry was in the preceding narrative shown to comprise the healing of the sick and the deliverance of those oppressed by the devil. But besides this the nation was legally and morally defiled, and moreover sin had wrought such inherent weakness in the people that, unable to come of themselves, they needed to be brought to the feet of the divine Healer. Two typical cases — the leper and paralytic — are therefore selected

for the exemplification of the perfect suitability of the Servant of the Lord to remedy the existing state of physical and spiritual evil among men, the physical being used as a type of the spiritual according to the frequent custom in the Gospels, and in this way illustrating by concrete example the word of the kingdom which Jesus preached.

Before proceeding to consider the solemn significance of the former of these two incidents, it may be well to note that in the third gospel also, the same combination occurs. The healing of the leper and then of the palsied man are there given previous to the account of the call of Levi (Luke 5:12-26). In Matthew, however, the historical order, which is evidently that found in Mark and Luke, is not followed, but the events are set in that connection which most vividly portrays the Kingship of Jesus. There the healing of the leper is placed after that manifesto of the new order of things in the coming kingdom, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 8:1-4), although in point of time the miracle was wrought previously, as Luke shows. And this miracle is followed in Matthew by the healing of the centurion’s servant, and of Peter’s wife’s mother, the stilling of the tempest and the casting out of the demons which then entered the herd of swine. All these events are named before the cure of the palsied man (Matthew 9:1-8), and are followed by the call of the tax-gatherer.

Without now considering the significance of this chronological displacement of details, it is sufficient to note that Matthew gives a fuller and more varied array of witnesses to the character of Messiah’s coming kingdom than was needful in Mark. Here we have only two witnesses cited, whose joint testimony, however, is as valid as that of a more numerous company. The Cure of the Leper The Evangelist describes the cure of the leper in graphic terms, as is characteristic of him. We are called to behold the afflicted outcast coming to Jesus, not standing "afar off" like the leprous ten (Luke 17:12), but in his eagerness approaching Him of whose great power in the kingdom of pain he had heard. With mute entreaties the poor sufferer, "full of leprosy," as Luke tells us he was, beseeches the Master to exercise His pity and His power. In the intensity of his emotion he threw himself upon his knees* before the Lord in that attitude which is so significant at once of reverence and dependence. Then the kneeling suppliant framed his petition in the brief words which are recorded without variation by the Synoptists, save that Matthew and Luke add the term of address, "Lord." He does not say, as the fervour of his actions might lead us to expect he would have said, "Have mercy on me," or, "Heal me; cleanse me"; but he expresses his conviction that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth there is a resident power adequate to meet even such a desperate case as this "if thou wilt, thou canst cleanse me." The leper’s prayer has been criticised, it being alleged that it lacks faith because there is no expressed appeal to the love and mercy of the Lord. We desire, in passing, to record an emphatic protest against human criticism of the leper’s prayer or of the prayers of any. Prayer is the transmission of the inner cravings of the spiritual nature of man (whether articulate or not) to his God. Who shall intermeddle in this? Who has a right to censure what is meant for the divine ear? If I am an auditor, I may, if needs be, abstain from adding my "Amen" to the petition. This is permitted me, but further I dare not go. Am I competent to examine the naked heart of him who The Greek term is also used by Mark of the young ruler who knelt to Jesus, as did the father of the young demoniac (Matthew 17:14). These were sincere, but not so were the soldiers of the governor, who knelt before Him in mockery (Matthew 27:29),prays, and to unravel his secret motives? The Lord does this still, as He did of old when He openly condemned the prayer of the hypocritical Pharisee for its insincerity. But the Lord

does not condemn this defiled pleader. On the contrary, the appeal instantly calls forth the exercise of those potentialities of the healing mercy abounding in Him, though there was more than the mere act of miraculous power. He was moved with compassion; His whole nature, rising above all that was loathsome and repellent, physically and ceremonially, in the leper, was stirred with intense sympathy for the sufferer. Here we see the tender mercy of God (Luke 1:78) exhibited in Jesus, that we may be encouraged to seek and find true consolation in His compassions towards us, which fail not. As king Ahasuerus extended the golden sceptre of mercy to his beautiful queen Esther, so the Lord stretched out the hand of mercy and touched the unlovely leper, contracting no defilement as another would have done (Leviticus 13:46;Numbers 5:2). Then He sent forth His word and healed him: "I will, be thou made clean."* {*For the cleansing power of the word of Christ, compareJohn 15:3,Ephesians 5:26.} What Does Leprosy Illustrate?

Leprosy was a common disease in Israel, and was brought with them, it has been said, from the bondage of Egypt. Apart from its seriousness as a disease of the body, the law of Moses imposed upon. it additional seriousness by the ceremonies of that economy. Other infirmities and diseases receive brief mention only, but the instructions having reference to leprosy occupy a considerable section in the priests' guide book (Leviticus 13:1-59, Leviticus 14:1-57). The priest, acting as the representative of Jehovah in the midst of His people, examined the symptoms of a suspected case, and decided accordingly whether the patient was a leper or not; and if so, condemned him to dwell alone in the place of uncleanness without the camp. The priest only was empowered to decide whether the plague of leprosy was healed in a given case, while a series of ceremonies was prescribed before the healed man could be again acknowledged as one of the congregation of worshippers of Jehovah.

It is easy to gather from this exceptional prominence assigned to it that leprosy is figurative of sin, and especially of sin in that aspect of it which causes the sinner to be excluded from the presence of God and from the privileges of relationship with Him. This intimate connection between the moral and physical in this disease is illustrated by the case of Uzziah, king of Judah, who in a spirit of profane bravado usurped the priest's office and went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense on the golden altar. He was opposed by the priests in his sacrilegious act, and he was smitten of God with leprosy to mark his uncleanness of heart and unfitness for the divine presence. "Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy broke forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah" (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). At his death he was buried in a field adjoining the burial-place of kings. The uncleanness of the king's heart was indicated by the leprous signs which arose in his body and demonstrated the justice of his exclusion from priestly ministrations, though he was the anointed king of Israel. His very effort to force himself into the presence of the All-pure brought to view his latent uncleanness.

Leprosy then is emblematical of man's natural defilement, individually and nationally. And by the cleansing of the Galilean leper the Servant of Jehovah showed that He had come to purify the sinner from his sins, as He would Israel also, if the nation would take up the language of

penitence, and say, "We are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6, R.V.). Then would Jehovah’s prophetic promise to His people be fulfilled, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned; and whereby they have transgressed against me" (Jeremiah 33:8). This will be fulfilled in a day to come, but if Israel had known, even then a fountain was opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).

Legal Ceremony to be Observed

It was the function of a priest to pronounce a leprous man unclean, and it was also his function to pronounce a man clean when he was cured. The law was inoperative to heal, and only took cognisance of the fact of a man being healed or not. The work of ceremonial restoration only commenced when the cure of the plague had been effected by other means. This is expressly stipulated in the book of Leviticus "And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall go forth out of the camp, and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper" (Leviticus 14:1-3).

Clearly, the legal provision only contemplated one in whom divine mercy and power had wrought a cure. The leper whom Jesus cleansed was such a one. And the Lord bade him to observe the rites of the law in this respect. He was to show himself to the priest "for a testimony," that the genuine nature of this unusual case of recovery might be attested by the recognised authority in such matters. The priest who declared him unclean was the person most qualified to decide whether he was now really clean or not. To him was he therefore sent by the Lord, who never set aside the law. But there was more involved in this than the release of the cleansed leper from his sanitary and religious restrictions. The man was a living wit ness to the fact that God who of old cleansed a hated Syrian had now cleansed a despised Galilaean, and this He had done by His Servant, greater than Elisha, but equally ignored by the ruling power. The appointed sacrifices and offerings were to be made, so that Jehovah’s name might be glorified in the obedience thus rendered to His word by the leper in a day of its neglect and dishonour. For this Servant sought not His own glory, but His who sent Him, being obedient Himself, and impressing on others obedience to constitutional authority. The Silence Enjoined

There has been much conjecture as to the reasons for the silence imposed upon the man by Jesus: "See thou say nothing to any man." But from the narrative it will be seen that the leper’s mission to the priests was made to appear by the Lord to be one demanding immediate execution. After the healing Jesus at once sent him off, strictly charging him to say nothing to any one, but to show himself to the priest, who would then have before him indubitable evidence of the reality of this cure. This injunction the man disregarded, and as soon as he left the Lord began to spread the news in the immediate locality, so that Jesus could no longer go into town, but remained in desert places where persons visited Him.

"See thou say nothing to any man" may be compared with the Lord’s direction to the seventy, "Salute no man on the way" (Luke 10:4). In matters of urgency it was necessary to avoid these tedious and elaborate salutations. Elisha gave similar instructions to Gehazi (2 Kings 4:29). The verb(ekballo)used of the Lord’s sending him on the errand, while literally meaning "to drive forth,"

certainly implies urgency and speed. The man was directed to discharge his obligations to the Levitical priesthood before abandoning himself to the selfish joy of announcing his cure to his excitable friends and neighbours. Divine claims were paramount. But the healed leper disregarded both the word of His Healer and the express commandments of the law. And there have been those who have sought to justify the act of disobedience, as if grace such as the leper had received absolved the recipient from the responsibility of obedience. On the contrary, "to obey is better than sacrifice," and He, who told the delivere Gergesene to go home and tell his friends what the Lord had done (Mark 5:19), had wise reasons for what He said to the leper. Silence is a grace equally with speech when in accordance with the will of the Lord.

05.10. Out of Weakness made Strong

10. Out of Weakness made Strong

"And when he entered*1 again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised*2 that he was in the house.*3 And many were gathered*4 together, so that there was no longer roomfor them,no, not even about the door; and he spake*5 the word unto them. And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up,*6 they let down the bed*7 whereon the sick of the palsy lay. And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, *Song of Solomon 8 thy sins are forgiven. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God? And straightway Jesus, perceiving*9 in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether*10 it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power*11 on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and straightway took up the bed, and went forth*12 before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion"*13 (Mark 2:1-12, R.V.).

{*1 "on his entering again," W.K.

*2 "reported," J.N.D., W.K.

*3 "at the house," " at home," W.K.

*4 "brought together," W.K.

*5 "was speaking," W.K.

*6 "having dug it up," J.N.D., W.K.; "opened it up," W.K.

*7 "couch," J.N.D., W.K. Mark uses krabbaton in this section, and also in Mark 6:55; Matthew and Luke use a different word. They were not copyists one of another.

*8 "child" J.N.D., W.K.

*9 "knowing well," J.N.D., W.K.

*10 "which," J.N.D., W.K.

*11 "authority," W.K.;exousia, right as well as ability; see note on p. 38, ante.

*12 "out," J.N.D., W.K.

*13 "thus," J.N.D., W.K.}

Here we have the account of another of the numerous "mighty works of our Lord performed in that particularly favoured town, Capernaum. This town, whose name signifies the city of comfort or consolation, seems to have been the chosen centre from which the Lord proceeded upon His various itineraries. It is called by Matthew "His own city" (Matthew 9:1), and it was there, presumably because it was His place of residence, that the tax-collectors exacted tribute from Him (Matthew 17:24).

After some days of retirement in desert places, following upon the cleansing of the leper, Jesus came to town again and entered the house privately possibly the house of Simon and Andrew. His arrival was quickly reported, and the news travelled rapidly throughout the town and district, so that He was soon sought out by the crowds in Capernaum, as He had been in the desert places. The Lord continued His work of teaching, as the Sower sowing the good seed of the word of the kingdom, and as the righteous Servant of Jehovah instructing the masses in righteousness (Isaiah 53:11, New Tr.). Besides the simple unlettered peasantry of Galilee His audience, on a certain day at any rate, included Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come out of every town in Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem (Luke 5:17;Mark 3:22). Were these emissaries of the priests to whom the cleansed leper presented himself, and charged by them to make official inquiries concerning Jesus and His work? We indeed are not told so, but we are told (1) that this healed man was sent as a witness to the leaders of the people, and (2) that immediately afterwards hostility to the Servant of God had begun to work in their hearts.

Eagerness to see and hear something novel brought together then, as always, a great concourse of persons, whose interest was intensified not only by the fame of Jesus and His miracles, but also by the visit of the nation’s great ones from the metropolis and from the large towns of the provinces. Every means of access to the Master who sat indoors teaching was in consequence filled by excited crowds straining to hear a word or to catch a glimpse of what was being done.

There must necessarily have been disappointment for many that day, and it would seem that one of the least likely in Capernaum to receive benefit on this occasion from the great Healer was the paralysed man, whose infirmity confined him to his bed. This man had an earnest desire in his heart to seek the face of Jesus, whom he believed could relieve him, as He had done many others. His faith was shared especially by four devoted friends*, who carried him upon his bed to the house where Jesus was. These were accompanied by others, as Mark’s narrative shows — "they came, bringing a paralytic, borne of four." At the house further advance seemed impossible, for the courtyard and every avenue of approach was blocked by interested persons who showed no disposition to make room for the sick man and his hearers. But what so dauntless as earnest and purposeful faith such as this! They, the sufferer agreeing to endure the pain to himself which the scheme involved, ascended by an outside flight of stairs to the flat roof of the house (cp. Matthew 24:17), where they proceeded to remove the tiling or the thin stone roofing (not at all a difficult task, and its repair an easy matter), and to lower the paralytic upon his bed, through the opening thus made, in to the presence of the Master.

{*Is there any connection between these four unnamed bearers and the four "fishers of men," associated with Jesus for the purpose of bringing others to Jesus (Mark 1:16-20)?} The act was a bold and beautiful strategem of faith, arising not from a spirit of bravado, but from real confidence in the grace and power of Him whose presence they sought, coupled with a sense of the needed

mercy. The faith was that of the five, for the action was concerted. And this the Lord saw, and approved what might have seemed to most brusque and ill-timed. It was indeed an offering to the Lord, even as the Jews will be in a future day when they are brought to Jehovah out of all the nations "upon horses and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts" to the holy mountain Jerusalem for blessing in their land (Isaiah 66:20). In this instance the Lord did not wait for the suppliant to frame his petition, nor did He say, as to the blind man, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He gave him the boon and more, going down to deep-seated needs the man, so far as we know, had never realised. Addressing the sick of the palsy in tender and affectionate terms, Jesus said, "Son*, thy sins are forgiven." The critical portion of the audience, seeing no visible effect following these words, drew adverse conclusions immediately, and in their hearts set down the Lord as a blasphemer "Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only?" But Jesus was present not only as the One to pardon iniquities and heal diseases (Psalms 103:3), but also as the One who searches the hearts, tries the reins and knows the inmost thoughts (Psalms 94:11;Jeremiah 17:10). He who saw the faith of the five men perceived the reasonings of the scribes in His own omniscient spirit (cp.John 2:24;John 6:61), and not by a power temporarily imparted to Him, as might have been the case with a prophet. None but God could penetrate the secret workings of man’s spirit, as Solomon confessed in his prayer (1 Kings 8:39;1 Chronicles 28:9;2 Chronicles 6:30;Ezekiel 11:5), and the Lord gave the Pharisees the proof of the nature of His person by answering their thoughts. Who else could "hear them thinking"? The Lord thereupon addressed those who were inwardly cavilling at His words in terms which shed the light of God upon their hearts, revealing their secret thoughts: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?" The crucial point was not the actual words uttered, but what result was consequent upon their utterance. And the Lord proceeded to give them a visible assurance that His word was living and powerful, as He had just shown it to be "sharper than a two-edged sword." He demonstrated its power over physical infirmity, that by analogy its power to dispense pardon to the guilty might be known. The Master then continued, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

{*Luke gives "Man," the Lord having used both terms. But Matthew and Mark giveteknon(nothuios) indicative of more affection (cp.Mark 10:24;Matthew 21:28;Luke 2:48;Luke 15:31;Luke 16:25). Matthew adds, "Be of good cheer" — a word of comfort to the afflicted man.} The effect of these words addressed in His own authority ("I say unto thee"), and not speaking as a delegate, was instantaneous upon the paralytic man. His useless limbs were strengthened, so that he arose immediately; and so hale was he that he was able, as incontestable evidence of his thorough restoration, to take up the pallet or mattress upon which he had been brought to Jesus and to carry it away in presence of them all. What previously was a proof of his weakness, became thus a witness to his strength. The miracle too was an undeniable testimony to the claims of the One then in Capernaum. The company was deeply impressed by the sight. 1 hey were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. Israel by-and-by will see and believe on the evidence of sight. But the Lord said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29), and this applies to the Christian today (1 Peter 1:8).

Forgiveness of Sins

It is remarkable that the Lord in His ministry in only one other recorded instance deals with the question of the forgiveness or remission of sins. TO the penitent woman, in Simon the Pharisee's house, He said definitely, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). There were thus two witnesses to His power on earth to forgive sins according to the prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1:77). This blessed work was hindered by the obduracy and impenitence of the people. But after His crucifixion and the shedding of the blood of the new covenant for the remission of sins, He is presented anew in this character. Peter testified concerning this: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). And this grace is not for Israel alone, but for all that believe. This Paul declared in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:38-39).

Such was the wider and fuller tide of blessing for man which was ensured by the death of Christ. But here was a sample of this function performed by the Person deputed to forgive, the blood-basis of the act having not yet been laid. The cleansing of the leprosy and the healing of the paralytic, coupled with the forgiveness of sins, were indisputable evidence that the Servant-Prophet of Jehovah was present in Galilee exercising divine prerogatives in His own right. Was not the Psalm familiar to their ears, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases "* (Psalms 103:2-3)? There was now an exemplification of this mercy before their eyes which could not be dissociated from Jesus of Nazareth as the One who was acting. In point of fact, Israel did not know nor consider, but this Servant of God patiently accumulated evidences of His mission which would leave the nation without excuse.

{*In Luke we read that the "power of the Lord (i.e.,of Jehovah) was present to heal" (Luke 5:17), a reference, it would seem, to this Psalm.} Are the Lord's words to be regarded as a benevolent wish on His part that the sick man's sins may eventually be forgiven? Not so; but rather as a positive declaration that they were then and thereby forgiven ("Thy sins are forgiven"); and the Lord intended that the sufferer should understand His words in this unequivocal sense. At any rate, the scribes understood the words in this sense, and they, in consequence, brought the charge of blasphemy against Him: "Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth? Who can forgive sins but one, even God? "It is evident they regarded the words as a positive expression of fact, and not a hope for future pardon, such as any one might compassionately utter on behalf of another.

It may be asserted that the disease of this man's body was an infliction upon him in consequence of some particular sins of which he had been guilty. God sent such temporal judgments in His government of the people of Israel, as the scripture testifies in many parts. For instance, at the repeated murmuring of the nation in the wilderness Jehovah smote them with a plague* (Numbers 11:32-33; Psalms 78:31). In New Testament times it was so also in the assembly at Corinth, where many were in sickness and some even slept, because of their transgression (1 Corinthians 11:30; see also James 5:14-16). The Lord recognised afflictions of this judicial character in the case of the impotent man of Bethesda, to whom He said after His cure, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

{*The people of Israel were warned by Jehovah at the commencement of their wilderness journey that their disobedience would be punished in this way: If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of

Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).}

If it be so, that the Lord's declaration of forgiveness had reference only to that portion of the man's sins for which his paralysis was a temporal chastisement under the hand of God, and not to the sum total of his guilt as a sinner, the principle still holds good. It is equally the exclusive prerogative of God to release a man from the temporal, as it is from the eternal, consequence of his sins. Sin is an offence against God, and therefore He only can remit it. By divine mercy the sins of Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, were forgiven; by that same mercy alone, the thorn in the flesh could be removed from Paul the apostle (1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Corinthians 12:7).

True were the words of the scribes, "Who can forgive sins but one, even God"; but false was their assumption that He who had just spoken was not God. He was God "manifest in the flesh," as He proved so often before their eyes. But all human reasoning founded upon disbelief in the person of Christ must not only be false but evil. He alone is the Truth, and He is also the Life, and the Way to the Father.

Speaking Blasphemy

Blasphemy in Holy Scripture, while sometimes used for evil speech against man, has reference also to evil speaking against or about God. The mental charge of blasphemy made against our Lord on this occasion was due to the assumption of the scribes that He usurped one of the attributes of Godhead by pronouncing absolution of sins. His claim to be the Son of God was so regarded by the Jews; as the Lord said to them, "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:33; John 10:36). At the trial Caiaphas said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death" (Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 14:64, New Tr.).

While these references illustrate the use of the term by the Jews, the Lord Himself applies it to the disparagement of God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10). The term is also used for the calumniation of men, and of Jesus on the cross (Luke 22:65; Luke 23:39), and is translated variously as "evil speaking," "railing," "being defamed," etc. Its seriousness as a sin is correlated to the dignity of the person slandered or blasphemed — a distinction fully recognised by human laws.

Son of Man

It is to be noted that in this connection we have the first recorded use of this title of our Lord in this Gospel and also in Luke — the power of the Son of man to forgive sins. In Matthew it first occurs in the sentence, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). The title is frequently applied by the blessed Lord to Himself, but is never applied to Him by others, nor by the Evangelists themselves. Stephen testified, however, that he saw the "Son of man standing on the

right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). And in the Apocalyptic visions John saw the Son of man in His capacity as Judge (Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14). It does not occur at all in the Epistles, except once in a quotation from the Psalms (Hebrews 2:6). This title, "Son of man," by its terms suggests a wider sphere than is suggested by "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham." It implies universal headship, as Hebrews 2. shows, and was adopted by the Lord in view of His rejection by the Jews as the Messiah. Son of a man He was not, but Son of man He was, and when on earth He could say, "The Son of man whichisin heaven" (John 3:13;1 Corinthians 15:47). In Daniel His universal dominion is prophesied of under this title: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). As Son of man He has power to execute judgment on sins as well as to forgive them (John 5:27). In the prophetic communications to Ezekiel, the title, "Son of man," is frequently employed by Jehovah when addressing the prophet. It is also used once in addressing Daniel (Daniel 8:7), but they never apply it to themselves. Both Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets of the exile, and ministered away from Judah, which was under the power of the Gentiles. The Lord too, as the despised Servant-Prophet, ministering in "Galilee of the Gentiles," assumed this title, proving His authority to forgive sins, not as Jehovah of Psalms 103:1-22, or as the Messiah of Israel, but as the Son of man.

05.11. Publicans Enter the Kingdom

11. — Publicans Enter the Kingdom

"And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted*1 unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed*2 by he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the place of toll,*3 and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

"And it came to pass that he was sitting at meat*4 in his house, and many publicans*5 and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and the publicans, said unto his disciples,*6 He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners. And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, they that are whole*7 have no need of a physician, but they that are sick:*8 I came*9 not to call the righteous, but sinners"*10 (Mark 2:13-17, R.V.).

{*1 "came," J.N.D.; "kept coming," J.N.D., note.

*2 "passing by," J.N.D.

*3 "tax-office," J.N.D.

*4 "lay at table," J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "tax-gatherers," J.N.D.; W.K. "and Pharisees," J.N.D.

*6 "Why is it," J.N.D.; "How is it," W.K.

*7 "strong," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "ill," J.N.D.; W.K.

*9 "have not come," J.N.D.; W.K.

*10 "to repentance," which occurs inLuke 5:32, should be omitted here and inMatthew 9:13.} The Evangelist as directed by the inspiring Spirit proceeds to set forth the character of the ministry of Jesus the Servant-prophet. He had been announcing the imminence of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). He had by many incontestable proofs shown that the healing mercies of Jehovah were in their midst in His own person (Mark 1:16-39). But the people had heedless ears and callous hearts and the striking cases of the cleansed leper and the restored paralytic awakened the religious wisdom of the day only to prefer a malicious charge of blasphemy against Him as the Forgiver of sins (Mark 1:40;Mark 2:12). When the benign grace of God is met by the churlish resistance of man it seeks to extend its limits. The Saviour came bringing grace and truth to the favoured nation, but since the scribes and Pharisees would not have His boon, He would show that the nature of this grace was such that it embraced not only the despised Galilean, but the still more despised publican. Mark shows this development in the Lord’s ministry by the account of the call of Levi, and by the subsequent feast at which many tax-collectors and sinners were present as welcome

guests. The Call of the Tax-Collector

Jesus left Capernaum and passed on to the shores of the Sea of Galilee where He was teaching the crowds that flocked to Him. Here was the Government custom-house, where various tolls and dues were collected either for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, or for the Romans. The persons responsible for the collection of these taxes were, in many, if not in all, instances, Jews. On this account, as well as because of the natural repugnance of most men to pay taxes at all, the "publicans" were regarded by their country-men as an odious and hateful class. In the performance of their duties they had ample opportunities for oppression and extortion, to their own personal enrichment (Luke 3:13). Such abuses naturally aggravated the hatred generally felt towards them. All, however, were not equally oppressive, and Zacchaeus evidently was an exception to the general rule, for he seems to have been of just and generous habits (Luke 19:8). As Jesus passed along he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the, place of toll. Addressing him, the Master said, Follow Me. And in instant response Levi arose and followed Him. As in the case of Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:16-18), there was probably on the part of Levi some previous knowledge of the Lord and His teaching. They, asJohn 1. shows, had made a confession of Him some time before they were called to go after Him. Levi no doubt had heard His preaching and witnessed His miracles in Capernaum. For aught we know to the contrary he may have been one of those publicans who "justified God, having been baptised with the baptism of John," and thus confessedly was one of those waiting for the Redeemer of Israel (Luke 3:12; Luke 7:29). But his difficulty would be whether he who was considered to be no better than a Gentile* might dare to appropriate the blessings of the promised kingdom. Like his fellow who could not lift up so much as his eyes in the temple (Luke 18:13), this man could not lift up his eyes to Him who was greater than the temple.

{*Compare the Lord’s words as to one who would not hear the church, "Let him be unto thee as a Gentile and a publican" (Matthew 18:17).} But the Searcher of hearts was passing by. He who knew the vain thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees knew also the timid desires of the publican. He who saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, had seen Levi at the toll-booth. And the Lord of love summoned him who was already a disciple in heart to be His follower in the open light of day. At once he arose and left all, as Luke tells us, reclaimed thus from the service of the Roman to that of King Immanuel, who in this manner collected His dues by the Sea of Galilee.

Levi and Matthew

Some have found a difficulty in determining whether Levi the publican and Matthew the apostle were the same person. There is, however, no sufficient reason to doubt their identity. In the lists of the apostles given in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew is named in each of them. And Mark and Luke, in narrating the call of the publican, both give him the name of Levi. The obvious inference from these passages is that, like other of the apostles, the man had two names, Matthew being his most usual, if not his only, designation after his call to the discipleship of Jesus. In the first Gospel, Matthew, writing of the same eventful call, ascribes it to a man named Matthew (Matthew 9:9), thus indicating his own origin with the utmost candour and humility, and by the avoidance of the name Levi preventing any possible confusion as to his identity. It is granted that a crooked worldly policy animated by motives of short-sighted prudence might cause an author to conceal such a fact about himself; but he who was inspired to include the names of Tamar and Bathsheba in the

genealogy of the Messiah (Matthew 1:1-25) would be preserved from the petty meanness of concealing the fact that one of the Lord's apostles was a tax-collector. "Whom do we hear to blazon the shame of Matthew but his own mouth? Matthew the Evangelist tells us of Matthew the publican. His fellows call him Levi, as unwilling to lay their finger upon the spot of his unpleasing profession; himself will not smother nor blanch it a whit, but publishes it to all the world in a thankful recognition of the mercy that called him, as liking well that his baseness should serve for a fit foil to set off the glorious lustre of His grace by whom he was elected. What matters it how vile we are, O God, so Thy glory may arise in our abasement?" The truth is that Matthew bore two names; so "Thomas is called Didymus by John only; and Thaddeus (or Lebbeus as in Matthew and Mark) is called Judas by Luke and John." But while the identity of Matthew and Levi may be considered as well established, it is the merest conjecture to regard Alpheus, the father of Levi, as identical with the father of James (Matthew 10:4), and with Cleophas (John 19:25). The Feast in Matthew's House

Soon after the call of the fishermen Jesus went to the house of Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:29). He is now shown as the guest of Levi the publican. "And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them" (Luke 5:29). The King is not the host here, for He has not yet taken possession of His own. Solomon in the day of his power made a feast to all his servants (1 Kings 3:15), but He who was a greater than Solomon had no place to lay His head. He who in a coming day will make in mount Zion for "all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isaiah 25:6), was well content to be entertained by the tax-gatherer. And what a company were seen at the banquet that day! The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins; hence sinners were welcome to Him who came to cleanse them from their sins. Levi the publican could testify to the grace that called him to be a follower of Jesus; hence, other publicans felt this to be a sufficient ground for believing that if they also came He would in no wise cast them out. We find therefore that a goodly company responded to the invitation of Levi, and came to eat and drink with Him. "O happy publicans and sinners who found out their Saviour! O merciful Saviour that disdained not publicans and sinners!" They found Him to be indeed the "Friend of publicans and sinners," "a Friend sticking closer than a brother," and it is good to read that at the close of the feast "many followed Him," sinners as they were, fitted and made meet to follow the Sinless One into His kingdom.

Murmurs at the Feast The unbelieving and sinful generation that murmured of old in the wilderness at the heavenly manna murmured now in the presence of the Bread of God come down from heaven to fill with good things those who were hungry and thirsty after righteousness. The Pharisaic scribes said to the disciples, "How is it he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? "

It will be observed how the gradual development of evil opposition to the Lord is presented to us. In the previous incident we are shown the mental comment, the inward suspicion, the evil surmise of the Pharisees; and also how the Lord graciously corrected this, rebuking them before all that others might fear. Now we see that the sinful thought of foolishness became the spoken back-biting word of these men unrestrained and unabashed in the presence of Him who had laid bare the thought and intents of their hearts. The word of the Pharisees, however, was spoken not to the Lord Himself, but to the disciples, reminding us of the wily serpent in Eden who directed his

assaults upon Adam through Eve, the weaker vessel. They, avoiding Jesus Himself, sought to bring the Master into discredit with His followers by their question, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" It was a whisper in their ears to turn away their hearts, even as Absalom sought to turn away the hearts of the people from David. But the Lord was watchful over His own. It was not yet the time to put words of wisdom into their mouths to speak for Him as His witnesses (Matthew 10:19). But He answered for them, confuting the sophistry of the scribes. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners," It was in this manner that the two-edged sword of truth proceeded out of His mouth for their moral judgment. For why was it they failed to receive their Messiah? Because in their own estimation they did not need such a one as He. Why complain then that those who did feel their need of such a Saviour came to Him and were made welcome? What sort of a physician is he who refuses to minister to any but the hale and the hearty? The Lord then definitely announced that He was come not to call the righteous(i.e.those who were righteous in their own eyes; indeed otherwise there is none righteous, no, not one), but sinners. These who responded should be washed, sanctified, justified, and made inheritors of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), but those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, except they repented, would most assuredly perish in their sins. In Matthew it is stated that the Lord vindicated His reception of the moral outcasts by a quotation from the prophet Hosea: "Go ye," He said, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13;Hosea 6:6). It was the promise of God that when man was in a resourceless case, He would exercise His prerogative of mercy. The Lord accordingly was in the midst of Israel not to receive sacrifice but to show mercy. For it is suggested that this is the significance of the passage, rather than a rebuke to formalism and religious ceremonialism which some see in it.

According to the latter interpretation the sentence is a declaration that God desires not the sacrifices of the law but the merciful deeds of man to his fellow-creatures. But while this statement is true in itself, and indeed expressed in other portions of Scripture, the words of the prophet as used here by the Lord show that in receiving publicans and sinners He was performing the divine function of displaying mercy, which was in accordance with the will of God, rather than the offering of sacrifice by those whose hearts were far from God, like the Pharisees. It was for the remission, not for the judgment of sins, that the Servant of Jehovah, the "dayspring from on high," had visited His people; and His mission emanated from the tender mercy [the heart of mercy] of God Himself (Luke 1:78). While it abides true that judgment shall overtake every evil work, it was shown in the house of Levi the tax-gatherer how the mercy of God gloried against judgment.

05.12. Fasting and Feasting

12. — Fasting and Feasting

"And John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken*1 away from them, and then will they fast in that day. No man seweth a piece of undressed*2 cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up*3 taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth,*4 and the skins; but they put new wine*5 into fresh wine-skins" (Mark 2:18-22, R.V.).

{*1 "shall have been taken," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 "unfulled," "unmilled," J.N.D. W.K.

*3 "its new filling up," J.N.D.;

*4 "is poured out," J.N.D. "is lost," W.K.

*5 "is to be put," J.N.D.; "must be put," W.K.}

There seems no sufficient ground to doubt that this question was put to the Lord in the house of Levi, nor that it arose while the feast was still in progress. The previous question related to the relative respectability of the assembly in the house of the tax-gatherer, where Jesus attended as the invited and honoured guest. The present question referred to the purpose for which the company was assembled. It was as if they had inquired with some display of zealous piety, Is this a time for eating and drinking and feasting? feebly imitating the indignant question Elisha put to Gehazi, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?" But unlike Elisha, the zeal of the questioners was without knowledge. The wisdom, however, of the Prophet whom God had raised up "like unto Moses" made the manifested ignorance of this inquiry the occasion for instruction to all. The questioners in this case embraced John the Baptist’s disciples and the Pharisees. John himself was at this time in prison (Mark 1:14), but his followers remained as a distinct body during this and some part, at any rate, of the Lord’s ministry (Matthew 11:2;Matthew 14:12;John 3:25), and even subsequently (Acts 19:1-4). They were taught by John to pray and to make supplications (Luke 5:33;Luke 11:1), and as their master came eating no bread nor drinking wine (Luke 7:33), so they used often to fast, imitating his austerities. In this they were in unison with the Pharisees, for was it not the proud boast of one of them that he fasted twice in the week (Luke 18:12)? They were on this occasion accompanied therefore by the Pharisees, though, as Matthew tells us, they were the actual spokesmen. "Then come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not" (Matthew 9:11)? The Occasion of the Question

We are not informed in the Gospels why this question was laid before the Lord. But it can hardly be supposed that on the part of the Pharisees there was a sincere desire for instruction. The publicans were entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 21:31), but they were not desirous of learning its principles. They were probably hoping that some word of His might form a basis of attack. On the other hand it is easy to conceive that the disciples of the Baptist might have been presenting to the Lord what was really an insuperable spiritual difficulty to them, founded upon the striking contrast between John and Jesus, which their imperfect knowledge could not reconcile. John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; the Son of man came eating and drinking. Who was right? The disciples of John had every confidence in their master. Though he wrought no miracles, they regarded him, and rightly so, as the prophet of the Highest, the forerunner of the Messiah. They were profoundly convinced of the justice of his stern denunciations of the evils prevailing in every social class at that time, though now, in the strange providence of God that voice of testimony was silent in the prison of the oppressor. They believed that the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and everything was ready for the baptism of the fire of Jehovah’s judgment (Matthew 3:11-12). They repented; and was not fasting fruit worthy of repentance? John fasted, and should not the disciples be as their master? But more than this they were not without the support of scriptural example and precept for the association of fasting with the introduction of the kingdom of Messiah. Truly this support existed more in their own fancies than in reality, but such is often the case in the history of spiritual difficulties. They would remember the long fast of Moses on the occasion of the giving of the law, and of Elijah, in whose spirit John had come, in the days of the restoration of the law. When Zechariah prophesied of the fountain to be opened for sin and uncleanness, and of the deliverance of Jerusalem from the oppression of the Gentiles, did he not prophesy that in that day there should be a great mourning in Jerusalem? The whole land should mourn, every family apart (Zechariah 12:9-14, Zechariah 13:1). Joel also, in view of the imminence of the day of Jehovah, calls the people to fasting and to prayer: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the old menandall the inhabitants of the land unto the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD" (Joel 1:14;Joel 2:15).

These and other scriptures in connection with the introduction of the kingdom, which they believed to be at hand, might well cause them to wonder when they saw a feast not a fast proclaimed, and sanctioned by the presence of Jesus Himself, while sinners were not cut off in judgment but made welcome at this feast which was proceeding at the very time of one of their own fasts. What was the explanation? They sought instruction of the great Prophet of wisdom. "Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?" The Terms of the Answer The solution of their difficulty was simple, and in like manner all our difficulties vanish as the light of God shines upon them. They had fallen into the common error of thinking of the coming kingdom and of forgetting that the King was already present with them. They were absorbed with the adjustment of the Bridegroom’s affairs, and overlooking the Bridegroom Himself. They were full of the sense of their own guilt as sinners, and ignorant of the presence of the Saviour of sinners. There is a time to fast and a time to feast. The question really was which of these was seasonable, and this the Lord settles in His own inimitable way, revealing the truth concerning Himself in simple and homely figures such as all might understand.

He was among them as One to serve them all in love, not in the majesty of His might to condemn; with the branch of olive, not with the rod of iron; as the Bridegroom, not as the Judge. "Can," said

He, "the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall have been taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."

It was clearly incongruous for there to be, from whatever motive, fasting in the presence of a bridegroom. The nuptial season is, by common consent, one associated with joy, from the days of Adam and Eve in Eden. And the disciples of John had to learn that the Lord Jesus was presenting Himself to the daughter of Zion in the character of her Bridegroom, come to betroth Himself to her "in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies," according to the spirit of the prophecies of Hosea. God had raised up a Horn of salvation for His people; was it therefore a day for a man to afflict his soul, to bow his head like a bulrush, to cover himself with sackcloth and ashes? Was not the "Magnificat" of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) more suitable to their lips than the Lamentations of Jeremiah, since the Servant of Jehovah was in their midst — He who had come to give a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3)?

There is reason to think that these men had heard this figure of the Bridegroom applied to the Messiah on a previous occasion. They spoke to John with reference to the numbers of persons whom they saw coming to Jesus. John showed them that he was aware that this was, and must be, the case, saying also in explanation, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30). The Baptist compared himself to the friend of the Bridegroom, showing that he was conscious that Jesus was present in that character though he himself was His friend, rather than of the bride. For like Moses upon Pisgah, he discerned the promised kingdom and its glories near at hand, yet not for him. Like aged Simeon he would depart, having seen the King in His beauty. The Lord now confirmed the application of this prophetic figure by John, their master, to Himself, as if to awaken a sense of allegiance to Him as the Bridegroom of Israel. Had not John pointed to Him, saying to them, "Behold the Lamb of God"? But they had not responded. Had he not spoken of Him as the Bridegroom? But still they fasted and prayed and held aloof from Him to whom John witnessed. The Lord did not definitely call them to follow Him as He called Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Levi the publican, for they lacked that appreciation of Himself which would have impelled them to instant obedience. But He set before them that truth concerning Himself which, when received by faith, would inevitably draw them unto Him. An Occasion for Fasting to Come

While the disciples of the Lord had at that time adequate reasons for rejoicing, inasmuch as the Hope of Israel was with them, the days would darken again before the millennial dawn. The Bridegroom would be taken away; then they would have reason to fast. Thus did the Lord, early in His ministry, intimate to His own, in veiled but significant language, that He must be removed from their midst, and, in consequence, a sorrow should fill their hearts which would be turned into joy only at His second coming(seeJohn 16:17-22). The coming days, characterised by the absence of the Bridegroom, are strictly those which immediately precede His public appearing for the blessing of Israel and the nations generally. Those will be days of unparalleled tribulation for the Jews, of such an intensely violent nature that if they were protracted none could be saved (Matthew 24:21-22). Then the faithful ones might well fast. So the Lord instructs them subsequently in more definite terms (Mark 13:1-37), but here imparts so much of the truth as was needful to meet the

difficulty raised. The Lord was with them, and in this they were authorised to rejoice, as they would be constrained to do by the affections of their hearts towards Him. The Lord did not condemn fasting as a practice. He instructed His disciples that it should be undertaken in secret, as before God, rather than before men (Matthew 6:16-18). It was to be united with prayer for the effectual expulsion of unclean spirits in certain cases (Mark 9:29). There was a season of prayer and fasting in the early church when Paul and Barnabas went forth on their first missionary tour (Acts 13:3). Nothing in scripture appears to warrant the present general abandonment of the practice by Christians, though indeed there is a sense in which we may say the Lord is still with us (Matthew 28:20). Self-denial in the spirit of Nazariteship, of which food-fasting is but a single phase, should, however, be practised by the believer habitually and not only on special occasions.

Fasting appears to be expressive of an occupation of the spiritual nature with heavenly subjects to such an intense degree that the instinctive cravings of the physical nature for food and relaxation are disregarded or unheeded for the time. In its purest form therefore fasting is involuntary. It is surely needless to say that the perfunctory or the Pharisaic fast is valueless before God. The Old and New Contrasted The Lord, in taking up the question of the apparent incongruity between His disciples and ohn’s, used it as an occasion for general instruction as to the contrast in principle between the dispensation that was passing away and that which was about to come. That was old; this was new. The two differed in nature and character — both externally and internally. This essential contrast the Lord placed before them in the simple and homely metaphors of the cloth and the wine, with the absence of affinity between new and old in both cases. "No man seweth a piece of undressed [unmilled] cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins: else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins; but new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins." In the first case a worn-out and torn garment is rendered still more unserviceable by a patch of new cloth — the newness itself causing a further breach. In like manner, unless new wine is put into fresh unused skins (or leather bottles) the skins burst* and both the wine and the skins are lost.

{*It is explained that new wine, or "must," being put into old skins would be caused to ferment by the traces of old wine in the skins. Hence the bursting of the skins (cp.Job 32:19; alsoJoshua 9:4; andGenesis 21:14;Psalms 119:83).} The joys of the promised kingdom are associated in the prophets with the introduction of what is absolutely new and created of God, not with the rehabilitation of the old things. Thus we read in Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isaiah 65:17-19). Nothing can be newer than a created thing. And the principle is true in Christianity, even as it will be in the coming millennial day. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The dispensational truths underlying the emblems of the cloth and the wine are fully revealed in subsequent parts of the New Testament. That outward righteousness which is of the law is replaced by that which is of faith. And the joys of the "vine of the earth" give way to those of the "True Vine," who bestows the inward power and comfort of the Holy Ghost, a source of joy of which no one can rob us. Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews

particularly deal with these contrasts.

"It is not possible to attach the spiritual power of Christianity to the carnal ceremonies which human nature loves, because it can make of them a religion without a new life, and without the conscience being touched. The unconverted man, if he wishes, may thus do as much good as the converted man. No, the new wine must be kept in new bottles: it is important for us to remember it. The dispensation was changed, a new order was coming in, and all was altered; the nature of the things was different — they could not exist at the same time; fleshly ceremonies and the power of the Holy Ghost could never go together. Think of it, Christians! Christianity has tried to embellish itself with these ceremonies, and often even under pagan forms; and what has it become? It has adapted itself to the world of which these forms were the rudiments, and has become really pagan, and its true spirituality can hardly be found at all."

05.13. The Servant of Jehovah the Lord of the Sabbath

13. — The Servant of Jehovah the Lord of the Sabbath

"And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the cornfields; and his disciples began, as they went,*1 to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and did eat the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also*2 to them that were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for*3 man, and not man for*3 the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even*4 of the sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28, R.V.).

{*1 "began to walk on, plucking the ears," JT.N.D.

*2 "even," J.N.D.

*3 "on account of," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "Lord also," J.N.D., W.K.} The Servant of Jehovah is shown by the Evangelist in a variety of circumstances, carrying out in them all the will of God with absolute and unvarying perfection, so that in every recorded word and deed we have for our admiration and humble emulation a living exemplification of divine truth.

We have seen Him at the feast spread by the love of Matthew the publican, having accepted the invitation with that humility which was the wonder of the Pharisees and is the ambition of the believer. But as He thus "goes along with the lowly" we see the Guest become the Host. He will be debtor to none, and in that motley assemblage of self-righteous and self-abased men He dispenses the hospitality of heaven, making them free of truths of the kingdom which the prophets and kings, the Abrahams and Davids of old, had longed in vain to know.

We now see Him a wanderer, and His followers staying their hunger with a few grains of corn, plucked by the wayside. They who had no occasion to fast because the Bridegroom was with them were compelled to fast because the Bridegroom was a rejected one. The Pharisees raised objections to this act of the disciples, as if the law of God were infringed thereby, but the Lord exposed their sophistry by means of the Old Testament scriptures, and accepting His title as the rejected Servant, He asserted the authority of the Son of man as the Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus in the Cornfields The Lord and those who were with Him were walking in the cornfields on the Sabbath day. We learn from the parable of the Sower that a public way or path often lay through the cornfields, on which indeed some seeds were apt to fall in sowing-time (Mark 4:4). The disciples, as they passed along, began to pluck some of the ears of corn, and, after rubbing them in their hands, to eat the early ripened grain. This act was not regarded as a violation of the law of private property. On the contrary, it was expressly permitted under the Mosaic economy: "When thou comest into thy neighbour’s standing corn, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand;

but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deuteronomy 23:25). Accordingly, in this case we do not find that any protest was raised by the husbandman himself, but the envious and jealous eyes of the Pharisees were upon the little band, and directly they began (Matthew 12:1-2) to pluck the corn in their hunger, the hostile critics in their indecent haste to find some occasion to condemn the Lord, said to Him, "Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? " The Lord Himself had not participated in the act of the disciples, but He defended them against their accusers. Precious proof of His faithful guardian love for those whom the Father had given Him out of the world! If He is for His own, who can be against them? The time was to come when the little flock would be left alone, and in that future evil day they must gird themselves with the girdle of truth and wield the sword of the Spirit. Now the Master, whose hands had been taught to fight in the wilderness (Psalms 144:1), used the two-edged sword of scripture to overcome these adversaries who sought to fasten upon His followers the stigma of law-breakers. The reply of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, consists of two distinct portions, each of which is introduced by the words, And he said unto them." (1) He appealed to written scripture in support of what was done: "Did ye never read what David did?" etc. (2) He vindicated the act of the disciples on the ground of the origin of the Sabbath, and of His own authority as Lord of the Sabbath. To this two-fold testimony the Pharisees, so far as we learn, returned no reply. We can well believe that, in a greater degree than in the case of the protomartyr Stephen, "they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). In the Gospel by Luke, the same two points raised by the Lord are given, but in Matthew two other points are added, so that His testimony there is shown to have a fourfold character. But this we can now do no more than mention. The Lord there is stated to have cited, in addition to that given by Mark and Luke — (1) the example of the priests serving on the Sabbath day in the temple, executing their duties in the offering of sacrifices and the like, not contrary to, but in accordance with the law, and (2) the declaration of Jehovah through Hosea of His desire for the exercise of His own mercy rather than the reception from man of the sacrifice required by law (Matthew 12:5-7;Hosea 6:6). But of all these things the Pharisee in his religious pride was ignorant, or he would not have condemned the guiltless disciples. This instance afforded a practical illustration of the truth previously declared by the Lord that the old wine-skins of the law could not contain the new wine of the kingdom.

David and Abiathar

Let us consider now this reference — the only one — made by the Lord to the history of His ancestor according to the flesh, the great king of Israel (1) regarding the incident itself, and (2) inquiring what is its application to the event in the cornfields.

David, chosen of God and anointed of Samuel to be king over Israel, was in flight from Saul, who sought to kill him. It was a day when the appointments of Jehovah for His worship and praise in Israel were sadly "out of course." The ark was at Kirjath-jearim, while the tabernacle was at Nob (1 Samuel 7:2; 2 Samuel 6:2), where the priests were also; and thither David came, a fugitive from the wrath of the king, and famished with hunger. He arrived on the Sabbath day when the priests had changed the twelve loaves of showbread ("the bread of the face," or "of the presence") which according to divine instruction were placed on the golden table in the holy place every Sabbath (Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9). The ritual was therefore proceeding, though there was no ark within the holy of holies — an indication of the manner in which the nation had departed from the centre and core of worship as laid down in the beginning of its history. David asked the priest for

some of the stale loaves for himself and his companions. This was a bold request, for this hallowed bread, unleavened, anointed with pure frankincense, one of the most holy fire offerings to Jehovah, was eaten in the holy place by the priests only (Leviticus 24:7-9). But the priest recognised in the hungry David fleeing from Saul the anointed of Jehovah, and he gave him showbread, in spite of the evil eyes of Doeg the Edomite, a creature of Saul's, which were upon him (1 Samuel 21:7), and by whose hand the fearful vengeance of the king was speedily wreaked upon Nob and its priestly inhabitants.

It was to the written account of this incident in the life of David that our Lord referred by way of scriptural support of what the disciples had done on the Sabbath. "Did ye never read what David did?" The parallel is clear. The glory of God had departed from the temple, and the Pharisees were despising and rejecting their Messiah, even as David was hunted into exile by the cruel and unrighteous rage of Saul. In that day the letter of the ancient ordinances had to yield to the necessities of him who was the anointed king after God's heart. Of what value then were these petty cavils of the Pharisees who sought to impose grievous burdens contrary to the spirit of the law, and refused to acknowledge either the King or His kingdom? Their objections recoiled to their own condemnation, for were they not to blame because the Lord from heaven was wandering on the Sabbath, with His followers, hungry and homeless? "In the presence of the evil that despises God's beloved and faithful witnesses in the earth, the outward ordinances of the Lord lose their application for the time being. The sanctity of ritual disappears before the rejection of the Lord and His people." "Granted that the showbread was only for the priests, yet for them to keep their consecrated bread and let the anointed king starve would be strange homage to God and the king. And now the Son of David, the Lord of David, was there, and more rejected, more despised, than David himself."

Abiathar or Ahimelech? In a divine revelation there must be of necessity difficulties to a finite mind. And in an inspired history extending over many centuries and consisting of events selected and grouped for moral and spiritual instruction, there must indeed be difficulties many of which arise from the omission of connecting links which, though unessential to the divine aim, would nevertheless, if supplied, at once remove the perplexity. An instance of such a difficulty, which is indeed common in all history, occurs in this section of Mark. The Lord's words, as recorded in this Gospel, are, "Did ye never read what David did . . . how he entered the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest." In the book of Samuel, David is said to have come to Ahimelech the priest, (1 Samuel 21:1), who gave him the bread, and was subsequently massacred with his family by order of Saul (1 Samuel 22:11-19), one of his sons named Abiathar escaping to David, and afterwards becoming high priest. So that apparently the same man is called Ahimelech in one place and Abiathar in another. This constitutes the "difficulty," and if we were in possession of the whole of the details it would no longer be a difficulty to our intelligence, as it is now none to our faith. We dare not suppose that our Lord was ignorant of the name of the priest at Nob, nor that Mark, who alone of the Evangelists supplies the name, was permitted by the inspiring Spirit to record the words of his Master erroneously. But as the Lord definitely challenged the Pharisees, who were so punctilious as to the letter of scripture, on their reading ("Did ye neverread?") we may examine the Old Testament for help. The Lord's words, as we have seen, imply that the truth on this point could have been ascertained by reading.

Now it will be observed from the Historical Books that (1) the same person frequently possessed more than one name, and (2) that the same name frequently recurs in the pedigree of families. It is not therefore an improbable explanation that the priest who succoured David bore the joint names of Ahimelech and Abiathar, and that his son, who escaped the massacre at Nob, also bore the same double names. Indeed, the responsible priest at Nob is "called by no less than three names: Ahiah (1 Samuel 14:3; 1 Samuel 14:18), Ahimelech (1 Samuel 21:1-6;1 Samuel 22:9-23); and, as in St. Mark, Abiathar (1 Chronicles 18:16;1 Chronicles 24:6; 1 Chronicles 24:31). The Septuagint gives also the form Abimelech. Moreover, the son of this Ahimelech or Abiathar, who was afterwards David's joint High Priest* with Zadok, was himself also called by both names, viz., Abiathar (1 Samuel 22:20-23;2 Samuel 15:24-29;1 Kings 2:26-27), and Ahimelech (2 Samuel 8:17;1 Chronicles 24:6; 1 Chronicles 24:31), or Abimelech (1 Chronicles 18:16). Now it has often been remarked that there occur in the Old Testament many instances of double names,** as Reuel, Jethro, and Hobab; Esau and Edom; Benjamin and Benoni; Gideon and Jerubbaal; Solomon and Jedidiah; Uzziah and Azariah; Zedekiah and Matthaniah(seePatrit.de Evang.50. 3. ;Diss.9: c. 3); but it has scarcely been noticed that the priests especially appear to have borne double names, and that father and son were frequently called by the same names. Yet both these facts are of the utmost value for the passage before us. The following are illustrations: — As to the first: In 1Ma 2:1-5 is a list of five priests, sons of Mattathias, all with double names. The priestly pedigree of Josephus, from the public records, furnishes several other examples (Jos.Vit.§§ 1, 2). As to the second: It was proposed to call John the Baptist Zechariah after the name of his father; and his father was a priest (Luke 1:5; Luke 1:59). In Josephus's pedigree, Matthias, one of his priestly ancestors, had a son also called Matthias; whose grandson again was likewise named Matthias, and his son also Matthias(l.c.).Also, upon the deposition of Joseph Cabi, the High Priesthood was conferred on the son of the famous High Priest Ananus, "who was himself also called Ananus (Jos.Ant. 20.9.1). Thus, then, we not only have Old Testament evidence to the fact that the High Priest who gave David the hallowed bread bore the name of Abiathar as well as that of Ahimelech, and his son likewise; but also independent evidence that this possession of double and the same names by father and son in the families of the priests was not an unusual occurrence. With such evidence the alleged historical error of St. Mark completely vanishes.*** {*Strictly speaking, he is not termed high priest in the Old Testament, but priest.

**Compare also the double names of the apostles viz., Simon, Peter; Matthew, Levi. [Notes, W.J.H.] ***J. B. McClellan,The New Testament,p. 672,} This explanation seems preferable to that which supposes that the phrase in Mark is elliptical and means "in the days of Abiathar who afterwards became high priest." Abiathar, it is further assumed in this hypothesis, influenced his father to befriend David, and as he alone escaped, this may have been the case.

Seeing that the senior priest at Nob was called Ahimelech and Abiathar, a pertinent inquiry arises why the Lord refers to him as Abiathar instead of Ahimelech, the latter being the name by which he is described in the narrative relating to the showbread incident. In connection with this inquiry, it should be remembered that Ahimelech was of the house of Eli, and that house was doomed to extermination by the judgment of God, because of the wickedness at Shiloh (1 Samuel 2:30-33;1 Samuel 3:12-14). In accordance with this judgment, Eli's descendants were all slain at Nob, butwith one exception.For God was not unmindful of the mercy of Ahimelech shown to His anointed, and He did not then make a full end of the line of Ithamar, and blot out the posterity of Eli

from the earth. Abiathar was spared to be the representative of the junior house of Aaron throughout the reign of David, being subsequently deposed by Solomon in fulfilment of the word of Jehovah spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh (1 Kings 2:27). Abiathar therefore (to use the more frequent name by which he is called who was the companion of David in his exile) preserved the second name of his father Ahimelech throughout the glorious reign of David when the rest of the family were cut off. In the warning of judgment delivered to Eli by the man of God, he said, "It shall come to pass that every one that is left in thine house shall come and bow down to him [Jehovah's anointed] for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread" (1 Samuel 2:36). But it came about that Jehovah's anointed begged bread of the descendant of Eli, and as he was not denied, the mercy of God was displayed in the midst of the judgments that fell upon the ungodly house, and a scion of that house held the priestly office while David was upon the throne. The Lord therefore, in alluding to the act of kindness shown to David by Ahimelech, alludes also to its recognition and reward by Jehovah in a manner familiar to students of God's word by selecting the least obvious of his names, but that name by which his reward is marked in Holy Writ, viz., in the mercy and distinction conferred upon his son Abiathar. The principle of moral and spiritual significance conveyed by the use of the one or the other of double names may be traced elsewhere in scripture. Compare, for example, the use of Jacob and of Israel in the prophecies, and of Simon and of Peter in the Gospels.

It is believed therefore that underlying this alleged historical difficulty there is a truth of great beauty which is seen upon patient inquiry. In addition to the assertion that the Son of David may do what David did, there is the quotation of an example of God's grace shining out in a dark chapter in the annals of the priesthood. We cannot think there was no bread in Nob except the show-bread. But all closed their hearts to David except one, and he helped and honoured the true king of Israel when all else despised him. And Jehovah, true to His word spoken to the head of that priestly house, "Them that honour me I will honour," rewarded his kindness as is recorded. The Lord would have them know that the principle was equally true in their day. If the Pharisees received God's anointed, already rejected by the spirit of the nation, their reward should be great in heaven. The stone of stumbling would assuredly fall in crushing judgment upon the guilty people, but the followers of the Lord in "His temptations" should "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelves tribes of Israel."

Second-First Sabbath The parallel account in the Gospel of Luke of the Lord's walk with His disciples through the cornfields contains a chronological note which does not occur in either Matthew or Mark. There we read, "Now it came to pass on the second-first sabbath that he was going through the cornfields" (Luke 6:1). The occasion is in this sentence specified by the use of a very unusual term, "the second-first sabbath." The word (for in the Greek it is but a single word) is so infrequent and so difficult of exact definition, that in many ancient MSS. it is unwarrantably omitted. For this insufficient reason the Revisers have also omitted the word, briefly indicating this omission by a note in the margin that "Many ancient authorities insertsecond-first." "Now the witnesses which omit the word are few, though high, and the difficulty of understanding a word nowhere else occurrent, and in itself hard to explain without an exact knowledge of Jewish scripture and usage, accounts readily for the tampering hand of copyists prone to cut knots instead of untying them. . . . Nobody would or could create a needless difficulty by inserting this [word in

sixteen uncial MSS.]; but we can easily account for a few omitting what was hard in their eyes, as it is to most readers still."*

{*W. Kelly.}

What then is to be understood by this difficult epithet, "second-first"? There have been many explanations, mostly far-fetched, the discussion of which is beyond the purpose and scope of the present article. That interpretation is prima facie most to be commended which is founded on the scripture itself.

Now there is an express injunction in the law of Moses forbidding the Israelites at harvest-time to partake of the fresh corn until the ceremony of the wave-sheaf was passed. This occurs amongst the very particular and explicit regulations regarding the feasts of Jehovah (Leviticus 23:9-14). The children of Israel were enjoined to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest to the priest that he might wave it before Jehovah. This was to be done during the feast of unleavened bread, or of the passover, as it was also called, "on the morrow after the sabbath." This sabbath occurring after the slaying of the paschal lamb was considered of especial sanctity, and was regarded by the Jews as a great or high day (John 19:31). It was emphatically thefirstsabbath, not necessarily in point of time, but in point of importance. The following day, the wave-sheaf was offered to Jehovah, and the succeeding sabbath would be the "second-first." On the great sabbath no godly Jew would have partaken of ears of corn, because of the legal prohibition which stated, "Ye shall eat neither bread nor parched corn, nor fresh ears, until this selfsame day, until ye have brought the oblation of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:14). On the second-first sabbath the wave-sheaf would have been offered, and the injunction just quoted would therefore not be applicable to the action of the disciples, they being ceremonially free to partake of the newly-ripened corn.

Sabbath Made for Man The Evangelist proceeds to show that the Lord justified His followers on another ground — by the enunciation of a weighty truth concerning the sabbath which the Pharisees had nullified by their tradition. The distinction of this utterance from the Lord’s historical allusion to the Old Testament is marked in the narrative by the phrase, "And he said unto them." For He proceeded to introduce to them a new phase of the subject, illuminating it by the truth of God, as it could emanate from Himself only. In their ignorant zeal, under a thin veneer of piety, they had made the sabbath a yoke of bondage grievous to be borne. The Lord pronounced authoritatively, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." The object of the institution of the septenary season of rest was not the punishment of man, but his blessing. Was not this so at the beginning? When the works of creation were complete and the earth was in a glorious state of perfection and beauty fresh from the hands of its Maker, "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2-3). In that rest our first parents were to participate, but sin entered into the world, and thorns and thistles, and wearisome labour and death. Still, as to original divine purpose, the sabbath was made for man who appeared on the sixth day. And if the people of Israel were to do no manner of work on the sabbath, a merciful and gracious Jehovah provided a double portion of manna on the sixth day. And when the sanctity of the seventh day was enforced by the attendant terrors of Sinai, this was due to the choice of the

proud and self-confident people themselves, who placed themselves under the law and its restrictions (Exodus 19:8). The vexatious deprivations associated with the sabbath were therefore derived from man and not from God. In its original nature it was not mere prohibition, but positive blessing. The Lord declared that the sabbath was made not for Israel only, but for man. It was true that the sabbath was a special sign that Israel was the nation of Jehovah; but it was also true that it existed before Israel's day, though the responsibility for the observance of the sanctity of the seventh day was placed upon them. Thus Jehovah said to them through Ezekiel, "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them" (Ezekiel 20:12). And the Levites in their worship said, "And [thou] madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them commandments and statutes and a law, by the hand of Moses thy servant" (Nehemiah 9:14). At Sinai therefore Israel received what had existed as the sabbath of Jehovah from the beginning and what in its original scope embraced all mankind.

"Pharisees might turn the sabbath into an engine for torturing man, but in God's mind the sabbath came in most mercifully. There were the days of labour which God Himself had known something of in figure, for there was a time when He had wrought and made the earth; and God Himself was pleased to rest on the sabbath, and to sanctify it. Then sin came in, and God could no longer own it, and His word is silent. We read of the sabbath no more until God takes up His people in delivering mercy, and gives them manna from heaven. Then the sabbath day becomes a marked thing, and rest follows, the type of Jesus sent down from above. It disappears from the beginning of the first book of scripture, and reappears in the second. God makes rest once more. He was giving to man in grace when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Of this the sabbath was the appropriate sign." Law came in by-the-bye, imposing its observance with penalties for disobedience, but from the beginning it was not so. The Lord of the Sabbath

"The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." In these words, to the confusion of the unbelieving Pharisees, the Servant of Jehovah asserted His claim to an absolute authority over the sabbath. In virtue of His own rights He was competent to decide what might or what might not be done on the sabbath, for He was Lord of the sabbath. This was an important revelation of the dignity of His person, and we find the saying recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels in connection with the incident before us. But here it is especially instructive to observe that the Servant of Jehovah, so perfect in His dependence, so untiring in His energy, so exquisite in His sympathy, and so tender in His compassion, quietly and unostentatiously, using the simplest form of speech, claimed an unqualified authority which no man ever possessed previously. For, let it be remembered, this Lordship implied more than the Adamic supremacy over the lower creation. This was Lordship over a divine institution which Adam never had. The Son of man, who had power on earth to forgive sins, had power on earth to regulate the sabbath also, for, even as Peter said to Cornelius, "He is Lord of all." The ideal sabbath is yet to come. So the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, after showing that the rest of God did not come about in Old Testament times, declares, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). Of this sabbatism the Son of man is Lord, as He is the true Joshua to lead His own into that rest, and to maintain them in it. At that day both the heavens and the earth will participate in the sabbath of Jehovah, whose glory shall fill the whole earth throughout the millennial day. This period to which the prophets witness will be the true sabbath when the second Adam, the Son of man, will rule, and both the heavenly and the earthly departments of His kingdom will enjoy this rest.

Son of Man The Lord advanced this claim of Lordship of the sabbath not as the Son of David, nor as the Seed of Abraham, nor as Immanuel, but as the Son of man. "The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath also." This title of Christ is remarkable for more reasons than one. In the New Testament it is found almost exclusively in the Gospels. The exceptions are two passages where the Lord is seen in vision and thus named as the future Judge of men (Revelation 1:13;Revelation 14:14) in accordance with other scriptures (Daniel 7:13;John 5:27); and a quotation from the Psalms which is used in Hebrews, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Hebrews 2:6;Psalms 8:4). Stephen, when arraigned before the Jewish council, also uses it (Acts 7:56). In the Gospels it does not occur in the narrative itself, nor in any utterances made by others either to the Lord or about Him, but is strictly confined to His own sayings. And it is by far the most frequent term applied by the Lord to Himself. Thus in Mark's Gospel "Son" is recorded once (Mark 13:32); "Lord" twice (Mark 5:19;Mark 11:3); "Christ" once (Mark 9:41); "Master" (teacher) once (Mark 14:14); "Lord of the sabbath" once (Mark 2:28); "King of the Jews" once (Mark 15:2); "Sower" twice (Mark 4:3; Mark 4:14); "Master (lord) of the house" once (Mark 13:35); "Bridegroom" three times (Mark 2:19-20). But "Son of man" occurs fifteen times, which is more than all the others added together. A similar proportion is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, while in John "Son" used alone is more prevalent than "Son of man."

We may now inquire what is the significance of this title assumed by the Lord. This can only be learned by a careful study of the passages in which the title occurs. And with the intention of providing assistance in such a study the various references in the Synoptic Gospels are collated under headings which indicate their general tenor and form a basis for further research by such readers as are so disposed. The Lord refers to Himself as the Son of man when:

1. Foretelling His betrayal, sufferings and death —Matthew 17:12; Matthew 17:22;Matthew 20:18; Matthew 20:28;Matthew 26:2; Matthew 26:24; Matthew 26:45;Mark 8:31;Mark 9:12; Mark 9:31;Mark 10:33; Mark 10:45;Mark 14:21; Mark 14:41;Luke 9:22; Luke 9:41;Luke 18:31;Luke 22:22; Luke 22:48;Luke 24:7.

2. Foretelling His coming glory and kingdom —Matthew 10:23;Matthew 13:41;Matthew 16:27-28;Matthew 19:28;Matthew 24:27; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 24:37; Matthew 24:39; Matthew 24:41;Matthew 25:31;Matthew 26:64;Mark 8:38;Mark 13:26;Mark 14:62;Luke 9:26;Luke 12:40;Luke 17:22; Luke 17:24; Luke 17:26; Luke 17:30;Luke 18:8;Luke 21:27.

3. Foretelling His resurrection —Matthew 12:40;Matthew 17:9;Mark 9:9;Luke 11:30.

4. Foretelling His session on high —Luke 22:69.

5. Declaring Himself the homeless One —Matthew 8:20;Luke 9:58.

6. Declaring Himself the Forgiver of sins —Matthew 9:6;Mark 2:10;Luke 5:24.

7. Declaring Himself Lord of the sabbath —Matthew 12:8;Mark 2:28;Luke 6:5.

8. Declaring Himself the Saviour — [Matthew 18:11]Luke 9:56;Luke 19:10.

9. Declaring Himself the Sower —Matthew 13:37.

10. Referring to men’s opinion of Him —Matthew 11:19;Matthew 12:32;Matthew 16:13;Luke 7:34;Luke 12:10.

11. Referring to the confession of His name —Luke 6:22;Luke 12:8. In the Gospel by John it is recorded that the Lord used the term when speaking of:

1. His death —John 3:14;John 8:28;John 12:34.

2. His glorification —John 1:51;John 12:23;John 13:31.

3. His ascension —John 6:62.

4. His authority to judge —John 5:27.

5. His personal glory —John 3:13.

6. Himself as an object of faith —John 6:27; John 6:53; [John 9:35]. A consideration of the whole of these references is at this time impracticable; but a cursory glance is sufficient to instruct us that this title is one taken by the Lord in view of the fact that the kingdom of God which He proclaimed was not accepted by the people of Israel. On the contrary, He Himself was met with personal hatred, and in view of the culmination of this hatred in His crucifixion under a coalition of Jews and Gentiles, He adopted the designation of Son of man a title of wider limits than Son of David. Thus, when Peter, speaking for the other apostles, confessed Him as the Christ, the Lord "charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly" (Mark 8:27-32). And as may be seen from the above classification, a great proportion of the passages in the Gospels containing this term allude to His approaching death. The greater part of the remainder refer to His resurrection, ascension, glorification, and to the future manifestation of His kingdom in judgment and glory, which will be not only national but universal in its scope. But all the passages coincide to point out this title, though of wider significance than "Messiah," as that assumed by the Lord in consequence of His rejection by the chosen nation to which He expressly came. The use of this phrase in the Old Testament corroborates this interpretation of its significance. Passing over the general prophetic sense of the term in Job 25:6;Psalms 8:4;Psalms 80:17;Daniel 7:13; it is applied by Jehovah to two of His prophets, viz., Daniel and Ezekiel (Daniel 8:17;Ezekiel 2:1, etc.). Now both of these men were raised up as witnesses during the period when the nation, on account of its apostasy from the worship of Jehovah, was under a foreign yoke. Sovereignty was transferred from Israel to the Gentiles, and it is remarkable that these two contemporary servants of God who prophesied outside the land of Israel during the captivity are the only ones who are so designated. So that the Lord, in describing Himself as the Son of man, adopted a title hitherto borne only by prophets in exile. It was even then a title of reproach, inasmuch as it indicated that the nation of Israel, like Esau, renounced the privileges of its birthright. But what was the departure in the day of Daniel and Ezekiel to the departure in the day of the Gospel? Was it not an incomparable privilege that the Messiah should offer Himself to the Jews, insignificant as they were nationally at that period, and enslaved moreover to the Romans? But the people deliberately refused Him,* whereupon the Lord instructed His followers to proclaim Him no longer in that character (Matthew 16:13-28;Mark 8:30;Luke 9:21), but to know Him as the Son of man who was to pass through the depths of suffering to the heights of glory in the kingdom beyond. This was a difficulty to His

disciples then even as it is still; only faith can adequately sustain him who seeks to walk in the pathway of the despised and suffering Son of man.

{*In Matthew, treating specially as it does of the presentation of Messiah to the Jews, it will be seen that more emphasis is laid on His rejection, by the construction of the Gospel, than in Mark or in Luke.} The Second Man, the Lord from heaven, was in a world different in nature from that in which the First man, Adam, was placed. He was in a world into which sin had entered, and in which it reigned unto death." And in this world, when it demonstrated its implacable hostility to all that is divine by refusing to receive Him or to recognise Him, He took the title of Son of man. This title implied that the Servant of Jehovah was in the world outside Eden, the same world into which Cain and Abel, Seth and Enosh were born, begotten in the likeness and image of fallen Adam. But Jesus was "without sin," Son of man truly, but not son of a man. He was "born of a woman," but the Holy Thing" born was the Son of God.

"He was to be the Son of man — a title the Lord Jesus loves to give Himself — a title of great importance to us. It appears to me that the Son of man is, according to the word, the Heir of all that the counsels of God destined for man as his portion in glory, all that God would bestow on man according to those counsels (see Daniel 7:13-14; Psalms 8:4-6; Psalms 80:17; Proverbs 8:30-31). But in order to be the Heir of all that God destined for man, He must be a man. The Son of man was truly of the race of man — precious and comforting truth! born of a woman, really and truly a man, and partaking of flesh and blood, made like unto His brethren.

"In this character He was to suffer, and be rejected, that He might inherit all things in a wholly new estate, raised and glorified. He was to die and rise again, the inheritance being defiled, and man being in rebellion — His co-heirs as guilty as the* rest."

05.14. A Merciful Deed on the Sabbath

14. — A Merciful Deed on the Sabbath

"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered.*1 And they watched him whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man that had his hand withered,*1 Stand forth.*2 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm?*3 to save a*4 life, or to kill? But they held their peace.*5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved*6 at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored. And the Pharisees went*7 out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel*8 against him, how they might destroy him" (Mark 3:1-6, R.V.).

{*1 "dried up," J.N.D.

*2 "Rise up [and come] into the midst," J.N.D.

*3 "evil," J.N.D.

*4 "a" omitted, J.N.D.

*5 "were silent," J.N.D.

*6 "distressed," J.N.D. "sullupoumenoshere only. It is contested whether it means 'sympathising grief' (Psalms 68:20) or 'deep grief.' There is, I apprehend, sorrow for, with an intensitive force insyn— ; but from its use, not its natural force, entering into their state; not sympathy, which is feeling with, but feeling what a state they were in, with grief for it.'Note,J.N.D.

*7 "going," J.N.D.

*8 "symboulion peion" is an expression peculiar to Mark; Matthew has alwayslambanein. s.is used also for a council,Acts 25:12. It may be more in this sense here, but a private one." — J.N.D.} In the cornfields the lowly Servant of Jehovah, by the vindication of His followers from the groundless charge made against them by the Pharisees, declared that He had supreme authority over the sabbath. The record of this declaration by the Son of man is immediately succeeded, in all three of the Synoptical Gospels, by the account of the miraculous restoration, on another sabbath, of the withered hand of the man in the synagogue. Whether the latter event followed the former in immediate chronological sequence cannot be definitely ascertained from the sacred history, and this point may therefore be regarded as one of no importance in the scheme of the Gospels.

It is, however, of the deepest interest to observe that the two incidents are brought together by three of the Evangelists, and thus constitute an epoch in the Galilean ministry of our Lord. At this juncture the truth of the gospel broke away from Judaism. For herein it is shown how the teaching and practice of Jesus came into direct collision with the teaching and practice of the Jews in regard of one of the most salient of the outward features of their religion — the observance of the sabbath. In this particular, as in others, the Jews had rendered the law of God inoperative by their

traditions. The Lord, by exposing this departure from the spirit of their ancient oracles, and the evil tendencies of their beliefs, aroused their hostility and censure. The two incidents may be regarded from this point of view as forming a double witness (1) to the apostasy of the Jews in their manner of observing the sabbath that characteristic ordinance committed to the chosen people and (2) to the wise and faithful testimony to the truth delivered by Jehovah’s Servant in the face of Pharisaic gainsaying and rancour. And while both occurrences show the persistent zeal exercised by the Lord’s enemies to prove Him a sabbath-breaker, they also show how able the Lord was to confound their schemes and to discern the evil motives concealed beneath the cloak of piety. The Withered Hand Restored The Lord went into a synagogue on the sabbath. It is not clear whether this was or was not the synagogue at Capernaum where He had already performed miracles. But when the Pharisees and scribes who were assembled there saw amongst the congregation a man whose hand (the right, as Luke the physician, tells us) was shrunken and useless they suspected that the Master might heal the afflicted man. Thoroughly opposed to Him as they were, their unspoken thoughts by this conjecture paid tribute to the unfailing compassion of Jesus for whatever weakness and suffering crossed His pathway. But it is patent that the fact of His being good and doing good, which they inwardly acknowledged, caused them to hate Him and to seek to destroy Him. Imbued with this sinister desire they eyed the Lord narrowly, hoping that out of His active beneficence which they anticipated they might concoct some charge which would bring Him under the jurisdiction of the law.

Jesus knew their machinations (Luke 6:8), but was not to be diverted out of His course of "doing good." He bade the afflicted man to rise and stand out in the midst in sight of the whole company. Then the Lord, desirous of awakening the dormant consciences of the Pharisees and scribes to a sense of their own guilty motives, asked them, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath or to do harm? to save life or to kill?" (Mark, Luke).* To this piercing question, which exposed the hidden sophistries of their minds, they had no reply, and were dumb before Him. They had reasoned within themselves that, since the commandment of God forbade all work on the sabbath, Jesus, by healing the withered hand, would be working, and therefore breaking the sabbath. But the Lord’s words put the matter on a different plane altogether. The question was not, as they supposed, one between activity and passivity; it was between doing good and doing harm, between saving a life and destroying a life by refraining from saving it. The law of God was given for the repression of evil, not for the repression of good. "There is none good save one, that is, God," and it is inconceivable that He, "the Goodness of goodness," would promulgate a law which would prevent the doing of good. Indeed to refrain from doing good when opportunity is offered is to display unlikeness to God. "Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him" (1 John 3:17)?

{*In Matthew we are told they asked the Lord, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" And that part of the Lord’s words in reply which directly answered this question is there recorded. "What man shall there be of you that shall heave one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:10-12). He takes them on the ground of their own practice. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Proverbs 12:10). If a beast may be the subject of mercy on the sabbath, how much more man, who is head of the lower creation!}

Thus then did the Lord, by the presentation of the truth, seek, first of all, to heal the diseased minds of His enemies in the synagogue, but was hindered by their unbelief. The entrance of His words would have illuminated their dark hearts; but as the Prophet of Jehovah surveyed the congregation, His omniscient eyes marked not only the frowning brow and furtive glance but the hardened hearts and minds refusing to accept the truth. The zeal for God which "consumed the Righteous Servant drew forth a momentary flash of that "wrath of the Lamb from which the potentates of this world shall vainly seek to be sheltered in a future day (Revelation 6:15-17). But the Lord was not there to judge. Hence He regarded their desperate condition with sorrow and grief. "He looked round* about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart." Then addressing the disabled man, He bade him stretch out his hand. With implicit trust in the words of the prophet of Nazareth the man essayed to do so, and found the limb restored to its natural strength and suppleness.

{*The word periblepo, looking round, occurs several times in Mark — Mark 3:5, Mark 3:34; Mark 5:32; Mark 9:8; Mark 10:23; Mark 11:11 — but nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Luke 6:10.}

Such a result could not be gainsaid. The miracle was performed in a public place in the presence of a company of witnesses, consisting not of ignorant and credulous peasants only, if at all, but also of educated Pharisees and scribes who were only too anxious to deny the cure altogether, if possible, or at any rate to raise objections to its genuine character. They did not, however, attempt to deny the miracle, but leaving the synagogue they sought their rivals, the Herodians, and laying aside their mutual animosities, the two parties conferred together that they might find the most expeditious method of destroying Jesus.

Prominence Given to Sabbath-Service In the brief outline of the life and ministry of our Lord which we possess in the Gospels, it is striking to observe what a large proportion, comparatively speaking, of His recorded service was performed upon the sabbath. There are, altogether, about twenty-six cases of healing specifically mentioned in the Gospels, and of these, seven are stated to have been executed on the sabbath day. These seven cases are: —

1. The demoniac at Capernaum (Mark 1:21).

2. Simon’s wife’s mother (Mark 1:29).

3. The man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5).

4. The bowed woman (Luke 13:14).

5. The man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6).

6. The impotent man at the pool (John 5:9).

7. The beggar blind from birth (John 9:14).

Other instances are referred to in general terms as happening on the seventh day. It may also be observed that the Lord commenced His public ministry at Nazareth on the sabbath; and that He was in the sepulchre during the whole of the sabbath after His crucifixion — that "high day," as it was called. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the incident in the cornfields occurred

on the sabbath.

Much of this service was rendered in synagogues where it was customary for the law and the prophets to be read in the hearing of those assembled. The acts of mercy therefore, in addition to the direct benefit which they conferred upon those immediately concerned, formed instructive examples of the blessing for man which would characterise the coming kingdom even then preached by the Servant of Jehovah. This blessing was not to be effected without the energy of divine love. And divine love had charged itself to remove the presence of sin and its fruits; nor could it rest until this was accomplished for the whole creation. As the Lord said on another occasion, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). The instance here of the healing of the withered arm was a sample of the "powers of the world to come," and was but a single instance of what shall eventually be effected for the whole earth.

Looked at truly, the presence of this sufferer in the synagogue was undeniable evidence that the sabbath could not be rightly kept. For at the beginning of the world’s history, when Jehovah rested on the seventh day from His works and blessed it and hallowed it, the earth was unblemished, and declared the glory of God. In an Eden unsullied by man’s disobedience Jehovah could, in that primaeval sabbath, commune with Adam. The entrance of sin destroyed these conditions, its presence in the world being incompatible with the rest of God.*

{*Hebrews 4:1-16shows that man has never yet entered into the rest of God, which, in point of fact, is still future.} At Sinai the people of Israel were enjoined to "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." There were to be no sinful desires, no sinful actions, no sinful associations. They were to regard the claims of Jehovah upon them and observe the day to Him, distinguishing it from the six days by abstaining from all manner of work,i.e.,all labour usually undertaken for personal gain or gratification or comfort. Where was this sanctity in the Galilean synagogue? It is true there was a cessation of manual labour in the town. The fishing-boats rode idly at anchor or were drawn up on the strand, the fields and vineyards were deserted, the bazaars were silent, and a decorous company assembled for prayer and reading of the Scriptures. This man saw, and judged what a pious observance of the sabbath was there. But Jesus saw more and differently. He saw a man there doing no manner of work truly, for his right hand was robbed of its cunning. If this affliction was not a direct infliction from God, as in the case of the renegade king and of the false shepherd of Israel (1 Kings 13:4;Zechariah 11:17), it was certainly the result of sin, whatever the secondary causes may have been. The human hand, by its flexibility and manifold utility, differentiates the physical organisation of man from the ape-like animals which superficially resemble him. Its uselessness in this case demonstrated the cruel effects of sin upon mankind. But the Saviour saw even more. He looked beneath the cloak of formal piety and hypocrisy, and discerned a fountain of corruption. Evil thoughts and desires were in the assembly. Those who considered that to heal a man on the sabbath was to violate sanctity had no scruples about holding a council on that day for the destruction of Jesus. The Cain-thirst for innocent blood was there. The professed sabbath-keepers were hating their Messiah without a cause, and had already murdered Him — in their hearts. Was this remembering the sabbath day to keep it holy? All this and more the Lord saw, as He looked round on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts. He surveyed them in the spirit that at His final entry into Jerusalem wept over the guilty city.

Similarly, we read of divine grief in the Old Testament when in antediluvian days "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5-6). Again He said of the Israelites in the wilderness, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" (Psalms 95:10). A Solemn Lesson

There is in this incident, beside other instruction, a solemn lesson for all time as to the utter futility of 'the mere outward observance of a divine ordinance. The same truth is expressed many times elsewhere and in many ways. But it is here associated with the keeping of the sabbath and not with the offering of sacrifice or the repetition of prayers, and it may be well to state the principle which seems to be involved.

Here, on the part of the Pharisees, was a great display of zeal, ostensibly for the honour of Jehovah's sabbath. They appeared to be desirous above all things that its holiness should be preserved inviolate, so much so that they regarded the plucking of a few ears of corn and the healing of a withered hand as infractions of God's law. But what was the truth? They were all the while furiously angry without cause, hating their Messiah and persecuting the benefactor of their fellows. It is evident that their position was one of gross deceit, though while they might deceive other men and even themselves, they could not deceive God. And this was the true nature of Pharisaism, as the Gospels abundantly testify.

It is well, however, to remember that this hypocrisy arose from the natural tendencies of the human heart, and for this reason all religious persons are liable to fall into the same unreality in their devotional exercises. And what at first may be no more than an occasional lapse, becomes eventually a settled habit. We are therefore to regard the exposure here made of the inward evil of these religious professors as a serious warning for the present day.

It should be comparatively easy to discern that the exercise of public Christian worship and the celebration of the Lord's Supper are liable to the danger of unreality a punctilious performance of these rites being accompanied by a complete absence of spiritual intention. And it is commonly and rightly understood that this failure to present to God "worship in spirit and in truth" is especially to be feared when that worship is connected with an ornate ceremonialism and a prescribed liturgy. The aesthetic ritual may proceed most agreeably to the cultivated taste, but what if the soul of the worshipper be out of harmony with its God?

Most admit the possibility and even the prevalence in Christendom of this spiritual pretension. But is it not too often forgotten that the danger equally exists, however simple the external forms of worship may be? In our Lord's day it was found in the synagogue as much as in the temple. Nowadays hollow formalism frequents both the fretted aisles of venerable cathedrals and the whitewashed rooms of our obscure by-ways. Reality may be as seriously lacking in the simple singing of a "common metre" hymn as in the classical rendering of an anthem accompanied by trained choral and instrumental harmonies. The delusion lies in the false assumption that the negation of all outward ceremonies provides a certain safeguard against unspiritual worship and prayer. The truth is that the presence or 'the absence of an appointed ritual will not exclude from 'the worshippers thoughts which are evil and hostile to the Saviour, though it is likely enough that these thoughts may assume the disguise of religious zeal for the readier deception of the

unwatchful, and of such as, like those in the synagogue, have not learned the real nature of their own sinful hearts.

Heart-Hardness

What are we to understand by the phrase used here — "the hardening of their heart"? Does it imply that the hearts of the audience in the synagogue were naturally incapable of appreciating the cogent and irrefragable evidence afforded by the works of Jesus to the divine nature of His person and mission? or does it imply that they, knowing otherwise, resolutely refused to recognise the value of this evidence? In other words, is the allusion to their inborn or to their wilful obdurateness of heart? The wordporosistranslated "hardening" or "hardness" signifies a state of callousness, and, considered in connection with the other instances of its use in the New Testament, seems to specify the deplorable state of insensibility of the Jews to the words and works of the kingdom which were placed before them by their Messiah a condition of indifference which became intensified by their neglect of the testimony to the gospel.

Looking at the other occurrences of the word and its cognate forms, we find that it is applied to the Jews, to the Gentiles, and to the disciples of our Lord to indicate their want of receptivity of the truth. In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle uses it in reference to the rejection of the gospel by the mass of the Jews. "That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened. "A hardening in part had befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:7; Romans 11:25). Again, in another epistle, the apostle, speaking of the same subject, says, "Their minds were hardened" (2 Corinthians 3:1).*

{*In Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians the word (verb or substantive) is erroneously translated "blinded," or "blindness," in the A.V.} The same term is used to express the natural irresponsiveness of the Gentiles also to what is of God: "Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). The word is not found in the Synoptical Gospels except in Mark. He uses it here, and also in reference to the disciples: "They understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52). And again, he reports the words of Jesus to the dull apostles, "Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? Have ye your heart hardened (Mark 8:17)? In the above instances the activity of the will in opposition to the truth is not necessarily implied. The term appears rather to point to that prevailing state of moral stupidity among the Jews which failed to perceive what was evidently of God. When the apostle in the Hebrews is referring to the wilful obstinacy of the Israelites in the wilderness he uses a different word: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Hebrews 3:8; Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:7). And without presuming to dogmatise as to its finer shades of meaning it is suggested that the worda skleruno*and its derivatives is employed to denote that definite resistance on man’s part which deliberately blocks up the heart to exclude the light of God — as the Lord said, "Yewillnot come unto me that ye may have life" (John 5:40).

{*This word in one form or another also occurs in Matthew 19:8; Matthew 25:24; Mark 10:5; Mark 16:14; John 6:60; Acts 7:51 [Acts 9:5]; Acts 19:9; Acts 26:14; Romans 2:5; Romans 9:18; Hebrews 3:8, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 4:7; James 3:4; Jude 1:15.}

It must be added that the former word, porosis, occurs in one other connection not yet mentioned. John uses it in his Gospel with reference to the solemn judicial process which is exercised by God upon those who fill up their measure of guilt in repeated refusal of divine testimony. The Evangelist, speaking of those who had not believed on Jesus although they had witnessed so many miracles by Him, wrote, "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40; citation from Isaiah 6:9-10). This judicial sentence was not pronounced upon the nation until the divine patience was exhausted with those who stumbled at the stumbling-stone, ignoring the Messiah sent to them (Acts 13:27).

05.15. A Summarized Statement of Service

15. A Summarized Statement of Service

"And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed:*1 and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples that a little boat*2 should wait on him because of the crowd lest they should throng*3 him: for he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon*4 him that they might touch him. And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he charged* them much that they should not make him known" (Mark 3:7-12, R.V.).

{*1 Note that the punctuation is altered here. The Galileans came to Jesus first, then, as the report concerning Him spread in various directions, others sought Him also. This is not so clear in the Authorised Version.

*2 "ship," J.N.D.; W.K.

*3 "press upon," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "beset," J.N.D.; W.K.

5 "rebuked," J.N.D.} The Lord who knew the thoughts of those around Him in the synagogue, and was grieved at the hardening of their hearts against the many gracious testimonies of the gospel, knew also the evil intentions of the Pharisees and Herodians who left the synagogue in company that they might together concoct some scheme for His speedy destruction. This intimate knowledge of the secret plottings of His enemies aroused no animosity in the heart of the Saviour, neither did He, to counteract their plottings, organize some "plan of campaign" amongst His adherents, as a political or social agitator might have done. But in the serene dignity becoming the Servant of Jehovah who was governed alone by the will of Him by whom He was sent, He withdrew Himself from the immediate neighbourhood. Supremely trustful in the perfection of His manhood, omniscient also as to His Godhead, yet He did not adventure Himself where danger threatened. As He had refused to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, so He retreated from the vicinity of those who sought His life. The hour wherein to deliver Himself into their hands had not yet come.

{*In Matthew this withdrawal as a consequence of their evil plans is expressed more definitely than in Mark: "But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him. And Jesus, perceiving it, withdrew from thence" (Matthew 12:14-15).}

Jesus therefore, accompanied by His disciples, betook Himself to the coast of the Sea of Tiberias, as the inspired history states. Then in a pregnant sentence, the more striking because of the account of Pharisaic unbelief and enmity which immediately precedes, the evangelist sums up the widespread interest which the words and works of the Lord had awakened. If the religious leaders

despised Him, the toilers and sufferers of the house of Israel congregated to hear more of One who healed the sick and preached the gospel to the poor. Crowds flocked to Him from all parts — from Tyre and Sidon in the north, from Perea beyond Jordan on the east, from Idumea in the south, and even from Judah and Jerusalem in the centre of the land. The report of Him that traversed every part of Galilee (Mark 1:28) spread beyond in all directions, and multitudes, hearing what things He did, gathered to Him* (see also Mark 1:45). But how few had real faith in Jehovah's Servant! How soon were the words of the prophet Isaiah fulfilled, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?"

{*The Galileans "followed" Him; the others, named subsequently, "came" to Him (Mark 3:7-8).} The Mission Boat The great crowds that sought Jesus to hear or to see or to receive somewhat from Him were selfish, as all crowds are. They had no consideration for others, nor for Him whose benefits they desired. The afflicted ones especially, in their eagerness to obtain healing, pressed upon (literally, "fell upon") the Lord, to His great inconvenience, if not danger, besides interfering in this way with the activities of His service. The Lord therefore instructed His disciples to arrange that a small boat should attend upon Him; so that He might from a point of vantage declare the gospel of peace to the multitude, and be secure from the thronging of the disorderly people.

It was a simple arrangement most certainly and for this reason the incident is commonly passed over by those who are in search only for profundities, and who imagine that only what is vague and mysterious is to be prized. But a great feature of the Gospels is that both here and elsewhere they show how our Blessed Lord glorified the common and ordinary things of daily life. Pity it is if we miss the truth that divine power and love reach down to the humdrum "the daily round, the common task." The Servant of Jehovah required no accompanying "pomp of circumstance," no gorgeous ceremonial, no cumbrous paraphernalia. His service was in simplicity, making use of just what was at hand. A madly impetuous crowd was hindering Him in His labours. A little boat rocking on the Galilean lake is therefore commissioned to serve His purpose who was speaking words such as man had never heard, and doing works such as the world had never seen. There was a time to speak in the synagogue; there was a time to speak in Solomon's porch. But at this time it was most fitting that the small boat should be the pulpit. Let us learn the lesson of heavenly wisdom, and amid the throng and hubbub of life be ready to avail ourselves of the humble vessel near at hand from which to speak to the glory and praise of the Master. The Lord here, by His action, gave no countenance to the dreams of ascetics, and of such as seek to glorify God by the "neglecting of the body." The body was His instrument of service, and He adopted prudent measures to prevent injury to it from the struggling crowds. The means were simple yet effective, and at the same time forbid the notion that the Lord despised the corporeal substance. Was it not the body "prepared" for Him, and in which He had come to do the will of God? It is true that subsequently wicked men scourged and smote Him, and He submitted to their contumeliousness with unexampled meekness. For then the will of God led the obedient Son of man to deliver Himself into their hands. But before this hour had come we learn, as in the passage before us, which, be it noted, is found in this Gospel only, that the Lord took such precautions as were needful in this emergency, if we may call it such, so that He might the more effectively perform Jehovah's service. It may surely be inferred that the servants of Christ, while not allowed to pamper or indulge the body, are not, on the contrary, permitted to despise it, but rather enjoined to present it "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." In the natural order of things the outward

man decays, but there is no scriptural warrant for the belief that it is well-pleasing to God to hasten that decay either by our wilfulness or by our neglect.

Touching Jesus The numerous cures wrought by the Lord Jesus incited those that had plagues to push forward among the crowd in the hope that they might get near enough to touch Him and obtain healing for themselves in this manner.

Plague is an uncommon word in the New Testament. It is used in Luke’s Gospel in speaking of the works wrought by Jesus in the presence of the two disciples sent to Him by John the Baptist from prison: "In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits" (Luke 7:21). The word is also twice applied by Mark to the disease of the woman suffering from an issue of blood (Mark 5:29; Mark 5:34). Literally meaning a scourge, it probably included the severer forms of complaint from which relief was sought. This effort to touch Jesus was evidence of strong faith on the part of those that sought healing in this way. The bold faith that stretched out weak hands to Him was mute, inarticulate indeed, but nevertheless genuine as the Saviour knew, and could never deny. "He filled the hungry with good things." The poor were feeble, pain-racked, dying. They touched Him, the great Physician, in blind trust as little children. And in the words of another evangelist, describing a similar occasion,* "power came forth from him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19).

{*This occasion was later, and is mentioned by three of the Evangelists —Matthew 14:36;Mark 6:56;Luke 6:19. The woman with the issue of blood also touched His garment for healing —Matthew 9:20;Mark 5:27;Luke 8:44.} This action is the converse of the touch by Jesus Himself which was so significant of the outflow of healing power to the patients whom He blessed. The touch is used in the Old Testament as expressive of the divine communication of power to individuals, as in the case of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:7), of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:9), of Daniel (Daniel 10:10; Daniel 10:16; Daniel 10:18), while in that of Job it is used with reference to the infliction of personal trial (Job 1:11;Job 2:5).

It will be of interest to summarize here the instances recorded in the Gospels where we find the Blessed Lord bringing Himself in this manner into personal contact with the sufferers whom He healed. He touched —

1. a leper (Matthew 8:3;Mark 1:41;Luke 5:13).

2. the hand of Peter’s wife’s mother (Matthew 8:15).

3. the eyes of two blind men (Matthew 9:29).

4. the eyes of two other blind men (Matthew 20:34).

5. the eyes of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22).

6. the tongue of the deaf stammerer (Mark 7:33).

7. the ear of Malchus (Luke 22:51).

8. the bier of the widow’s dead son (Luke 7:14).

9. the terrified disciples on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:7). In addition to this phrase ("He touched"), which is so beautifully expressive of the intimate way in which Jesus identified Himself with the circumstances of suffering and pain from which He delivered those who sought Him, we find another which is closely related. We also read that He laid or put His hands on persons for healing or for the communication of strength. In some cases these terms appear to be used synonymously. Thus it is stated in Mark and Luke that babes were brought to Jesus that He might touch them (Mark 10:13;Luke 18:15), while in Matthew the desire is said to have been that He should put His hands on them (Matthew 19:13). In recording the grant of this request, Matthew and Mark say He laid His hands on the infants (Matthew 19:15;Mark 10:16). Mark uses the two terms similarly in his accounts of the cure of the deaf stammerer, and of the blind man of Bethsaida (compareMark 7:32-33;Mark 8:22; Mark 8:25).

Other instances in which it is recorded that Jesus laid hands on persons in the bestowal of healing or power are in the case of —

1. the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18; Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:23; Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54).

2. the demoniacal youth (Mark 9:27).

3. the bowed woman in the synagogue (Luke 13:13).

4. a few sick folk (Mark 6:2; Mark 6:5).

5. every sick one that came to Him at Capernaum (Luke 4:40).

6. Peter on the waves (Matthew 14:31).

These numerous cases in which He either touched or laid hands upon those whom He healed testify not only to the striking activity of Jehovah’s Servant, but to His personal interest in the individuals who came to Him to be blessed. And in this feature of His character we all have the most intimate concern, while the contemplation of this grace which cares even for the individual need, should lead us to adoration.

Demoniacal Witness Refused This great concourse of persons that came to Jesus from all parts of the land was evidence that a report of Him as the Healer of Israel had spread in all directions, and that there was an eagerness among the poor of the flock to seek His face for blessing, in spite of the evil judgments pronounced upon Him by the religious leaders. Here also were voices loudly testifying to Him before all as the Son of God. But alas! this testimony was "from beneath." It was not of man, but of Satan, whose works He had come to destroy. "Unclean spirits whensoever they beheld Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." In like manner, the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum acknowledged Him, but there He was owned as the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24). The Lord refused both the one and the other. "He charged them much they should not make him known." The time had not come for their confession. In a future day infernal beings shall publicly bow to the name of Jesus (Php 2:10). But in the day of His humiliation the lowly Son of man will not have evil spirits to speak forth His praise as the Holy One or the Son. He chose other witnesses, as the narrative goes on to show. And one of them, Simon Peter, taught by the Father above, confessed Him in this double character — Son of God (Matthew 16:16) and Holy One of God (John 6:69, R.V.).

Such testimony the Lord valued and honoured, and proceeded to choose twelve of His disciples who should be His accredited witnesses, not only during the term of His earthly ministry in the favoured land, but in a more active sense in all the world after His ascension.

05.16. The Appointment of the Twelve

16. — The Appointment of the Twelve

"And he goeth up into the*1 mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth*2 to preach, and to have authority*3 to 4*cast out demons: and Simon he surnamed*5 Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed*5 Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot,*6 which also betrayed him" (Mark 3:13-19, R.V.).

{*1 "The indefinite article appears wrongly in the A.V.; the Revised gives 'the' correctly, not meaning any particular mountain, but the high land as contrasted with the low or plain; as 'on board ship' or 'on the sea' is in contrast with 'on the shore.'" — W.K.

*2 "forth" omitted, J.N.D.

*3 "power," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "to heal sicknesses and" in A.V. omitted here, and also by J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "gave the surname of," J.N.D.

*6 "Iscariote," J.N.D.}

We now arrive at what was an important juncture in the ministry of the Servant and Prophet of Jehovah. His continuous and indefatigable labours in Galilee, proclaiming the coming kingdom, have been recorded in the previous verses of Mark, along with the marvellous testimonies which accompanied His preaching, of His goodness and His power. This witness to the gospel awakened an interest which spread in every direction throughout the country, so that crowds came to Jesus from all parts. Clearly there was a general desire abroad to hear and to know more of the Prophet of Nazareth. If many journeyed to the place where He was, there were presumably many more unable to travel who were equally desirous to hear for themselves the wonderful works of God. "But how shall they hear without a preacher?" To meet this difficulty the Lord of the harvest selected certain of His followers whom He authorized to proceed in various directions and proclaim in every town and village the good news of the kingdom. The Occasion of the Call In the First Gospel the call of the twelve is narrated in connection with the great need that sprang up for more extensive service among the masses of the suffering poor of the land. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:36-38). Such was the sympathy of the Good Shepherd for the distresses and infirmities of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that He desired that others should co-operate in the work of speedily gathering together those that were scattered abroad.

And immediately, being Himself the Lord of the harvest, He proceeded to send forth labourers into the harvest.

Luke, in recording the call, states quite another circumstance which brings into emphatic prominence the perfect dependence of the Man Christ Jesus upon God. "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose from them twelve whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:12-13). In this Gospel, the immediate context pourtrays the intensified hatred and opposition of the religious leaders to Christ. In view of this enmity Jesus retired to the solitudes of the mountainous country, and spent the night in prayer. At dawn, He chose twelve witnesses to labour with Him in face of this growing antagonism.

These aspects of the apostolic call both differ from that which appears in Mark, while all three, each being itself perfect in its setting, combine to present a flawless portrait of our ever adorable Saviour and Lord in His choice of those who should eventually occupy positions of honour and dignity in His kingdom. Sympathy for the ignorant and love for the erring wrought in the heart of the Master, as Matthew shows; grace also wrought in associating fishermen and others with Himself as the "Faithful and True Witness" in testimony against a hostile world, as Luke shows. But Mark is careful to display the holy and heavenly calling of the apostolate instituted by the Lord. He makes it clear that these chosen ones had no connection with the grateful crowds on the one hand, nor with the witnessing demons on the other.

We are told that Jesus left both of these companies and went up into the mountainous region. It was a place of separation from the world of confusion, the powers of evil, and the passions of sin, below. In the presence-chamber of the Most High, the thrice-holy Servant passed the night-watches in communion with His Father. This act of His was, as it were, a foreshadowing of what He said later, in that marvellous prayer before His crucifixion, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). Even then it was true, though more fully so later, that the called ones were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. But if this is the correct view of the passage in Mark, the Spirit being jealous for the honour of Christ shows by this connection that the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah was thus freed of all apparent association with either time-serving beneficiaries or the spiritual agents of Satan. He, on the contrary, silenced the demons, and, exercising His sovereign right, selected from His disciples "whom He Himself would." The Purpose of the Call The object for which these twelve persons were selected from among the mass of the disciples or followers of the Lord is here stated to be threefold. They were (1) to be with the Lord, (2) to be sent forth to preach, and (3) to have authority to expel demons. These chosen ones, as Luke tells us, are named apostles" by the Lord Himself (Luke 6:13); and it is well to remember that this term was applied to them from the first, so that the apostolate, so far as the twelve are concerned, originated before the founding of the church. The first of their qualifications is of special interest since it is mentioned by Mark alone — they were to be "with Him." The phrase constitutes one of those inconspicuous points in the differentiation of this Gospel from the others that offer to the believing heart such indisputable evidence that a predominating purpose characterises fife portraiture of the Lord Jesus in each of the four. Here we have the calling of those destined to carry on the service and testimony of the gospel in the whole world after His departure. Do we not therefore see the exquisite propriety that the Evangelist who describes the perfect Servant of Jehovah should show us that His under-servants received their

training in the company of the Master Himself. Who so competent to instruct them, by example and precept, what was acceptable and glorifying service to God, as He whose "ears were digged," as the Psalmist said (Psalms 40:6)? They, after their service in the day of suffering, should serve in the day of glory, as the Lord told them at a later period. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-29). Those who were with David's Son in the cave of Adullam should be with David's Lord in mount Zion.

We may thus consider that this phrase covers the spiritual education which Christ's servants received under the personal tuition of the Incomparable Servant, who in His service served even His own servants. They were admitted to a degree of favour and intimacy which was accorded to none beside. In such a hallowed associateship what daily lessons were ever before them for their learning of untiring zeal, exhaustless patience, purest devotion, absolute and unqualified obedience to God and profoundest sympathy for man! But more than this being "with Him" they heard His words, and received the truth. Seeing Him, they saw the Father also. Beholding Him, they beheld His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father. So that the apostles became qualified to testify, as eye-witnesses, of the revelation of the Father made by the Son. One of them, subsequently, writing to the whole family of God, referred to the fulness of this intimacy as that which constituted the credentials of his apostleship. "What was from [the] beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked on, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, the which was with the Father and was manifested to us); that which we have seen and heard we report to you" (1 John 1:1-3, N.T.). The apostles therefore had the honourable distinction of being not only the servants of the Lord, but His friends (John 15:14-15). In the second place, the apostles were called that they might be sent forth to preach. At the commencement of His public ministry the Lord presented Himself, preaching the gospel of God — that the kingdom was at hand. It now was proved to be necessary that this testimony should be taken up by others and spread in all directions, and the Lord chose the twelve that He might commission them to go throughout the country as the accredited heralds of His kingdom. The term "apostle" signifies one who is sent, and the first item of the service assigned to them was to announce that the Redeemer was come to Zion, and that the prophetic kingdom was therefore at the doors.

Thirdly, the apostles were to receive authority to cast out demons. In Matthew and Luke the power to cure diseases is coupled with that over unclean spirits. And copyists with an ignorant zeal to make the Gospels all alike, appear to have added the phrase here unwarrantably, for it is now agreed that the best witnesses omit it in Mark. And the context supplies what will be found to be quite an adequate explanation of the omission here by Mark of any reference to the curative powers conferred upon the apostles. The purpose of this section, as has been suggested already, is to show the dissociation of the kingdom of the Lord and the kingdom of Satan. One of the special forms of temptation in the wilderness was that the Lord should obtain the dominion of the world by acknowledging the rule of Satan (Luke 4:6-8). Now we read that evil spirits submitted to His power and rendered public testimony to His divine person. The Lord knew what His enemies would say, and what indeed they did say of Him, soon afterwards that He had Beelzebub, and that

His mighty works were done by evil agency.

Hence the Lord, anticipating this calumny, chose the twelve apostle to be His ambassadors, and gave them also authority over evil demons. So that wherever the Lord and His apostles encountered the spiritual powers of darkness, there was the reverse of co-operation; the unclean spirits were cast out and not suffered to speak. Mark had shown the angels ministering to Jesus (Mark 1:13), but he makes it clear that evil spirits, the servants of the great enemy, were in no way associated with Him. The apostolic power over diseases is therefore not mentioned in this connection, in order that greater prominence might be given to their power over demons. We can see the utmost propriety in this omission, especially when we consider that the chapter goes on to narrate that the charge of complicity with Satan was actually brought against the Lord by the scribes which came down from Jerusalem. The Twelve and Their Names The Lord chose and appointed the twelve to be His apostles. The term itself, though used in connection with the call by Matthew and Luke, is not given by Mark, who only uses it once throughout his Gospel (Mark 6:30). Their number has an obvious allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28); and the sphere of their service was confined to the earthly people of God. Their charge from the Lord was, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). After the Lord’s resurrection the commission was made universal in its scope: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And at Pentecost the apostles being together with others of the followers of the Lord, the Spirit descended upon them (Acts 2:1-47), and they were incorporated in the church, that new building of God which groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Paul, called after Pentecost, was pre-eminently the apostle of the church in the sense that the revelation of the mystery of its heavenly calling was communicated to him. Barnabas is also alluded to as an apostle in company with Paul (Acts 14:14). But the original call of the twelve Jewish apostles as recorded in the Gospels is clearly in connection with the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to Israel. This band of apostles is frequently alluded to in Scripture as "the twelve," but this mode of reference is used most of all by Mark. The following is a list of the passages:Matthew 26:20;Mark 3:14;Mark 6:7;Mark 9:35;Mark 10:32;Mark 11:11;Mark 14:17;Luke 6:13;Luke 8:1;Luke 9:12;Luke 18:31;John 6:67; John 6:70;Acts 6:2;1 Corinthians 15:5. Thomas is called "one of the twelve" (John 20:24); and so is Judas (Matthew 26:14; Matthew 26:47;Mark 14:10; Mark 14:20; Mark 14:43;Luke 22:3; Luke 22:47;John 6:70-71). After the defection of Judas, they are called "the eleven" (Matthew 28:16;Mark 16:14;Luke 24:9; Luke 24:33;Acts 1:26); Matthias being subsequently chosen by lot after prayer to fill the vacancy (Acts 1:26; Acts 2:14). The names of the twelve apostles are enumerated in each of the Synoptic Gospels, and also in the Acts, and these names were also seen in vision inscribed upon the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14). They occupied a special place of honour and privilege in the confession of the name of Jesus in the days of His presentation as Messiah to Israel, and in the coming day of glory a special award is accorded to them in manifestation before Israel and the nations in that holy city which is to come down from God. Paul undoubtedly will have his distinguished place in that heavenly kingdom, but the twelve, unlike Paul, moved along, in believing wonder, with the Lord in His daily progress through this world of woe. Hence, their names are written, not only in heaven (a matter in itself of greater cause for their rejoicing than

power over evil spirits,Luke 10:20), but also in the foundations of the wall of that figurative city which will be a medium for the light of the glory of God and the Lamb throughout the millennial earth. The various names of the apostles, with one or two exceptions, are easy of identification. A few brief remarks upon each are appended, following the order found in Mark.

(1) Simon Peter. The name of this apostle is always placed first in the various lists of the twelve, and also when two or three or more are mentioned by name. Simon or Simeon (Symeon, Acts 15:14; 2 Peter 1:1) was the son of Jona or Jonas (John 1:42; John 21:15-17). Jonas, which is equivalent to John, is the Greek form of Jonah. And Bar-jona, or Bar-Jonah, means son of John (Matthew 16:17).

Simon received a new name from the Lord, signifying a stone or a rock. This name in the Aramaic, that is, the language usually spoken by the Lord, was Kephas, or, Cephas (John 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1:12; Galatians 2:9), and in the Greek, Peter (Petros, Matthew 16:17). Peter, or Simon Peter, occurs most frequently by far in the New Testament. Besides in those references, made historically before his call and at his naming, Simon is used alone in the following passages: —

(a) By the Lord (Matthew 17:25; Mark 14:37; Luke 22:31; John 21:15-17).

(b) By the other apostles (Luke 24:34).

(c) By James (Acts 15:14).

(2)James.This was one of the sons of Zebedee the fisherman, the New Testament form of Zabdi (Joshua 7:1; Joshua 7:17-18;1 Chronicles 8:19). The word James is an English form of the Hebrew and Greek name Jacob. He is the only apostle whose death is mentioned in the New Testament, being executed in Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa I. (Acts 12:1-2). From a comparison ofMatthew 27:56withMark 15:40, it would appear that the name of the mother of James and John was Salome.

(3) John. The brother of James was also chosen to be an apostle, and the two sons of Zebedee were surnamed by the Lord Boanerges, which means, Sons of thunder.* Though others of the apostles appear to have had several names, Peter, James and John are the only ones who, we are told, received surnames from the Lord.

{*Some regard this as having reference to their natural fiery temperament, of which some indication is given in Mark 9:38; Mark 10:37: Luke 9:54.}

There seems no doubt that John alludes to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; John 19:26; John 21:20) in the Gospel which he wrote. He also wrote three Epistles, as well as the Apocalypse, the latter during his exile in the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9).

3 John is associated with Peter in their visit to the tomb of Jesus (John 20:1-10), in the healing of the lame man and the subsequent testimony (Acts 3:1; Acts 3:4;Acts 4:14; Acts 4:19), and in their journey to Samaria after the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:14); while Peter’s inquiry of the Lord concerning John, "And what shall. this man do? (John 21:21) shows the affection existing between the two men. The name John in Hebrew is Johanan, signifying, "the gift of Jehovah."

(4) Andrew. In Matthew and Luke, Andrew immediately follows Simon Peter in the list of names. They were brothers, and natives of Bethsaida, like Philip (John 1:44). Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, whom he left to follow Jesus, afterwards communicating to his own brother the joyful intelligence that the Messiah was found. This preceded the call by the Lord (Mark 1:16).

Little is said of Andrew. His name is, however, mentioned alone twice by John (John 6:8; John 12:22). The four, Peter, Andrew, James and John are named as being together with the Lord in the house at Capernaum (Mark 1:29) and on the mount of Olives (Mark 13:3).

(5)Philip.This apostle was also of Bethsaida, a fact stated twice in John's Gospel (John 1:44;John 12:21). He was one of the early disciples of the Lord, being called by Him, as it says, Jesus "findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me" (John 1:43). The Lord "proved" Philip before the feeding of the multitude (John 6:5-7). Some Greeks came to him, and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). He said to the Lord, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). All these historical items are communicated in the Fourth Gospel only. The name itself means "lover of horses."

(6) Bartholomew. This was the apostle's patronymic, that is, his family name, or surname; and it occurs in all four lists. Nathanael was, most probably, his personal name, signifying the "gift of God." He confessed the Lord before His public ministry as Son of God and King of Israel (John 1:49). Bartholomew is not mentioned by John, who, however, includes Nathanael of Cana when naming others of the apostles after the resurrection (John 10:1-42; John 11:1-2). Of him the Lord said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47).

(7) Matthew. The identity of Matthew and Levi the publican seems to rest upon sufficient evidence, and reference has previously been made in these articles to this point.* He was the writer of the First Gospel, but no further record of him is found in the Scriptures. Mark alone gives the name of his father, Alphaeus (Mark 2:14), a different person, it is presumed, from the one mentioned in connection with James, since the two apostles are not associated like James and John of Zebedee.

{*See ante, pp. 164-5.}

(8) Thomas. The name Thomas, like that of Didymus, which is used three times by John, means "a twin." Nothing is said of him after his call and appointment except by John. When the Lord spoke of going to Bethany, Thomas said to the other disciples, "Let us also go with him, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). When the Lord was instructing the apostles as to His immediate departure and their knowledge of the way, Thomas broke in with, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). His incredulity at the tidings of the resurrection has passed into a proverb (John 20:24-31).

(9) James. In each of the four lists, Peter heads the first four names, Philip the second four, and James of Alpheus the third four.

James is a name of frequent occurrence among the Jews, and, on this account, the name is not easy of identification, apart from some distinguishing epithet. In the New Testament we read of (1) James of Zebedee, (2) James of Alphaeus, (3) James the Lord's brother, and (4) James the Less. The first is clear, but scholars are divided in their opinions as to the number of persons referred to

by the following terms, whether three, two or one. A few words must suffice here upon what has been the subject of much controversy.

James [the son] of Alphaeus only occurs in each of the various lists of the apostles. But it has been supposed that Alphaeus is the Greek name for the Hebrew Cleophas (Clopas, John 19:25), whose wife stood by the cross with the other Marys, and is called the mother of James (Luke 24:10). In any case, that James of Alpheus was an apostle is fully established.

James the Lord's brother is so called by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. He states that on his visit to Jerusalem, "other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19). This person appears to be distinguished in this way from the other James who is mentioned in the succeeding chapter without any qualifying phrase (Galatians 2:9; Galatians 2:12) [?]. Such a form of reference implies that the latter was too well-known in Galatia to require any special term of distinction. The latter may therefore be assumed to be the James who came into prominence in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:18), and to be identical [?] with James of Alphaeus, one of the twelve. He wrote the inspired Epistle to the twelve tribes (James 1:1), and is sometimes known as James the Just.

James the Lord's brother is mentioned with others (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3); and in the account of the meeting in the upper room at Jerusalem before Pentecost, the brethren of Jesus are said to have been there, but they are mentioned separately from the apostles (Acts 1:14). In favour of the hypothesis that he wrote the Epistle of James it may be noted that like Jude he does not claim to be an apostle, but neither does John in any of his three Epistles. This argument therefore is not a weighty one.

James the less, or little, occurs but once (Mark 15:40), and is named as the son of Mary, one of the Galilean women who were last at the cross and first at the tomb. She was the wife of Alpheus, so that this is the James already mentioned, the epithet being applied to him probably because of his stature.

(10) Thaddaeus. From Matthew we learn that Lebbaeus was surnamed Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3), while Luke, in his Gospel and in the Acts, gives a further name of this apostle, viz., Judas [the son or brother] of James. A question of his is recorded by John, who distinguishes him from the traitor of the same name: "Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22). There is no further reference to him by name in the New Testament.

Whether Judas the apostle was the writer of the Epistle bearing this name is a matter upon which difference of judgment exists. The writer introduces himself, not as an apostle (see also verse 17), but as "Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James," this James being the Lord's brother. It is certain that of the Lord's brothers there were two so-named, since they both are mentioned by Matthew and Mark (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and we know that the brethren of the Lord were at the apostolic prayer-meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14), including James and Judas, if not Joses and Simon. There is no great difficulty therefore in supposing that Judas the Lord's brother wrote the Epistle known by that name.

If the contrary opinion is held — that the writer was an apostle — it is necessary to translate the idiomatic expression in Luke 6:16 and in Acts 1:13 as in the Authorised Version, "Jude [the

brother] of James" to agree with Jude 1:1, instead of "Jude [the son of James," as in the Revised Version. And yet in a previous case the same idiom is rendered, "James [the son] of Alpheus," so that the identification calls for patient discrimination rather than hasty dogmatism.

(11) Simon. He is distinguished from Simon Peter by Matthew and Mark as the Cananean, and by Luke as the Zealot. The first term is the Hebrew (not meaning an inhabitant of Canaan)), and the second the Greek name for a Jewish sect holding violent religious and political views, inimical to the Romans. Nothing else is recorded concerning this apostle specially.

(12) Judas Iscariot. This name is always placed last of all in the lists of the apostles. With one or two exceptions each reference to him is accompanied by a phrase alluding to his betrayal of Jesus. He is said to have been [the son] of Simon (John 6:71; John 12:4; John 13:2; John 13:26). He was not of Galilean origin, like the majority of the apostles, but of Kerioth, a town in the land of Judah (Joshua 15:25), this being implied by "Iscariot."

05.17. Opposition by Friends and Foes

17. — Opposition by Friends and Foes

"And he cometh into a house.*1 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends*2 heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.*3 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils*4 casteth he out the devils.*4 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*5 And if a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand? And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand,*5 but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil*6 his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil*6 his house. Verily I say unto you, All their sins*7 shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme;*8 but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal*9 sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:19-30, R.V.).

{*1 "They came to [the] house" J.N.D.; "they came home," McClellan.

*2 "relatives," J.N.D.

*3 "out of his mind," J.N.D.

*4 "demons," J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "subsist," J.N.D.; W.K.

*6 "plunder," J.N.D.; W.K. (second case only).

*7 "all sins," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "injurious speeches"; "speak injuriously," J.N.D.

*9 "everlasting," J.N.D.; W.K.}

Immediately after the call and appointment of the twelve it would seem that the Lord delivered an exposition of the principles of the new kingdom, such as is recorded by Matthew (Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34, Matthew 7:1-29) and inLuke 6:20-49. But Mark does not mention what is commonly known as the "Sermon on the Mount"; he states briefly that the Lord and the band of apostles came home, or to the house. This house was one habitually occupied by Jesus and His disciples when they came to Capernaum. Here on a previous occasion the crowd had gathered, and the paralytic let down through the roof was healed (Mark 2:1-11). In the house He explained the parable of the sower to His disciples (Mark 7:17). In the house also the Lord questioned the apostles privately as to the subject of their disputations among themselves by the way (Mark 9:33). This practice of Jesus appears to have been recognized in Capernaum, for, as a crowd quickly assembled upon a former occasion, so we read they did so "again"; "the multitude cometh

together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." The open doors of Eastern houses and the liberal hospitality of the domestic circle would explain as customary much of what in this incident the Western mind might regard as an unwarrantable intrusion. But making due allowance for local custom, it is clear from this passage and others (Mark 6:31-33) that there was a great eagerness on the part of the people to know more of the Prophet of Nazareth, while on His part an absolute disregard of self and an absorbing love to do good to the needy led Him willingly to forego meal-time when an occasion such as this arose for service. Is He out of His Mind? The news that Jesus was again at Capernaum spread quickly beyond the town itself into the surrounding country and to Nazareth where He was brought up. His relatives received these tidings with feelings of apprehension. They were alarmed at the growing interest and the excitement displayed by the populace, and possibly more so by the fact that a deputation of scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22) was even then in Capernaum to investigate the practices of the Prophet of Nazareth and to ascertain whether anything in the new teaching was antagonistic to the religion they had received from Moses and the fathers. As soon as they heard,* they started out, presumably from Nazareth, to go to Capernaum in order to prevent this mischief, for so they conceived it, spreading further. In their blind ignorance and blinding unbelief they said, He is beside Himself, or, out of His mind.

{*The phrase "of it" is italicised in the A.V. very properly, thus indicating that it is not in the original. The Revisers have not made this distinction, and consequently have unwarrantably restricted the news to a report of the crowd being in the house.}

There is no ground for understanding the term "friends" in the above translation in the sense of a relation based mainly upon feelings of love and regard. When the Lord said to His disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14), He used a different word altogether (philoi), which does signify those who love. But here the Evangelist employs a peculiar phrase (or, par autou), literally, those from Him, or, from His home. It means no doubt His relatives or kinsfolk, and certainly included, as we find from the account in this chapter of their subsequent arrival (Mark 3:31), His mother and brethren. Cranmer’s Version (1539), following Tyndale’s (1534), translated the phrase expressively enough as, those belonging unto Him: "And when they that belonged vnto him heard of it, they went out to laye handes vpon him. For they sayde: he is madd."

We are shown here by this outrageous comment of the relatives how utterly unable "flesh and blood" under the most favourable conditions was of appreciating the true nature of the service of Jesus. It might be supposed that the family at Nazareth would have supported Him. And yet sacred history is not without examples of family ties covering family feuds, even though the enmity existed upon one side only. Cain slew Abel his brother; the sons of Jacob sold Joseph into Egypt; and the sons of Jesse scoffed at David the shepherd who slew Goliath before their eyes. And the Spirit of Christ in the prophets said, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children" (Psalms 69:8); and again, "Because of all mine adversaries, I am become a reproach, yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear to mine acquaintance" (Psalms 31:11, R.V.). The Gospels illustrate the fulfilment of this predicted estrangement. Mary, in her overweening anxiety that Jesus should do some great thing to signalize Himself, said to Him suggestively at Cana, "They have no wine." Before the feast of tabernacles, His brethren said to Him in Galilee, "Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may behold thy works

which thou doest. . . . If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world" (John 7:3-4). Here, as Mark shows, mother, brethren and others came out to restrain Him, for such zeal, they said, bespoke an unsound mind. Thus in every case, whatever appearance of aid their actions had, there was real opposition to Him in His path of service.

How full of bitterness was the cup of the Lord, who endured not only the "contradiction of sinners" against Himself, but the mistaken and evil judgments of His own kinsfolk. He trod first and foremost in that pathway wherein, as He warned His disciples, a man should find that his foes included his own household.

It has seemed to some that to translateexesteby "out of his mind," "beside himself," or is mad," is to give the word a stronger sense than is justifiable. And it is true that inJohn 10:20, where His enemies say, "He hath a demon and is mad," a different word is used. But whatever may be an exacter rendering here in Mark the general sense is certainly that they thought Jesus was actuated by an extravagant enthusiasm which altogether exceeded the bounds of soberness and propriety. This was a false judgment which arose because they failed to understand what Person had now undertaken service for Jehovah in the midst of His chosen people. The Infamous Charge of the Scribes With that austere impartiality which is indubitable evidence of the divine inspiration of the sacred Gospels, the Evangelist, after she wing that the Lord’s zealous activities awakened in His kinsfolk a suspicion of mental derangement, states, in immediate juxtaposition, the awful charge preferred against the Servant of Jehovah by the religious leaders of the Jews. They were unable to disprove or to deny the reality of the signs and wonders wrought by Him. They therefore, with horrible perversity, attributed this power to a Satanic origin. They could not condemn Him as guilty of this charge by the test laid down of old in the Scriptures of failure in the fulfilment of His words. For in their presence the Lord spoke the word of healing to the palsied man who was so helpless that only by a most extraordinary method was the prostrate sufferer brought before the Prophet of God. His word was immediately effective, as crowds in Capernaum could testify, and the man was able to carry away his bed before their eyes. This proved conclusively the validity of the Lord’s claims. Was it not written, "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the LORD hath really sent him" (Jeremiah 28:9). And Moses had previously written of the converse, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22). In the case of the Lord, however, there were abundant instances that His word was fulfilled, so that a fair-minded teacher of eminence in Israel was constrained to confess, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him (John 3:2). The Pharisaic scribes from Jerusalem,* unable to accuse Jesus of failing to comply with these tests divinely laid down in former days for an alleged prophet, resort to a charge of complicity with evil spirits. Such a charge, if established, would have rendered the Lord liable to the death-sentence of the law. For Jehovah had commanded through Moses, "A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones" (Leviticus 20:27). The Jews did, as we learn elsewhere, say of the Lord that He had a demon (John 7:20;John 8:48; John 8:52;John 10:20), and they also sought to stone Him (John 8:59). Here they went further, for they said, "He hath Beelzebub," and "By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons." The degree of aggravation in this charge will be seen when we remember, on the one

hand, that Judas, the perfidious traitor, in his act of betrayal, was possessed not of a demon but of Satan himself (Luke 22:3;John 13:27), and, on the other hand, that the Man Christ Jesus was anointed for service by the Heavenly Dove, the Holy Spirit of God (Mark 1:10-12). By this statement of theirs which attributed the works of Jesus to the power of Satan, the scribes incurred the guilt of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

{*There seems to have been a special commission sent from Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin to investigate the words and deeds of Jesus in Galilee. See alsoMatthew 15:1;Mark 7:1.} The Lord's Reply to the Scribes The Servant of the Lord did not contend with those that opposed Him so unscrupulously, but He gently, meekly, patiently, instructed them (see2 Timothy 2:24-25). He called them to Him and showed them (1) the absurdity of their charge, using for this purpose plain and forcible figures of speech (Mark 3:23-27), and (2) the gross wickedness of their charge, and the peril of it to themselves (Mark 3:28-30).

(1) Their folly. The Lord demonstrated that these learned scribes whose opinions by reason of their eminence would possess a weighty influence upon the people, were devoid of even ordinary wisdom. He set this forth in "parables" or pithy metaphors stated in the form of interrogatories. "How," said He, "can Satan cast out Satan?" The prince of the demons is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44), and his purpose is to rob and kill and destroy. How unthinkable therefore that Beelzebub should be the author of the merciful and beneficent deliverances from the power of the demons wrought in the cases they had witnessed. The prince of darkness could not be the agent of such works of light.

Besides, as the Lord proceeded to point out, such a policy involved self-destruction on the part of Satan. All worldly experience proves that disunion and faction in a community result in disintegration. That union is strength is a universal maxim. Whether it is a kingdom or a household that is divided against itself it will not be able to subsist. And if Satan had risen up against himself, as the words of the scribes implied, he could not continue, but must destroy himself.

Thus the Lord exposed the folly of His accusers and then added another truth which the many instances of the expulsion of demons by Him proved. Every demoniac was a witness of the power Satan wielded over men; while every such miracle of Jesus was evidence of the superiority of His power to that of the Evil One. As the Lord said, "No one can enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." This He Himself had already done. He had resisted the temptations of the strong and crafty one in the wilderness. He had also delivered a great number of demoniacs. And shortly He would bruise the serpent's head, through death bringing to nought him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). The hand of Jehovah was thus upon the Man of His right hand, the Son of man whom He made strong for Himself (Psalms 80:17). And if only Israel had faith, they might well sing praise with the Psalmist, "All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and needy from him that spoileth him?" (Psalms 35:10). But the scribes and Pharisees could not deny the gracious mercy in exercise in their midst, yet would not believe it to be the power of God, bringing rather the baseless and improbable charge of Satanic influence against the Lord.

(2) Their wickedness. This gross charge was not only foolish, it was worse; it was impious and blasphemous. They said of Jesus, He hath an unclean spirit; and this statement was blasphemy

against the Holy Spirit by whom the Son of man was indwelt, anointed and sealed. And the Lord warned of the gravity of their sinful speech, prefacing His warning by the solemn and impressive phrase, "Verily I say unto you."* He said to the scribes, "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin."

{*In John's Gospel the form of the phrase recorded is always, Verily, verily I say unto you"; the above form with a single "Verily" only occurs in the Synoptists — in Matthew about 32 times, inMark 15, and inLuke 7times.} The Lord, speaking as the anointed Servant of Jehovah, shows that He regarded the railing of the scribes as directed not so much against Himself as against the Holy Spirit by whom He wrought His miracles. In like manner Ananias, in lying to Peter, lied to the Holy Ghost dwelling in the newly-formed church; and, taking another instance, the Sanhedrin, in refusing the testimony of Stephen, resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51; Acts 7:55). Only here the sin was greater; for those that sat in Moses' seat, in the obstinacy and virulence of unbelief, called the Holy Spirit an unclean spirit.

Though they knew it not, these scribes were tools of the great enemy of God and man. They were carrying into effect the scheme of Satan to cause that the Lord should be regarded among men as his emissary. The awful character of this design will become more apparent to us when we recollect that, according to apostolic teaching, Satan will even yet succeed in imposing upon men for a time a modified form of delusion. If he then sought to persuade men that Jesus was his Servant, he will yet delude men into accepting his agent as the object of divine worship. Such temporary success over men Satan will accomplish in the days of the coming apostasy, which will affect both Judaism and Christendom. This agent is in the prophetic word called the "man of sin, the son of perdition," and in evil arrogance will impersonate the Messiah Himself to the deceit and destruction of many. It is said of this personage that at his future coming he "opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly against every one called god or object of veneration; so that he sitteth down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," his coming being "according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Scripture is clear that this gross imposture will be accepted by the mass of Christendom as well as of the Jews, and this servant of Satan will be successful in luring multitudes to destruction. But think of the enormity of this evil scheme, originated in the days of the Lord, to characterise Jesus, the meek and lowly Servant of Jehovah, as One under the power and direction of Satan! And according to the subtle policy of the serpent, that the slanderous accusation might fall with greater force upon the hearts of men, this declaration concerning the Prophet of Nazareth was made by the religious leaders who had come down with authority from Jerusalem to Galilee.

Such a sinful charge, directed as it was against the eternal Spirit of holiness, was of such heinousness that there was no forgiveness, neither in that age nor in that to come (Matthew 12:29).

Unpardonable Blasphemy

It is important to observe that the sin concerning which our Lord made such an unqualified pronouncement is a specific one. It is in no sense vague and indefinite, but on the contrary it is here, as well as in the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, stated in precise terms to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This terrible guilt rested upon the Jewish generation of that day. Most cogent evidence of the power of the Holy Ghost was before their eyes in the words and works of Jesus; but they denied the validity of that evidence, and going further in their malice they ascribed this power for good to the energy of Satan. For this wilful blindness and obduracy of heart there was no remission. Such perverse unbelief was the sure sign of that impending doom to the nation which could not be averted. Could there be a more perfect testimony than that which was rendered by the Spirit through the holy Son of man in whom every act and word and motive were in absolute accord with His divine energy? The generation to which the Lord ministered had "done despite to the Spirit of grace" by describing this testimony as Satanic, and was "guilty of an eternal sin." This last phrase is peculiar to Mark. And the expression is one pregnant with deep significance. It teaches by a word the unalterable character of the unforgiven. There is an eternal fixity in the unholy character of such rebellion against the authority and love of God. The penitent is forgiven, but the guilt of the impenitent is eternal. And eternal sin implies eternal punishment. A Common Error The following remarks are helpful in elucidating the correct interpretation, and thus preventing erroneous views of this passage, some of which have caused unnecessarily much personal distress, as in the case of Peter Williams and of many others.

"Our Lord most solemnly pronounces their doom [the scribes], and shows that they were guilty — not of sin, as men say, but of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. There is no such phrase as sin against Him in this sense. People often speak thus, Scripture never. What the Lord denounces is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasoning about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous unforgivable sin against Him. All sin, I presume, is sin against the Holy Ghost, who has taken His place in Christendom, and, consequently, gives all sin this character. Thus, lying in the church [the case of Ananias and Sapphira] is not mere falsehood toward man, but unto God, because of the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there. Here, on the contrary, the Lord speaks of unforgivable sin (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as 'sin against the Holy Ghost,' but blasphemy against Him).

"What is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing the power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would be instantly relieved if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible. The truth is, that as any sin of a Christian may be said to be sin against the Holy Ghost, what is especially the sin against the Holy Ghost, if there be anything that is so, is that which directly hinders the free action of the Holy Ghost in the work of God, or in His church. Such might be said to be the sin, if you speak of it with precision.

"But what our Lord referred to was neither a sin northesin, butblasphemy against the Holy Ghost.It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into, and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up, who will receive the Christ whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that

generation was concerned, they were guilty of this sin, and they could not be for given. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus. They consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised. They still carried it on persistently; and it [this persistency] is always the case when men enter upon a bad course, unless sovereign grace deliver. The more that God brings out of love, grace, truth, wisdom, the more determinedly and blindly they rush on to their own perdition. So it was with Israel. So it ever is with man left to himself, and despising the grace of God. 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness.' It is the final stage of rebellion against God. Even then they were blaspheming the Son of man, the Lord Himself; even then they attributed the power of the Spirit in His service to the enemy, as afterwards still more evidently when the Holy Ghost wrought in His servants; then the blasphemy became complete."* {*"Lectures Introductory to the Gospels," by W. Kelly, 2nd ed., 1874, pp. 165-7.}

05.18. Obedience the Test of Relationship

18. — Obedience the Test of Relationship

"And there come his mother and his brethren*1 and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting about him;*2 and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren*1 without seek for thee. And he answered them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith,*3 Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:31-35, R.V.).

{*1 "his brethren and his mother," J.N.D. as the A.V.

*2 "a crowd sat around him," J.N.D.

*3 "looking around in a circuit at those that were sitting around him, he says," J.N.D.} The kinsfolk of Jesus had set out for Capernaum with the intention of restraining Him in His active service by word and work (Mark 3:21). They arrived after the interview in the house between Jesus and the scribes from Jerusalem had taken place. On account of the multitude, His mother and His brethren were unable to obtain access to Him, and they accordingly sent a message to announce that they were seeking Him. They must have known that scribes, to whom naturally some reverence and regard were due as teachers of the law of Moses, were among the audience. But this they disregard and send their peremptory message as if to assert the paramount claims upon Jesus of natural ties. But the Servant of Jehovah, in that wisdom which had come from above, turned the occasion to account in His preaching of the kingdom of God. He did not meet with an angry rebuff this unwarrantable interference which sprang from natural affection, although it wasignorantaffection, blind to His heavenly mission. But the Lord used the incident as a text, so to speak, for the announcement of the fundamental principle of the kingdom which was at hand. The effort made by His kindred to influence Him led Him to declare that obedience to the will of God is the only reliable foundation of divine relationship, while it necessarily takes precedence of every other claim. "Looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

"Looking round" (periblepo) is a characteristic expression of Mark, and is only used once by any other New Testament writer (Luke 6:10). By Mark it is used six times, and on all but one occasion it has reference to the Lord Himself (Mark 3:5; Mark 3:34; Mark 5:32; Mark 10:23; Mark 11:11). In the remaining instance it is applied to the disciples (Mark 9:8). The term seems here to imply the intense personal and individual interest the Lord took in those who sat around Him in the attitude of discipleship.

Jesus Himself doing God’s Will This simple and profound saying of the Lord (Mark 3:35) embodied truth applicable to man from the beginning. For obedience to the will of God must ever be inseparable from man’s well-being and happiness. Historically, the will of God forbade eating the

tree of knowledge of good and evil, and disobedience to that expressed will involved the forfeiture of the bliss of Eden and the inheritance of a world of sorrow and sin. Of Adam's descendants, whether enlightened Jews or darkened Gentiles, it is written comprehensively, not of a particular era, but of every age, "They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one." So that disobedience to God is declared to be perpetuated among men, His will being universally slighted and despised.

Now the Lord Jesus came not only to recall man by His instructions to a sense of his individual responsibility to God as the moral Governor of the world, but to afford in Himself an instance of perfect human obedience to the will of God. He came as a man truly, but also as the Incarnate Servant of Jehovah, which no man beside Him was or could be. Upon every sentient creature service to God is not a matter of choice but of incumbency, but upon the Son there was no obligation of servitude. He chose to take upon Himself "the form of a servant." This He purposed to do before the world was, as was intimated by the prophetic Spirit through the psalmist, "Then said I, Lo, I am come: in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:7-8). This utterance is definitely declared in the Epistle of the Hebrews to have been fulfilled by the coming of Christ (Hebrews 10:5; Hebrews 10:9). In Him the will of God was done in this world, where the will of man was and is ever struggling for supremacy. And no Gospel sets forth with greater precision than the Fourth — that which pourtrays Him especially as the Son of God — His absorbing devotion to the will of God. After His ministry of the water of life to the woman at the well of Sychar, He said to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know nothil" "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:32; John 4:34). Again, testifying to the Jews of Himself as the appointed Judge of living and dead, He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5:30). And once again, He declared, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me," going on to make known what is that will with regard to those who come to Him, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:38-40). What subjection was this! In the matter of receiving poor vile sinners, loving them as He did, about to die for them as He was, He acknowledged that He could not cast them out because it was the Father's will that they should come to Him and receive eternal life. In His joy, as in His suffering, He was the submissive One — in all the worthy Object of our admiring and adoring wonder and worship.

But, moreover, we have been permitted to see how His submission was subjected to the most rigorous of all tests. Three only of the apostles were allowed to accompany the Lord in His vigil in Gethsemane. But sleep overcame these, so that there were no human witnesses of that agony of the Holy Servant. Yet we have the record of the prayers and supplications, the strong crying and tears, the bloody sweat, the threefold repetition, communicated to us in the Gospels as well as by allusion in Hebrews 5:7. As a Son He learned obedience, and His obedience was unto death. In the garden the consummation of that obedience in atoning sufferings and death was immediately before Him. He anticipated the cup that His Father had given Him to drink. He gauged its bitterness with absolute perfection. He measured the immeasurable burden of guilt to be laid upon Him. The sting of death as for none else was before His spirit. It was in the anticipative realisation

of all this and of much besides, that He fell prostrate and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In this perfect resignation we have the triumph of holy obedience. "Thy will be done" was soon followed by "It is finished," and the will of God was indeed done. That obedience was thereby accomplished through which many were made righteous.

Doing God’s Will the Basis of Relationship The religious trust of the Jews was in their pedigree. They boasted that they were lineal descendants of Abraham (John 8:33; John 8:39) — an idol that John the Baptist sought to hew to pieces with fierce invective, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). The Lord here declared that in the kingdom of God vital relationship with the King was demonstrated not by nationality, but by personal obedience and individual fealty. The mass were obdurate and irresponsive to the Lord’s teaching, but whoever separated himself from the disobedient nation proclaimed himself thereby on the Lord’s side.

It will be remembered that Israel as a nation placed themselves at the beginning upon the ground of obedience, and it was because they proved themselves in this relationship to be a disobedient and gainsaying people that they were set aside. Jehovah said to them through Moses, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." In their self-ignorance and self-satisfaction they readily accepted this condition: "All the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:5-8;Exodus 24:3). Thus it came about that at the people’s desire the law was imposed with its defined responsibilities of unqualified love to God and man, its conditions being summed up in the phrase, "This do, and thou shalt live." But the recorded history of Israel under the law is one of dismal failure. Like sheep they all went astray and turned every one to his own way. They were the sons of disobedience. In the concluding words of the Book of Judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord by turning the hearts of the "disobedient to the wisdom of the just." For Messiah’s kingdom, as the Lord here intimated, is characterised by doing the will of God. For this consummation the Lord taught His disciples to pray to their Father in heaven — a new title of God evidently contrasted with that of Abraham their father on earth as to the flesh. The Lord had come to set up the promised kingdom, and He instructed His followers to pray to Him whose it was ("Thine is the kingdom") for its due establishment, so that the will of the Father might be done on earth even as in heaven (Matthew 6:9-13). On high there is the harmony of perfect desire among the angelic hosts to do the divine pleasure, as it is written in a psalm of praise, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure" (Ps. 8:20,21). And in Messiah’s kingdom this spirit of obedience to the divine will shall also be seen below. When it comes about that Jehovah’s anointed rules in the midst of His enemies His people "shall be willing" in that day of power (Psalms 110:3).

Enough has now been written to show what a far-reaching principle obedience to the will of God is. And it is as essential in the present as in the past and in the future. Relationship to God is inseparable from subjection to His will. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And the Lord said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Recipients as we are of His

illimitable grace, we may not ignore His authority, but are called to do the will of God from the heart [soul] (Ephesians 6:6). And to quote again the Master's words, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). This is the divine purpose with regard to us, who are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience" (1 Peter 1:2). And the impulse of the new nature begotten of God within us is to cry with the psalmist, "Teach me to thy will, O God" (Psalms 143:10). So Saul of Tarsus, convicted in the dust, exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" nor was he disobedient to the "heavenly vision."

It may be asked, How can I ascertain the will of God? First of all there must in such a case be the willing mind. This the Lord Himself declared — "If any one willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 6:17). Coming to the scriptures with the prayer, already quoted, of the psalmist, "Teach me to do thy will, O God (Psalms 143:10), the docile spirit is instructed, so that he may stand perfect and fully assured in all that will (Colossians 4:12). The apostle Paul desired on behalf of the saints at Colosse that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9). There is first the hearing and then the doing. In the Lord's words, "My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). But while to understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17) is obviously essential, it is required further in order toprovethat good, acceptable and perfect will, that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, not fashioning ourselves according to this present evil age (Romans 12:1-2). Self-denial and suffering are mostly involved in doing the will of God, as Peter reminds us (1 Peter 3:17;1 Peter 4:19;1 Peter 2:15). The obedience of Christ was of this nature, and we also are to have that "mind," as is exhorted in the verses which speak of His Great Renunciation unto the death of the cross (Php 2:5-8).

It is important to mark this, since the Incarnation is an insoluble enigma apart from the fact that the Son was here in human guise to do the Father's will. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). As God He was essentially exempt from the responsibilities of the creature. These He assumed that as the Second man He might become the federal Head of a new creation which should be characterised by obedience, even as the first creation was by disobedience (see Romans 5:12-19).

Until the Father's kingdom is fully established, and a spirit of unvarying obedience to His will pervades the whole earth, obedience to His word by the minority must be attended, by the renunciation of selfish interests and by the persecuting opposition of the disobedient ones. But the faithful Christ will publicly confess as akin to Himself, who came to "do and suffer" the will of God. His obedience had a double character — an active and a passive side — the doing and the suffering. In our case the will of God involves, on the one hand, the active and diligent performance of assigned tasks, and on the other hand, the patient endurance of privation and suffering for the sake of righteousness and the name of Christ. Thus we do (poieo) the will of God from the heart, and we also say in the spirit of the Lord Himself, "Thy will be done" (ginomai), (Matthew 26:39; Matthew 26:42; Acts 21:14).

However, in spite of the world's fierce enmity and powerful antagonism, the obedient believer is the only stable person in the world. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17). The Lord taught this same truth by a parable

concerning the obedient disciple: "Whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Matthew 7:24-27). Though there may be temporary defeat, there will be eternal victory for the obedient. Whoso suffers with Christ shall also reign with Him. The Lord then, in these weighty words, indicated what was before Israel after the flesh, who boasted in the possession of the law but forgot that not the hearers of the law are just before God, but that the doers of the law shall be justified (Romans 2:13). As the Servant of Jehovah He acknowledges as His associates those who follow Him in the pathway of obedience to the will (thelema) of God, which is "that which God decides to have done because it is pleasing to Him." "God’s good pleasure is everywhere [in scripture] regarded as the law whereby all things, human and divine, are ordered. Christ is regarded as its embodiment and manifestation; and the Christian, being — by profession at least — one with Christ, is supposed to be conformed to that will in all things." And regarding this incident in its connection with what precedes it, we believe that in the words He used we have not so much His absolute renunciation of natural relationship as His enunciation of obedience to the will of God as the only valid basis of spiritual relationship with Him. Thus we take the yoke of Christ upon us, and learn to love, to do, and to suffer the will of God.

"O Will, that willest good alone,

Lead Thou the way, Thou guidest best;

A silent child, I follow on,

And trusting, lean upon Thy breast."

05.19. The Sower, the Seed and the Soils

19. — The Sower, the Seed and the Soils

"And again he began to teach by the seaside.*1 And there is gathered*2 unto him a very great multitude, so that he entered into a boat,*3 and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by*4 the sea on the land. And he taught*5 them many things in parables, and said unto them in his teaching,*6 Hearken:*7 Behold, the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some*8 seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it.*9 And other*10 fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness*11 of earth: and when the sun was risen,*12 it was scorched;*13 and because it had no root, it withered away. And other*10 fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others*4 fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing;*15 and brought) forth, thirty-fold, and sixty-fold, and a hundredfold.*16 And he said, Who*17 hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:1-9, R.V.).

{*1 Omit "side," J.N.D.

*2 "was gathered," J.N.D.; W.K.; A.V.

*3"going on board ship," J.N.D.; "went on board ship," W.K.

*4 "close to," J.N.D.

*5 "was teaching," W.K.

*6 "doctrine," J.N.D.; W.K.

*7 "hear," W.K.

*8 "one," J.N.D.

*9 "devoured it up," W.K.

*10 "another," J.N.D.; "some," W.K.

*11 "depth," J.N.D.; W.K.

*12 "arose," J.N.D.; W.K.

13 *"burnt up," J.N.D.

*14 "another," J.N.D.; "other," W.K.

*15 "that sprang up and increased." W.K, "bore," W.K.

*16 "onethirty, one sixty,and one a hundred," J.N.D.; "some thirty, andsome sixty, and some a hundred," W.K.

*17 "he that," J.N.D.; W.K.} In Mark 4:4-41 a marked change is indicated in the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah. And it will be seen that a modification in His teaching was made at this juncture by the Lord both as to what He taught and as to the manner in which He communicated His message. At the first Jesus announced with authority that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the appointed time being fulfilled, and all classes were invited to repent and believe these good tidings. But now the Lord commenced to teach that there would be only a partial acceptance of the gospel, and much hostility would be aroused by it, so that the external form of the kingdom would be changed in consequence. This change the Lord placed before His audience in a series of parables, a method of teaching in strong contrast with the plain statements of the Sermon on the Mount, spoken previously, as we learn from Matthew's Gospel.

Why was this change made? This question may be answered to some extent from the history of the Lord's ministry up to this point, as it is presented by Mark. Brief and compressed as his narrative is, we are therein shown that the responsible leaders of the people made a studied and determined resistance to the prophetic testimony of the Servant of Jehovah, regardless of the holy and benignant nature of His words and works. Thus, the scribes inwardly condemned Him as a blasphemer because He absolved a man's sins (Mark 2:6). They also with the Pharisees discredit Him because He ate bread with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16). They further accused Him of countenancing a desecration of the Sabbath, because His disciples plucked corn on that day (Mark 2:24). The Pharisees and Herodians conspired to take His life (Mark 3:6). His relations declared that He was demented (Mark 3:21). The scribes from Jerusalem ascribed His power over demons to Satan (Mark 3:22). This last charge the Lord said was evidence of a spirit of animosity of such a nature that it could not be forgiven, and would cause the nation to be set aside. So that in these two chapters (Mark 2:1-28 and Mark 3:1-35) there is delineated a complete outline of that implacable hatred to our Lord by the chosen nation which culminated in His death. The hour was not come for His crucifixion, but the spirit that ultimately condemned Him to be crucified was before His eyes. He was thus a rejected Messiah already, so far as the nation as a whole was concerned. He came to the vineyard seeking fruit, and there was none. But if He could not gather fruit for the Father who sent Him, He would sow seed so that a remnant in Israel might bear fruit for the Husbandman. Accordingly, He virtually abandoned the nation at large, and offered His word to any who had ears to hear it.

Teaching in Parables

Coincident with this recognition by the Lord of a faithful remnant in Israel who would do God's will in contrast with the rebellious nation as a whole, we find that the Teacher and Prophet of Jehovah adopted a new style of address, presenting the doctrine of the kingdom in the form of parables or similitudes. In the parabolic form the truth was presented in a manner easy of retention by those who heard it Who does not recollect with ease the simple yet striking parables of the Gospels? Their meaning is not so apparent, however, and, in point of fact, was only to be apprehended in so far as an explanation or interpretation was given by the Teacher Himself to those in a moral and spiritual condition to receive it. The parables were spoken publicly to the multitude, and their meaning unfolded privately to the disciples only. In Matthew's Gospel there is an ample record of the Lord's statement upon this very point, in which he shows the distinction between the mass of the people and the believing remnant, and that this distinction was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He

answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is being fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:10-17). By these words the Lord placed it beyond question that parables were used by Him for the delivery of truths concerning the kingdom in a form which could only be understood upon His own exposition of them to those who received Him by faith. Quaint Thomas Fuller compared the parables to the divine appearance at the Red Sea which was at once light to the Israelites but darkness to the Egyptians. The quotation from Isaiah shows that the adoption of this form of teaching was in view of the judgment imminent upon the nation. In the prophet's day Israel was about to be subjugated to the power of the Gentiles and brought into captivity to heathen kings. In the Lord's day a severer judgment was at hand because the nation rejected and crucified its Messiah. Jerusalem would be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, the nationality of the people destroyed, and a gospel universal in its scope proclaimed. This national judgment, with its far-reaching consequences, was of course foreknown of the Lord, and He communicated the same to His disciples for their instruction before it came to pass, but not to the multitude at large save in parables only, because He was still presenting Himself to the daughter of Zion in both Galilee and Judea as the promised King. Until the Jews had finally rejected their King and delivered Him to the Romans for crucifixion, the Lord continued to offer Himself to them, although the hardened and hardening spirit that refused Him was ever before His gaze. His ministry in parables of the impending change in no wise interfered with their responsibility to receive Him, seeing they did not understand. Therefore "all these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matthew 13:34), but when they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples (Mark 4:34). The Parable Itself The Servant of Jehovah continued His work of instructing the mass of the people in the things of righteousness, and is again found by the sea doing this work. Previously we read, "And he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them" (Mark 2:13). Now again a very great crowd from the neighbouring towns assembled by the sea, and He whose voice was "as the voice of many waters" ministered to them the precious truths of God. But that they might hear, and that He might speak the more conveniently, He boarded a boat, as He had done before (Mark 3:9), and sitting thus on the margin of Lake Tiberias, He addressed the standing multitude gathered upon the strand, teaching them many things in parables. From this circumstance the series of them is sometimes called the "boat-parables." The Lord spake many, and most probably only a selection of them are recorded in the Gospels. Matthew gives the greatest number, and the seven constitute a panoramic sketch of the kingdom of the heavens in "mystery."

Matthew 13:1-58

1. The Sower

2. Wheat and tares

3. Mustard seed

4. Three measures of meal

5. Hidden treasure

6. Costly pearl

7. Great net Mark 4:1-41

1. The Sower

2. Seed growing secretly

3. Mustard seed Luke

1. The Sower (Luke 8:1-56)

2. Mustard seed (Luke 13:1-35)

3. Three measures of meal (Luke 13:1-35) As proof that a selection of these parables was made by the Holy Spirit to conform to the purpose of each of the three Gospels it is sufficient to note that Mark inserts one not occurring elsewhere,i.e.,that of the secret growth of the sown seed, while Matthew only records three spoken in the house to the disciples. This is evidence of differentiated design, not of effort after a dead level of uniformity in the Synoptic narratives.

It will be observed that the first that of the sower — is one of the three common to all. This is the longest of the parables, and its interpretation is given with great particularity. Unlike the others, it is not exactly a similitude of the kingdom, the prominent feature being the One who sows the word of the kingdom, although it is true that the varied results of the sowing are expressed.

It is interesting to observe the tripartite character of the parable. Its subjects are threefold —

1. The sower

2. The seed

3. The soils There are three varieties of unfruitful soil —

1. The wayside

2. The stony ground

3. The thorny patch

There is a threefold gradation in the results of seed-sowing on the unsuitable soils —

1. The seed was devoured before germination

2. The seed sprang up, but quickly withered away

3. The seed grew up, but was choked by the thorns

There is also a threefold degree of fruitfulness in the seed which fell on good ground —

1. Some produced thirty-fold

2. Some produced sixty-fold

3. Some produced a hundred-fold This is the order of the degrees of fruitfulness given by Mark, but Matthew reverses this order, and Luke only mentions the last — "a hundredfold." In comparing the three versions of the parable by the Synoptic Evangelists a close correspondence is observed between those presented by Matthew and Mark, but of the two that of the latter is the fuller. The principal variations in the second Gospel from the first are as follows: —

1. The addition of "it came to pass (egeneto)" before "as he sowed," Mark 4:4.

2. The "birds" are called "birds of the air (heaven)," Mark 4:4.

3. The choking action of the thorns described in Matthew byapopnigo,is expressed in Mark bysumpnigo,the latter term denoting the suffocation caused by the greater number of the thorns, Mark 4:7.

4. "And it yielded no fruit" is an addition peculiar to Mark, Mark 4:7.

5. The good and fruitful seed "growing up and increasing" is also an addition peculiar to Mark, Mark 4:7.

Luke’s account is much abbreviated, while at the same time it contains its own peculiar variations (Luke 8:5-8).

1. Of the seed falling by the wayside, it is added that "it was trodden under foot."

2. Of the seed falling on stony ground, it is said that as soon as it germinated it withered through lack of moisture; and the fact of the shallowness of the soil, the heat of the sun, and the absence of root is not mentioned.

3. The thorns are said to grow up along with (sumphuo) the good seed.

4. Luke says that the seed which fell on good ground sprouted (phuo).

5. He is also peculiar in using the compound form of the adjective, "hundred-fold" (hekatontaplasion), Though not occurring in Matthew 13:1-58, this term is found in Matthew 19:29.

05.20. The Hearing Ear and the Mystery of the Kingdom

20. — The Hearing Ear and the Mystery of the Kingdom

"And he said, Who* hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables. And he said unto them, Unto you is given* the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive* and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply* they should turn again,* and it* should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:9-12, R.V.).

{*1 "He that," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 J.N.D., W.K. add "to know" in brackets as an explanatory phrase.

*3 "beholding they may behold and not see," J.N.D.

*4 "lest it may be," J.N.D.; "lest perhaps," W.K.

*5 "be converted," J.N.D., W.K.

*6 "they," J.N.D.; W.K.} The Lord had by His miracles and signs fully established His title to be heard as the Prophet of Jehovah. But in the result He might adopt the language of Isaiah, and inquire, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" For the nation was like "the deaf adder [asp] that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Jesus, as the anointed King and Redeemer, had called, but there was no response, save blasphemously to ascribe His works of mercy and might to the power of the evil one. The Servant of the Lord did not, however, in view of His repulse both in Judaea and in Galilee, abandon Himself to despair like the despondent Elijah of old, and flee from the place of testimony to Horeb. If the nation at large refused to listen, He, was mindful of the simple and faithful ones who were "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." And from this period onward He addressed His ministry not to the mass as such, but to the individuals who were desirous of divine instruction. "And h’ said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Ears to Hear This phrase was used by our Lord more than once, and in each case His accompanying utterance contained a meaning which did not, so to speak, lie upon the surface, but needed faith and love in the heart, as well as the Spirit’s unction, for its true apprehension. In Matthew an abbreviated form of the words is found, "Who hath ears, let him hear." And in that Gospel it is recorded in one other connection besides in that of the parables. The Lord was speaking to the multitudes concerning John the Baptist and his super-eminence as a prophet, being none other than the messenger of Jehovah and the forerunner of the Messiah, as Malachi had foretold. "And," said He to His audience, "if ye will receive it, this is Elijah which is to come He that hath ears, let him hear" (Matthew 11:14-15). Only faith discerned that the King had come in humiliation, and also that the predicted forerunner had preceded Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, not yet, however, to introduce the day of God’s vengeance, but the day of His salvation. Those who had the ears of faith were called to hear this revelation concerning the extended scope

of the prophecy of Malachi, and to know that Elijah was yet to come and restore all things, and also that he had come and that the nation "did unto him whatsoever they listed" (Matthew 17:11-12).

Luke also records the phrase in one other association besides in that of the parables (Luke 8:8). The Lord was speaking to the great crowds that went after Him with reference to the stern and uncompromising self-denial and endurance which would be the lot of such as became His disciples. The follower of the humbled Messiah, He declared, must renounce all things. Yet His disciples were the salt of the earth, the sole preservative against the universal spread of the corrupting influences of evil. And the Lord concluded this saying by the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14:25-35). For all had not faith, and only faith could understand the new teaching that the way of divine service was not yet in the exercise of power but in the endurance of suffering and shame. In Mark this brief but striking call occurs in the seventh chapter as well as in this. There we Barn of the Lord teaching, in contrast with the law of Moses which concerned itself with man’s overt acts, that man is defiled by the evil thoughts and motives which proceed from his heart. "He called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand. There is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:14-16).* The saying was weighty, and only the sons of faith, now as well as then, receive this truth by which men are condemned down to the very core of their being. There must be the "ear to hear"; in other words, the experience ofRomans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25as well as of Romans 3:1-31.

{*The Revisers place the phrase in the margin, but there is considerable evidence for its retention in the text.} In this chapter the phrase occurs again (Mark 4:23), but it comes with special emphasis at the close of the parable of the sower. And this force appears the more striking when we connect it with the Lord’s call for attention at the beginning of the parable. "Hearken," He said, and having portrayed Himself as the Sower, He added, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It was a summons to the individual to free himself from the heedless mass. And as the Lord addressed this appeal to His earthly people, so was His cry reiterated to each of the seven churches in Asia; "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Revelation 2:3). Amid general ecclesiastical declension, the Lord requires individual faithfulness in regarding His word and His warning. Who Hears? Who then were those who heard the Prophet of Jehovah? There need be no doubt regarding the correct answer to this question, since the Lord Himself gave it. Speaking to His disciples, He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see; and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:16). They were His followers, for they had heard Him. As the sheep of the "little flock" they had heard the voice of the good Shepherd (John 10:3; John 10:27). When He was instructing His disciples, He described them as those who heard. "I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Luke 6:27). Again, the Lord said, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21). These had hungered and thirsted after the word of righteousness and were blessed indeed, for by the Prophet’s ministry they were filled.

It is instructive to observe that the Lord Himself took the place of subjection. As the Servant of Jehovah He had the opened ear in both His ministry and His suffering, waiting for directions upon Him who sent Him. This spirit of subjection and obedience was according to prophecy: "The Lord

GOD hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair" (Isaiah 50:4-6, R.V.). His ear was open as the true Prophet to hear, and what He heard He communicated to men. Thus He said to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). The believing followers of Jesus, then, were those that "heard," and what they heard they declared, as the apostle John wrote (1 John 1:1). But the nation would not hear. It is true that Israel boasted in their great "Shema," wherein the prophet Moses recalled them to the privilege and responsibility of the revelations under the law (Deuteronomy 6:4;Mark 12:29). "Hear, O Israel," Moses exhorted, "the LORD our God is one LORD," following this call with a summary of the ten words. But Israel was the "deaf servant" of Jehovah; and now God had raised up another Prophet, of whom it was written, "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you" (Deuteronomy 18:15;Acts 3:22-23;Acts 7:37). And as Moses had solemnly adjured the people, "Hear, O Israel," so now One greater than Moses cried, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." What if they did not hear? For those who refused to hearken, that ancient prophecy contained a warning equally solemn. "It shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:19). The Prophet’s Privacy The Lord Jesus, amid His multitudinous and multifarious services for Jehovah in the midst of His chosen people, preserved to Himself seasons of retirement from, or cessation from, public activities, wherein there was opportunity either for personal private communion with His Father (Matthew 14:23;Mark 1:35;Luke 9:18;John 6:15), or for intercourse with His friends and followers. On the latter occasions there were peculiarly sweet and choice communications confided by the Heavenly Teacher to His own intimate circle, chosen by Himself "out of the world." After the execution of John the Baptist, and the return of the apostles from their mission journeys, Jesus said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in a boat to a desert place apart" (Mark 6:31-32;Matthew 14:13;Luke 9:10). So also when the Lord saw fit to grant unto the favoured trio a glimpse of His personal glory He led them up into the privacy of the mountain side. "Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart; and he was transfigured before them" (Matthew 17:1-2;Mark 9:2). The Lord had matters for the eyes and ears of His own which were not for the populace. This accords with what on one occasion He said to His disciples, "privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24). The apostles sometimes utilized moments of His privacy to lay before Him their difficulties. They came to Him "apart" to know why they were unable to cast the demon out of a young man (Matthew 17:19;Mark 9:28). And again, at the close of His ministry, when certain of them desired to know more concerning the destruction of the temple, and what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age, they came to Him privately with their questions as He sat on the mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3;Mark 13:3). These were not exceptional instances, for they had been accustomed to such private tuition, as we read, "without a parable spake he not unto them [the multitude]; but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things" (Mark 4:34).

Here we find the disciples under similar circumstances seeking instruction in the significance of the parable of the sower and others. "When he was alone* they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables." It is interesting to see that others besides the twelve apostles were desirous of being taught, and none of them were denied. And while this teaching may be regarded as exclusive, esoteric, and committed in this manner to these chosen witnesses in order that after the Lord's ascension it might be promulgated throughout the world, the general truth is important that the ways of God are made known in the hush of the sanctuary rather than in the noise of the camp. The impending destruction of the cities of the plain was imparted, not to Lot in the bustling streets of Sodom, but, to Abraham in the quiet of a torrid noontide at his own tent door. David in the wilderness with his sheep, not Eliab in the camp of Saul, learned the mind of God about Goliath. So it was that not to the surging crowds by the Galilaean lake, but to the disciples who came to Him as He was alone in the house, the Prophet of Jehovah revealed the truth concerning the peculiar character of the coming kingdom.

{*"Alone" in the sense of being "by Himself," as inLuke 9:18. Compare alsoMatthew 14:23;Mark 6:47;John 6:15, where Jesus was alone in prayer. In the latter part of this chapter (Mark 4:34) a different expression (kat' idian) is used, signifying "privately" as contrasted with publicly. The latter expression occurs also in most of the other references made above.} The Mystery of the Kingdom.

It was not altogether a new thing for divine predictions to be conveyed to men in a form which concealed its import from the many and revealed it to the few. In the Old Testament we read of dreams, of visions, and, though not as frequently, of parables wherein God spoke to man. But we can only refer now to one or two of such instances in which He revealed matters affecting the government of the world. Take, for example, the dreams of Pharaoh. He who gives fruitful seasons, and in His providence fills the hearts of men with food and gladness, foretold events which were of the utmost importance in the administration of the great empire of Egypt. That seven years of phenomenal fruitfulness were at hand, and further that these were to be succeeded by a like period of absolute barrenness, were facts of incalculable value to the statesmen of that land. God who knew and gave these things was pleased to communicate them beforehand to the responsible governing head of Egypt. But the prediction came to Pharaoh in dreams, the significance of which he could not unravel. The heathen monarch and the wisest men of the land were alike constrained to confess their impotence, and compelled to solicit the aid of Joseph, the pious servant of the most high God. He came forth from the dungeon and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams which to human wisdom were otherwise insoluble.

Again, when Israel was displaced and God had granted universal dominion to the Gentiles, we find Him communicating with Nebuchadnezzar, the first head, but in the form of a dream. This forgotten dream presented an outline-sketch of the four great world-kingdoms (Daniel 2:1-49), but, apart from Daniel the prophet, it was unintelligible to the mighty king. In the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's banqueting hall we have another instance of a cryptic message, needing special interpretation; while the visions subsequently received by Daniel himself required to be explained to the prophet by an angel from heaven.

These examples are sufficient to illustrate the nature of what is called in Scripture a "mystery." It may consist of a dream, a vision, a parable or a verbal prophecy, the essential feature being that the divine communication cannot be understood without a subsequent divine communication

which explains the first. And it will be found that the Greek word, mysterion, mystery, first occurs in the chapter of Daniel to which reference has been made (Daniel 2:1-49). In the Septuagint version the term is applied repeatedly to the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation. Daniel and his friends "sought mercies from the God of heaven concerning this mystery." "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night." Daniel said, "The mystery which the king asks the explanation of." "There is a God in heaven revealing mysteries." "He that reveals mysteries has made known to thee what must come to pass." Nebuchadnezzar said, "Of a truth your God is a God of gods, and Lord of kings, who reveals mysteries; for thou hast been able to reveal this mystery" (Daniel 2:18-19; Daniel 2:27-30; Daniel 2:47; Daniel 4:6).* It may be seen therefore that a mystery is a secret thing which would remain such apart from divine revelation a matter to the knowledge and understanding of which initiation is necessary.

{*The quotations are from Sir Charles Brenton’s Translation of the Septuagint, It is "secret" in the Authorized Version.}

Now, as there was the mystery concerning the Gentile monarchies, so, the Lord said, there was a mystery concerning that kingdom which, according to Daniel 2:44 the God of heaven would establish, never to be destroyed. This mystery He set out in His teaching by parables, thereby concealing from the multitude for the time being the meaning which He afterwards revealed to His apostles. For He said, "Unto you is given [to know] the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand." He thus added a solemn warning to the people. Upon the nation at large the sentence of judicial blindness would fall, as Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 6:9-10). For the Light of the world was among them, yet they refused to see light in His light; hence darkness would come among and upon them, and even as He was speaking, the truth as to God’s provision in view of their rebellion was veiled from their eyes in parables.

Just what was signified by the mystery of the kingdom will appear in the interpretation of the parables that the Lord Himself gave. The altered character of the kingdom consequent upon the rejection of the Anointed One and the absence of the King is delineated most fully and categorically in the series of parables recorded inMatthew 13:1-58. Here we only emphasize the essential element of mystery in the Scriptural sense, viz., not that which in itself is difficult of understanding, but rather that which in both its communication and its reception is dependent upon divine revelation, and, as must necessarily follow, that which is only made known to a selected few who are fitted to receive it. The New Testament, associated as it is with the advent both of the Son and the Spirit, contains the revelation of many mysteries. Many matters kept secret from the foundation of the world, many truths concealed in Old Testament prophecies are therein brought to light and made known. We read of the mystery of God, of Christ, of God’s will, of godliness, of faith, of the gospel, of iniquity, of the seven stars, of the scarlet woman, Babylon the Great. The secret rapture of the church is called a mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51), and so its union with Christ the Head (Ephesians 5:32). The setting aside of Israel and the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges in the gospel is a mystery (Romans 11:25). Eye had not seen, nor ear heard these things in the ancient oracles. They are now freely given us by God’s Spirit.

Those Without

Those not following Jesus are described as "them that are without," and no explanation of the parables is offered to them. The term* is one peculiar to Mark, not occurring in Matthew or Luke. It is used similarly, however, in the Epistles, where it refers to those outside the assembly of believers. Thus Paul writes, "What have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within, whereas them that are without God judgeth?" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). He exhorts the Colossian saints to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Colossians 4:5), and also the Thessalonians to "walk honestly toward them that are without" (1 Thessalonians 4:12). One instance of its adverbial use is so striking and solemn that it may be quoted here: "Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:14-15). This instance is one of its final and irrevocable sense, no passage being possible from one side of the fixed gulf to the other.

{*That is, with the article. The remark does not apply to its more general use without the article as an adverb or preposition.} The Judicial Blindness

Isaiah centuries before had prophesied of the obduracy of the nation and the spiritual darkness that should fall upon it as a people in consequence. The prophet recorded the words of Jehovah to him. He was commanded to "go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." Such was their condition — in the position, and having the privilege, of hearing and seeing, but utterly oblivious to heavenly sights and sounds. The message went on to warn of what would come upon the nation as a righteous retribution of this gross abuse of their privileges. "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10). In the Septuagint version of Isaiah, this insensate condition is declared to be the result of the people’s own neglect rather than of a divine infliction, as in the Hebrew text. The Greek version runs as follows: "Go, and say to this people, Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."* {*Sir Charles Brenton’s Translation of the LXX. (Isaiah 6:9-10).}

Now, in turning to Matthew’s Gospel it will be seen that the Lord, speaking of the complete fulfilment (anapleroo) of this prophecy, quoted from the Greek version and not from the Hebrew text (Matthew 13:13-15). The people had themselves closed their eyes. Mark and Luke (Luke 8:10) only record the reference to the former part of the prophecy which states the condition of Israel hearing and not understanding; while all three agree in showing that the Lord adopted the parabolic form of teaching in view of their insensate moral state.

John also quotes Isaiah’s prediction, but in a different connection. It is cited at a later stage in the history of Israel’s opposition to their Messiah. Though Jesus did so many signs before them yet they believed not. And since they would not believe, it came to pass that they could not believe. And the Evangelist brings forward the ancient oracle which warned of this blindness which came as a divine judgment upon the nation. "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said,

He hath blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:37-40). This quotation, it will be observed, is from the Hebrew text, and is introduced historically immediately before the final act of unbelief the crucifixion of Christ. The truth was there hidden from their eyes, even the eyes of the wise and prudent (Matthew 11:25; Luke 19:42).

Through sovereign grace the gospel was offered to the guilty people by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, as is recorded in the Acts. But there was no response from the nation. In the concluding chapter of this book we have the final appeal of Paul at Rome to the Jews as such; but they closed their eyes and ears to this call also. And the apostle applied to them the witness of the Holy Spirit in the same scripture from Isaiah, quoting as in Matthew the Septuagint version, and laying the responsibility upon their own shoulders (Acts 28:25-27). The nation was thereupon abandoned. So far as Holy Writ speaks, no further opportunities of repentance were offered them. And less than ten years later, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the Jews scattered over the face of the earth. By the testimony of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of God, Israel had been summoned to hear the message of God. They refused to hear, and the apostle told them in his final address what was the consequence: "Be it known, therefore, unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles; they will also hear" (Acts 28:28). It was sent to such as would hear.

Thus we see that the prophecy is quoted in the Synoptical Gospels and in the Acts to show that the blindness of Israel was due to their own wilful obstinacy, and in the Gospel of John to show that it was the result of the judgment of God. Both aspects are of course true and necessary to a complete presentation of the truth.

05.21. The First Parable Interpreted

21. — The First Parable Interpreted

"And he saith unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know*1 all the parables The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side,*2 where the word is sown; and when they have heard,*3 straightway*4 cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been*5 sown in them. And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard*3 the word, straightway*4 receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while*6 then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of*7 the word, straightway) they stumble.*8 And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard*9 the word, and the care of the world,*10 and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And those are they that were sown*11 upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept*12 it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold"*13 (Mark 4:13-20, R.V.).

{*1 "will ye be acquainted with," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 "beside the way," W.K.

*3 "hear," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "immediately," J.N.D.; WK.

*5 "was sown," W.K.

*6 "but are for a time," J.N.D.; "but are temporary," W.K.

*7 "on account of," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "are offended," J.N.D.; "are stumbled," W.K.

*9 "hear," W.K.

*10 "cares of life," J.N.D.; "of the age," W.K.

*11 "have been sown," J.N.D.

*12 "receive," J.N.D.; W.K., but itparadekomaihere, notlambanoas in verse 16.

*13 "one thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundred," J.N.D.; W.K.} The apostles came to the Lord to seek enlightenment with regard to the meaning of the parable of the sower. He told them that the mysteries of the kingdom, though concealed from the unbelieving mass, were committed to them. But it was one thing for them to have these mysteries in a parabolic form, and another thing to know the true inwardness of the parables. The ignorance of the disciples upon the latter head stood confessed in their inquiry concerning the parable of the sower. This parable was, in comparison with others, elementary in nature, and introductory in character. If they were unable to

comprehend the initial lesson regarding the hitherto unrevealed phases of the kingdom, how much less would they be able to understand further parables of a more advanced and more complex nature? The Lord said to them, "Know (oidate) ye not this parable? how then will ye be acquainted with (gnosesthe)* all the parables?"

{*"Have ye not an inward conscious knowledge of this parable? How then will ye acquire objectively, a knowledge of all the parables?" Compare the note on1 Corinthians 8:1in J. N. Darby's translation of the New Testament, 3rd Ed., 1884, where the distinction between the two Greek verbs is discussed.} This inability of even the apostles to understand the significance of the parables apart from the Lord's own exposition shows that they were not used as are figures of speech, in the ordinary acceptation of this term. They were not like similes or metaphors or allegories introduced in order to illuminate or embellish or simplify a discourse. The parables, on the contrary, however deeply they might he impressed upon the memory, presented the truth shrouded in a veil, which was impenetrable to the disciples and to the multitude alike. The Prophet lifted the veil for the instruction of His followers; as we read, "Without a parable spoke he not to them [the populace]; and in private he explained all things to his disciples" (Mark 4:34, New Trans.), so that when He said to them, Have ye understood all these things? they were able to reply, Yea, Lord (Matthew 13:51). What the disciples failed to retain of the parables and their interpretations unfolded to them during the term of their Master's ministry, the Holy Spirit (so the Lord promised), should bring to their remembrance after His descent at Pentecost (John 14:26).

It is remarkable that but few of the Lord's own interpretations of His parables are recorded in the Gospels. Those of the sower and of the wheat and tares are given (Matthew 13:18-23;Matthew 13:37-43), as well as that relating to the true nature of defilement (Matthew 15:10-20;Mark 7:14-23). It may also be said that we have the explanation of the parable of the drag-net (Matthew 13:47-50). With regard to the others, however, we are left to seek to understand their meaning in the light of the subsequent revelations of the Spirit, transmitted through the medium of the apostles in the Epistles. The Sower and the Seed

It has been suggested that "the parable of the sower" is not altogether a suitable title for the Lord's first parable, since there is no definite statement of the identity of the sower, while a lengthy explanation is given regarding the behaviour of the seed in the various soils; and that a preferable description would be the parable of the seed and the soils. This remark must have been made without adequate reference and reflection. For the former is precisely the designation bestowed upon it by the Lord Himself. According to Matthew He prefaced His interpretation by the words, "Hear ye the parable of the sower." And evidently the parable is so described by the Lord to indicate that it unfolded the relationship He Himself was assuming towards the kingdom of God in its altered character. He, so to speak, laid aside the sword of the King and Judge and took up the word of the Prophet and Teacher. This new function, as about to be exercised, possessed also a special feature which the parable made clear. This feature was that the work of the Sower would, to outward seeming, be a partial failure. When Messiah reigns in power His rule will be successful, without exception, in subduing all things to Himself. When the Sower sowed the word, three-fourths would be absolute failure, and the remainder fruitful only in varying degrees. The Sower therefore is the subject of this parable, and, in agreement with the second parable, it may be understood that "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" (Matthew 13:37). Subsequently the apostles, in their ministry of the truth, became sowers themselves in a

secondary sense. For example, Paul used this figure when writing to the Corinthians "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Corinthians 9:11; cp. also1 Corinthians 3:6). The Lord's declaration that He was among them as the Sower implied that His errand of seeking fruit in Jehovah's vineyard was futile, as it was definitely expressed in another of His parables (Luke 13:6-9). It was not yet the glorious year of jubilee to which the ancient type pointed when there should be no need of sowing (Leviticus 25:11); nor was it that millennial day of extreme fruitfulness when, according to the prophecy, "the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed (Amos 9:13). But it was a day to "sow beside all waters" — a day when the Great Husbandman must, in fulfilment of the purposes of God, wait patiently for the precious fruit of the earth. It was, moreover, a day of shame and suffering for the Servant of Jehovah, when the Sower must sow in tears; yet, in the words of the Psalmist, "though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6, R.V.).* For if He was the patient Sower, He was also the Lord of the harvest.

{*This beautiful stanza is variously translated: "Surely (going) he goeth and weepeth, bearing a load of the seed; surely (coming) he shall come with joyful song, bearing his sheaves" (W. Kelly). "Il va en pleurant, portant la semence qu'il répand; it revient avec chant de joie, portant ses gerbes" (J. N. Darby's French version). The latter is rendered in English thus: "He goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for scattering; he cometh again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves."}

Israel then, having been found barren and unfruitful, the Lord came bringing that which would produce fruit, and this good seed He scattered broadcast, upon good and had soils alike. He had come to serve, and, as the Perfect Servant, He left the results of His work with Him who sent Him, according to the promise of Jehovah concerning His word of grace, "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11). In the strength of this assurance the Prophet of God sowed in the morn His seed, and in the evening withheld not His hand. In Mark the seed is called the word simply, without any qualification; but in Luke we read more definitely, "The seed is the word of God." This phrase predicates the divine origin of the word. It is of God. "I have given unto them thy word," the Son said to the Father. The word of God has the germ of life within itself. It is living and operative. It is incorruptible and eternal. It possesses life, and it bestows life. In the Gospel by Luke where the kingdom of God is treated in its world-wide aspect, this designation is on this account the most appropriate. But in Matthew we have not the generic but the specific term. The seed is there described as the "word of the kingdom." This phrase covered thesubjectof the word, while that of Luke looked to its Author. Christ's word had special and particular reference to the kingdom. We learn therefore from the First Gospel that in the parable of the sower the Lord made direct allusion to His own teaching on the topic of the kingdom. And it is well to remember that while the instruction in regard of the hindrances to the germination and fruitfulness of the seed is of general application to spiritual matters at all periods, primarily it referred to the gospel of the kingdom, preached by the Lord and His apostles. On comparing the accounts in Matthew and in Luke, it will be further noted that the former emphasizes the necessity for understanding the word, and the latter the necessity of

believing it. The following extract refers to these differences in mode of expression between the two Evangelists.

"There is, of course, a great deal in common between the two; but the Spirit had a wise reason for using the different expressions. It would have been rather giving an opportunity to an enemy, unless there had been some good grounds for it. I repeat that it is 'the word of the 'kingdom' in Matthew, and of 'God' in Luke. In the latter we have 'lest they should believe,' and in the former 'lest they should understand.'

"What is taught by the difference? It is manifest that, in Matthew, the Holy Ghost has the Jewish people particularly in His mind, although the word is going out to the Gentiles in due time; whereas, in Luke, the Lord had particularly the Gentiles before Him. They understood that there was a great kingdom, which God was about to establish, destined to swallow up all their kingdoms. The Jews being already familiar with the word of God, their great point was understanding what God taught. They had His word already, though superstition and self-righteousness never understood it (you might have been controverted had you said to a Jew, You do not believe what Isaiah says); and a serious question came, Do you understand it? But if you looked at the Gentiles they had not the lively oracles, so that among them the question was believing what God said; and this is what we have in Luke. The point for a Gentile was that, instead of setting up his own wisdom, he should bow to what God said.

"Hence you will observe that, looking at people who had not the word of God, and who were to be tested by the gospel going out to them in due time, the question was believing something that had not been brought out to them before. In Matthew, speaking to a people who had the word already, the great thing was to understand it. This they did not. The Lord intimates that, if they heard with their ears, they did not understand with their hearts. So that this difference, when connected with the different ideas and objects of the two Gospels is manifest, interesting, and instructive.

"'When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.' Another solemn truth we learn from this — the great thing that hinders spiritual understanding is religious prejudice. The Jews were charged with not understanding. They were not idolaters, or open infidels, but had a system of religion in their minds in which they had been trained from infancy, and which darkened their intelligence of what the Lord was bringing out. So it is now. Among the heathen, though you would find an evil state morally, yet at least there would be that kind of barren waste where the word of God might be freely sown, and by grace, be believed. That is not the case where people have been nurtured in ordinances and superstition: there the difficulty is to understand the word."* {*"Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew," by W. Kelly, London, 1896, pp. 285-7.}

Wayside Hearers

Both Mark and Luke refer to the various classes of hearers in the plural, but Matthew specifies the individual, "This is he which received seed by the wayside." The former lay down what is true generally, while the latter applies the truth particularly and personally to those who heard the word. In this case the result of the sowing is purely negative. The seed falls upon a hard and unreceptive heart: it does not even germinate, but is removed immediately by the spiritual enemy of man. The cause of the failure is not in any degree ascribed to the Sower or to the seed. These, on the contrary, are perfect, without defect of any kind. But the ground was hard and beaten unploughed,

while the birds of the air were alert to steal the good seed. The trodden pathway across the Galilean hillside is an apt simile of multitudes of mankind, then and now. Out of the heart of man are "the issues of life." It is the avenue of his being. Duty and enterprise as well as pleasure and pain, all throng daily in ceaseless procession along the highway of the heart. The continual succession of these earthly objects, each claiming concern, if not concentration of mind, wears down the heart into the ruts of a dull routine. When truth from above falls in such a street, it lies unheeded, and is "trodden under foot," as Luke says in the parable.

Under these circumstances, the word being sown in a heart irresponsive to its claim, and oblivious of its value, a personal and active foe of the truth appears and snatches it away. This foe is named Satan in Mark; the devil diabolos) in Luke; and the evil or wicked one in Matthew. And it is noticeable that in the threefold power which hinders the growth and fructification of the seed Satan is placed first. The Lord shows by the three classes that

1. the power of the devil removes the seed (the birds)

2. the power of the flesh prevents the seed rooting (the rocks)

3. the power of the world prevents the seed fruiting (the thorns) The Pharisees had blasphemously charged the Lord with being in alliance with Satan (Mark 3:22-30); the Lord here declared Satan to be the foremost enemy of the word of the kingdom, who "immediately," so energetic in his opposition is he, catches away the word. In Luke, where he is represented as the devil, the adversary of man, in contrast with the Saviour of men, his object in stealing the word is given — "lest they should believe and be saved." In Matthew it is as thewickedone that he snatches away thegoodseed. This expression seems to emphasise the moral contrast between the kingdoms of light, and of darkness, and their respective heads.*

{*In the only two parables interpreted, this and that of the tares, the Sower and Satan are placed in strong antithesis, thus forming an indirect but crushing reply to the accusation of the Pharisees.} The wayside hearers then are the careless and indifferent persons, too absorbed in other things to receive the truth in the love of it. The Athenians seem to have been, among others, an example of this class (Acts 17:15-32). They had habituated themselves ever to be telling or hearing some new thing. The novelty of the gospel, therefore, awakened a passing superficial interest in the preaching of Paul, but no more. Heathen philosophy, like formal Judaism, was unreceptive of the gospel of Jesus.

Stony Ground Hearers The main difference between this class of hearers and the preceding, with which it is coupled by the adverbial phrase, "in like manner," is that in the former instance the hardness and impenetrability were found on the surface, but in this case the density occurred at a little distance beneath. In outward appearance the exterior of the soil was actually more promising, but the resistance by the rocky subsoil to the growth of the seed was none the less effectual. Under normal conditions the sun’s rays should have caused the seed to root more firmly and deeply as it struck downwards in search of moisture. But under these circumstances the heat exercised a withering influence, hastening the total destruction of the growth.

These persons are characterized by superficiality. When they hear the word, immediately (Matt., Mark) they receive it with joy (Matt., Mark, Luke). The conscience, that fierce self-accuser within the heart, is clearly not awakened. Repentance does not rejoice, as these are said to do, but sits in

sackcloth and ashes. Confession of sins is made in tears, not with joy. Peter’s audience, when they heard the word on the day of Pentecost, were "sawn asunder" in their hearts.* These in the parable, however, receive the word because of the pleasure it affords by its novelty, or its beauty, or the like. The result is a rapid growth which by its fair promise may deceive some, but such profession, as soon as tribulation or persecution on account of the word arises, quickly withers away.**

{*The word "gladly" (Acts 2:41) is an acknowledged interpolation. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, but not prior to repentance (Galatians 5:22); for examples of rejoicing following faith, see Acts 8:8; Acts 16:34.

**In Matthew and Mark they are said to be stumbled (skandalizo) by affliction and persecution; while Luke, giving the side of individual responsibility, says they fall away or depart (aphistemi). It may he noted that this is an early intimation by the Lord of the persecution for the word’s sake which would be the lot of His disciples.}

There were many such shallow fickle hearers in our Lord’s days; there have been many such since. It is written that the common people heard Him gladly, but the priests soon persuaded them to ask Pilate to spare Barabbas and to crucify Jesus. A sign in Jerusalem, and many crowded to follow Him! A "hard saying," and many turned back to walk no more with Him (John 2:23; John 6:60-61)! They "endured for a while," but it is a little while only, even as they rejoiced in the testimony of John the Baptist "for a season" (John 5:35). Many put their hands to the plough, but quickly looked back, proving their unfitness to produce fruit. And the Lord, in the interpretation of this parable, unveiled the cause of this failure. The hindrance was within — the unbroken spirit, the adamantine heart. "To this man will I look," saith Jehovah, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Thorny Ground Hearers This would appear to be a more promising class than either of the former. The seed germinates, and grows and develops to a certain degree. But it is nevertheless unfruitful, on account of a powerful external influence. The thorns grow more vigorously than the good seed, and eventually suffocate it.*

{*"In this case "have heard" (aorist) is used (Mark 4:18), instead of "hear," as the baneful effect of the thorns does not immediately follow the sowing, as in the former instance.} The Lord explained what the thorns signify. They set forth the adverse influence which present things may exercise upon eternal things — a possible influence so great as to extinguish and exclude the latter entirely from the human heart. This influence is not manifestly hostile like that of affliction and persecution in the previous class; but it is none the less deadly, and much more dangerous because of its insidious nature. The thorns were growingtoo nearthe seed; a mile away it would not have mattered; and consequently they were able secretly, but effectually, to rob the good seed of its necessary light, air, moisture, and nutrition from the soil. Similarly, the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, if allowed the supremacy in the heart, choke the good seed, and unfruitfulness is the dire result.

Thorns are emblematical of the world outside of Eden. The thorns introduced through the fall of the first Adam formed the insignia awarded by his children to the last Adam. The kingdoms of man and of God are in a state of irreconcileable enmity. And here the Lord shows that the employments, the

successes, and the enjoyments of this present age may have a blighting and destructive effect upon the work of the word of God within a man.

Mark records the fullest description of these worldly forces. Luke summarizes them as the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." Matthew mentions only two of these three, which, however, he amplifies — "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." The second Evangelist has a yet ampler category, adding, moreover, that the mischief is wrought through their entering into the heart, where the word of God should be hidden (Psalms 119:11) — "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word."

These hearers lack singleness of eye and heart. The attention becomes absorbed by the incessant occupations of a busy world, by the distracting anxieties of everyday life and by the excitements of a restless and reckless age. Such divided efforts to serve God and mammon invariably result in luxuriant thorns and withered wheat. The "cares" have a particular reference to the "poor man’s toil how to live at all, to keep the wolf from the door," the struggle for a daily subsistence, the cares of this life, which, if not met in faith, hinders the thriving of the spiritual word in the heart." The affluent are specially susceptible to the "deceitfulness of riches," particularly when the love of money accompanies its possession (1 Timothy 6:9-10). The "lusts of other things "cover all the ambitious strivings after temporal objects, however innocent the objects may be in themselves, to which all conditions of men are liable, and which may fill the heart to the consequent exclusion of what is divine.

Fruitful Hearers The main object of sowing is the subsequent reaping. And fruitfulness is the indisputable evidence of effective growth. The Lord was preeminently the Sower, and, as He said, others reaped (John 4:34-38). Pentecost and onwards, were reaping times, as also, in a fuller measure, the coming day of glory will be. And in all cases the divine Husbandman alone is a competent judge of the quality and quantity of the fruit (John 15:1; John 15:5; John 15:8), though, in a general way, we may be able to recognize the fruitful effects of the word (Colossians 1:6;Php 4:17). In this instance the word is heard in a prepared heart — in an "honest and good heart," as the Lord said (Luke). And in examining the three Gospels it will be observed that three inward actions are stated to precede the fruit-bearing.

1 The word is understood (Matt.).

2 The word is received (Mark).

3 The word is held fast (Luke).

1. It has already been pointed out that lack of understanding was specially attributed to the nation of Israel, who had Moses and the prophets before the coming of the Lord. And it is from the First Gospel therefore that we learn that in order to bear fruit it was necessary to understand (suniemi).This was so in the case of the apostles themselves. After His resurrection the Lord opened their minds that they might understand the scriptures, particularly in that case, those relating to His death and resurrection (Luke 24:45). Those disciples who understand what the will of the Lord is are those who know what things are pleasing in His sight, and by doing such yield fruit to His praise.

2. In Mark, the word is received into the heart, that is, it is taken to oneself, welcomed and cherished. The truth is received not in a formal sense as in verse 16, where a different Greek word is used, but in the love of it. The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word of the gospel in all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so; "therefore "we are told, "many of them believed" (Acts 17:12-13).

3. Further, it is necessary to keep, or to hold fast, the word. This expression implies the energy of active resistance against all opposing influences. Spiritual fruit-bearing has its particular enemies. In view of these, therefore, there is an individual responsibility to use a special endeavour to preserve a sense of joy in the word and a love for it in the heart. To do so demands spiritual energy. But there are degrees of fruitfulness in the good ground. All do not bear fruit in equal profusion. The power of Satan, and the seductions of the world, which altogether extinguish the growth in other cases, are here shown to have the effect of reducing the amount of fruit borne. Some, the Lord said, bring forth fruit thirty-fold, and some sixty-fold, while others, like the seed Isaac sowed (Genesis 26:12), yield a hundred-fold.

Luke only mentions the full degree of fruition, and it is there explained that seed on good ground brings forth fruit "with patience" (Mark 8:15). A hundred-fold is the "perfect work" of patience or endurance (James 1:3-4). There must be not only well-doing, but patient continuance in it* (Romans 2:7). The faithful disciple is called to endure a "great fight of afflictions," for tribulation and patience are inseparable adjuncts to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the exiled apostle in Patmos testified (Revelation 1:9). Those in Philadelphia whom the Lord commended because they had "kept the word of his patience" (Revelation 3:10), are surely such fruitful ones as He contemplated in His parable of the Sower (Luke 8:15).

05.22. Shining in Public: Growing in Secret

22. — Shining in Public: Growing in Secret

"And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to*1 be put under the bushel, or under the bed,*2 and not to be put on the stand?*3 For there is nothing hid, save that it should*4 be manifested; neither was anything made secret,*5 but that it should come to light. If any man hath*6 ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you: and more shall be given unto you.*7 For he that hath,*8 to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

"And he said, So*9 is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed*10 upon the earth; and should sleep and rise*11 night and day, and the seed should spring up*12 and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth*13 fruit of herself*14 first the blade, then the*15 ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe,*16 straightway he putteth forth*17 the sickle, because*18 the harvest is come" (Mark 4:21-29, R.V.).

*1 "Does the lamp come that it should," J.N.D.

*2 "couch," J.N.D. In W.K.'s "Exposition of the Gospel of Mark," 1907, there is a strange misprint — "under the candle," p. 68, line 2. It is correct in the original "Remarks,"Bible Treasury,Vol. 5 (1864), p. 116.

*3 "Set up on the lamp stand," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "which shall not be," J.N.D., W.K.

*5 "nor does any secret thing take place," J.N.D., W.K.

*6 "one have," J.N.D.; "man have," W.K.

*7 "and there shall be [more] added to you," J.N.D.; "and unto you [that hear] shall more be added," W.K.

*8 "whosoever has," J.N.D.

*9 "Thus," J.N.D., W.K.

*10 "the seed," J.N.D., W.K.

*11 "Rise up," J.N.D., W.K.

*12 "sprout," J.N.D., W.K.

*13 "bringeth forth," W.K.

*14 "of itself," J.N.D., W.K.; ("of its own accord," McClellan).

*15 "an," J.N.D., W.K.

*16 "produced," J.N.D., W.K.; ("alloweth," McClellan).

*17 "sends," J.N.D.; "putteth in," W.K.; ("sendeth," McClellan).

*18 "for," J.N.D., W.K.} This section is one which, upon consideration and comparison, will be found to afford, like many other passages throughout the historical narratives, a striking illustration of the varying purpose of the several Gospels. With the object of gathering what instruction we may on this particular point it is proposed to make a brief reference to the context of the parable of the Sower, comparing the records in Matthew and Mark as to their designs. In the First Gospel (Matthew 13:1-58) the parable of the Sower is followed by six others, each of which is specifically stated to be a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. The obvious fact that this group of parables numbers seven, a numeral which in scriptural usage signifies completeness and adequacy of representation, coupled with the further fact, easily ascertained by inspection, that the period covered by the series of parables extends from its beginning to the close, that is to say, from the sowing of the seed to the harvest at the end of the world [age] (Matthew 13:39; Matthew 13:49), points unmistakably to the conclusion that the selection and arrangement of these parables was made with the definite object of presenting a synopsis of the various phases which the kingdom of the heavens would assume in consequence of the rejection of the King.

Now, in Mark’s narrative, we have, in connection with the parable of the Sower, what is altogether different, and, as we shall see, distinctive. Here it is followed by, not six, but two parables only, the first of which is found nowhere else in the Gospels, while the second (that of the mustard seed) is one of the six following this parable in Matthew. Moreover, these two parables are separated from that of the Sower by two sayings of the Lord which in the First Gospel are recorded in entirely different associations.*

{*In Luke the parable of the mustard seed is much more widely separated from that of the Sower (cf. Luke 8:4-15; Luke 13:18-19), its exceptional position being there assigned to it for topical reasons specially referable to that Gospel.}

Having noted these important differences, let us now proceed to inquire what their significance may be. And in the first place it will be evident that the meaning of the variations in the records must, in each case, lie in close relation to the main purpose of the inspired Evangelist. For, be it observed, the "harmony" of the Gospels is not to be sought, as is frequently done, by the construction of a single continuous narrative, composed by combining the accounts of the four writers to the utter destruction of the individuality of each of them. On the contrary, the true "harmony," using the word now in the sense of the consistency of the Gospel with itself, will be discerned by the discovery of the manner in which the various historical episodes are disposed by each of the four biographers in order to set forth his special design. Hence it is that in this particular inquiry the differences in the several narratives are of greater importance than the resemblances. These differences then are the subject of our present study.

It will be admitted that the object of Mark was to compose a biography of the Lord Jesus in His character as the Anointed Servant and Prophet of Jehovah. And we may therefore expect to find that, in order to display Him in this aspect, the nature and characteristics of His service and ministry will be more prominently and fully expressed than in the other Gospels, and that this will be more especially the case with regard to that modified form of teaching as to the kingdom which

He adopted because the nation had, in effect, refused Him as the Messiah. The Lord's Ministry and its Effect

Now, it will at once be observed that in this fourth chapter all the parables relate to the Lord's ministry and its effects. In each of the three parables the seed is the central object of the picture. In the first the diverse results of sowing the seed are shown; in the second the seed grows spontaneously; and in the third the seed develops from a state of outward insignificance to one of prominence. These parables, then, are correlated delineations of that ministry of the good news of the kingdom of God which was begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was continued by the apostles and their successors; and on this account these parables, as they are here arranged, could appear in no other Gospel with the same propriety as in that which sets forth Jesus as Jehovah's Servant. In the series ofMatthew 13:1-58we have the new earthly system which was about to arise presented variously,e.g.,by the field, the measures of meal, the great tree, the hidden treasure, the costly pearl, and such figures; but in Mark we have brought forward the power which accomplishes the outward effects rather than the thing itself which is produced. The third parable of the Second Gospel is only an apparent exception to this generalisation, the spreading tree being introduced to show the magnitude of the visible results of the presence and operation of the word of God in the world in contrast with its appearance at the beginning. In brief, the main theme ofMatthew 13:1-58. is the kingdom itself, and that ofMark 4. the gospel or word of the kingdom.

Bearing in mind, then, that this section of Mark is designed to teach what is the nature of the ministry of the new covenant by Jehovah's Servant (in general terms, of course, not in detail as in the Sermon on the Mount), we proceed to inquire concerning the meaning of the two sayings of the Lord which are interpolated between the first and second parables. And it will be seen that they have a direct bearing upon the truth brought out in the immediately preceding verses. In these we have that part of the Lord's ministry which was couched in a parabolic form. And this mode of discourse was employed, as we learn from the Lord Himself, in order that the mystery of the kingdom might be hidden from the unbelieving nation at large, although it was revealed by special interpretation to the disciples (Mark 4:10-13; Mark 4:34). Now the sayings which follow guard against a misconception which this form of teaching might cause in the minds of the apostles. They were not to assume that, because the Master had begun to speak publicly in parables, these wonderful communications of the Great Prophet would always be enveloped in obscurity. If there was darkness abroad as to divine knowledge, the darkness was not in or from the Sower, but in the people themselves. He was the true Light, come into the world to lighten every man. Is it not the function of light to shine abroad in radiant testimony — whether this light exists absolutely in the Prophet, as it did, or in the apostles, the sons of light, as deriving it from Him? So that the veiling of the truth in parables by the Lord was but a temporary measure.

These sayings of Jesus therefore are not introduced immediately after the parable of the Sower at haphazard; on the contrary, they have a direct relation to the main theme of the chapter. They assign a responsibility to the hearers of the word to communicate to others what they themselves receive. The truth must not be covered from view. Though the character of the coming kingdom was concealed from those whose will was opposed to its reception in the heart, the ultimate object of the Lord's ministry was that the gospel might be spread abroad, not hidden under a bushel or a bed. The light was to be placed on a lampstand. And in proportion to the zeal of His servants in

imparting the truth to others, further revelations would be made to them. The Lamp and the Stand, the Bushel and the Couch The Lord, in this saying here recorded, made reference to the common objects of a Galilean household to impress upon His disciples their responsibility with regard to what they heard. A lamp was among the essential furniture of the poorest home, and where means forbade the possession of more than one there the necessity was the most apparent that for its greatest usefulness it should be set upon a stand and not be obscured beneath a couch or extinguished under a bushel measure. Let the lamp be placed upon its appropriate stand,* and it would shed its light upon all in the house (Matthew 5:15), as well as upon all who might enter (Luke 8:16).

{*The light was to shine from the lampstand. In Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22 the seven churches are set forth by the figure of the seven golden lampstands. Ephesus hid its light and is warned that the stand will he removed unless it repents (Revelation 2:5).}

Here then we find the Lord preparing His followers for the missionary work to which He had called them, and to which He would soon send them forth, first to the cities of Israel and then to the ends of the earth (Mark 6:7-13). Light was given them that it might shine to others. John the Baptist, the forerunner, was a burning and shining lamp (John 5:35); now the testimony of the kingdom was transferred to the apostles. They were His witnesses, and what He told them in the darkness they were to preach in the light, and what they heard in the ear they must proclaim upon the housetops (Matthew 10:27). The essence of Christ’s gospel was its publicity, and also, as was subsequently developed, its universality. Its ultimate scope was to all men and not to a few only. And the Lord declared, referring generally to divine communications, that nothing was concealed except to be manifested eventually, and everything made secret for a time and for a purpose would assuredly be brought to light in due course. The dimness of the typical shadows would disappear in the light emanating from the perfect Priest and Sacrifice. That which was dark and involved in the predictions of the Old Testament would be fully elucidated by application and fulfilment in the New. The Lord Himself was not a lamp, but the LIGHT, shining in a darkness which was not dispelled but was deepened thereby (John 1:5). But to those who would receive it He had come to reveal the unknown. In His teaching was fulfilled the double prophecy of the Psalmist: "I wilt open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world" (Psalms 78:2;Matthew 13:35). And the apostles, in their turn, did not obscure or conceal the light of testimony, but by the Spirit preached God’s wisdom and taught the heavenly calling of the church previously hidden from all ages and generations (Colossians 1:26;Ephesians 3:9). Paul, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God, addressing the Ephesian elders, reminded them that in his ministry he had kept back nothing that was profitable, and that he had not shrunk from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20; Acts 20:27). This saying of the Lord therefore has reference, not to the eventual discovery of secret sins, but to the character of the period begun by His own ministry, which was an epoch of disclosure and promulgation of divine truth previously concealed. The Prophet of Jehovah was bringing out of His treasure-house "things new and old," and in view of the consequent importance of such an occasion He reiterated His word of warning, first addressed to the multitude at large, now spoken to the disciples: "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear."* In the first case there was the general responsibility applying to all Israel to hear their Messiah for their individual enlightenment, but in the second case there is the further responsibility of those who have heard in the former sense to hear in such a manner as to be able

to communicate faithfully and fully to others what they heard. This agrees with the final message to the church and the individual in the Apocalypse, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come" (Revelation 22:17).

{*The careful student of Scripture will not fail to observe that in the Gospels the verb "to hear" in the original is in the present tense, implying the habit of hearing, "let him have the habit of hearing"; but in Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22 the aorist tense is used throughout, implying a "single, transient act." There the call is "to hear "the particular address of the Lord to the several assemblies.}

What is the special significance of the reference to the bed and the bushel? If the bed may be considered to point to self-ease and self-indulgence, the bushel, or corn-measure, may indicate those domestic and other duties, legitimate in themselves, but which, equally with selfishness, may seriously interfere with an effective testimony. But, whatever may be the exact meaning, it is certain that both duty and recreation are liable, apart from necessary precautions, to obscure or even to extinguish the witness of discipleship. And by such a lapse from faithfulness, the truth, divinely revealed for diffusion throughout the world, is virtually placed again in a place of concealment. In another context the Lord specifically warned against such secretion of the light, "No man when he hath lighted a lamp putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but upon the stand, that they which enter in may see the light" (Luke 11:33). In contrast with others mentioned in a subsequent parable, the "wicked and slothful servant" having received the talent went away and hid his lord’s money to his own reprobation.

Heedfulness in Hearing

Another saying immediately follows that relating to the lamp, and this is introduced by the phrase of frequent recurrence in this section, "And he said unto them."* For the disciples it was pre-eminently the day for them to sit at the Master’s feet "to hear." Moreover, in their hearing they were to beware of the leavening "influence of the teaching of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matthew 16:12). They were not to be carried about by every wind of human opinion as to who He, the Son of man, was. "Take heed," said He, "what ye hear," supplementing this warning as to the matterof their hearing, by another as to the manner of it: "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke 8:18).

{*It is interesting to note the marked repetition in this chapter of the words "And he said." They occur no less than ten times (Mark 4:2, Mark 4:9, Mark 4:11, Mark 4:13, Mark 4:21, Mark 4:24, Mark 4:26, Mark 4:30, Mark 4:35, Mark 4:40), the last two however being not, like the rest, introductory to a paragraph, but in the course of the narrative.} The Lord next applied the principle of divine righteousness to their future ministry of what they heard. God would not be unrighteous to forget their work and love and service in this respect (Hebrews 6:10). In proportion to their zeal and energy in transmitting what they received to others, they should receive still further communications of truth. Let them therefore use the corn-measure not to cover up the lamp, but in useful service to others. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you, and more shall be given unto you." According to the ancient proverb, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:24-25). In the terms recorded by the Evangelists, grace was giving a revised version of the "lex talionis."The Lord was not saying to them, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth," but laying upon them a newer and nobler

injunction, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they* give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

{*It is not "men" here, as in the A.V., but the expression is impersonal, "they shall give," not defining the rewarders. Compare "they shall receive" (Luke 16:9).}

Those to whom "more is given "are those whohear,as it is expressed in the A.V. This "hearing" implies a reception of the new teaching in the truest and deepest sense of the word, receiving the testimony as of God (John 3:34;1 Thessalonians 2:13). Such persons are the good-ground and fruit-bearing hearers. These enter into possession of the word. They make it their own by faith. Theyhaveit. And the Lord added, "He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Was not this so with the wayside hearer? The good seed was immediately snatched away, since it lay upon the surface. In a formal sense this class of hearer had the word; in a vital sense he had it not. The infallible evidence of vitality is fruit-bearing, and we are taught in this section that "ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) is one of the forms of spiritual fruition. The word enters the heart of the disciple by the ear (Romans 10:17), and is transmitted from thence to the eyes of others by the lamp of testimony for Christ, shining out, as this does, in every good work and word (2 Thessalonians 2:17). The Spontaneity of the Seed’s Growth

Another saying of the Lord is next introduced in the Gospel, and this is of the nature of a parable. And, as has been previously stated, it is noteworthy that this parable is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture. Dealing, as it does, with the inherent vitality of the word of God, its beautiful appropriateness in this section is not difficult to observe when it is remembered that the general subject of this chapter is the ministry of the kingdom.

Such a view, however, is not always held or sought. "What follows [the parable in question] has the special interest of being the only parable peculiar to St. Mark, one therefore which had escaped the manifest eagerness of St. Matthew and St. Luke to gather up all they could find of this form of our Lord’s teaching." This remark, taken from a popular commentary, illustrates the disparaging manner in which the professed friends of the Gospels are apt to speak of them. It is assumed in this comment that the Evangelists compiled their histories after the manner of a schoolboy essay, without any purpose or special design, eager only to record every item they could collect or remember, stringing their paragraphs together with an utter disregard of chronological order. According to this degrading theory we are asked to believe that of Matthew’s seven parables (Matthew 13:1-58) Mark was ignorant of five, though he knew one which had escaped both Matthew and Luke; and that the latter (Luke) was only acquainted with three out of seven, one of which he inserted in one connection and two in another (Luke 8:1-56, Luke 13:1-35). In opposition to this unworthy hypothesis, which regards each of the Gospels as imperfect and fragmentary, we believe that the Spirit of God superintended both the inclusion and the exclusion of the facts of the Sacred Biography, and also the arrangement of the narrative, so that the particular design of each of the Gospels is secured. We believe, in short, that the writers were inspired of God (2 Peter 1:21), and also their writings (2 Timothy 3:16).

Returning from this digression, let us briefly recapitulate the main features observed in our examination of this chapter. We saw, first, the varied and but partially successful results of sowing

the word of the kingdom portrayed in the parable of the Sower, the meaning of which the Lord communicated in private to His disciples. This is followed by some of the sayings of the Lord to His followers, assigning to them in metaphorical language the responsibility of duly and diligently publishing abroad for the benefit of all what they had learned in secret. Now, further instruction upon the same theme is added in the form of a parable to show the apostles that the propagation of the gospel depended not so much upon the skill and efficiency of the labourers who do no more than cast the seed upon the ground, as upon the self-contained vitality of the seed itself, it being the word of God. This parable, like the earlier one of the Sower, is founded upon the phenomenon of growth in the vegetable kingdom, the main features in this case being that during the period between the sowing and the reaping manual labour is excluded so far as the parable is concerned. It is thus with the kingdom of God, the Lord said. A man scatters seed upon the land. He then pursues his other occupations, waking and sleeping, night and day; but apart from any intervention on his part, and without his possessing any real knowledge of the mysterious processes which were active within the seed, it sprouts and germinates and develops. Automatically the fruit is produced; first the blade appears, then the ear, and finally the fully ripened corn. Thereupon the time of harvest having come, the husbandman resumes work, using now the sickle to gather the grain. This pastoral picture presents an analogy of the kingdom of God, especially in the form in which it was introduced by the Servant of Jehovah in view of His rejection. The millennial kingdom of the future will be founded upon the righteous judgments of the King; but the present moral kingdom is founded upon the teaching of the Lord the Prophet. And the great lesson taught here is that the word of the Lord carries with itself a power to effect the divine purpose altogether apart from external agencies. The seed is shown to have its foes in the thievish birds, the torrid sun, the luxuriant thorns; while the light of the lamp may be dimmed or destroyed by the bushel or the bed. But the Lord assured the hearts of His followers that, in spite of the activity of its enemies and the feebleness of its friends the word of the kingdom will inevitably make progress and prevail. So it came about, as we read, that in the days of the apostles "the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). And so Paul wrote to the Colossians of "the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:5-6, R.V.). The Seed left to Grow

Thus while the duty of the servants of Christ was to let the truth shine in their actions, and to measure it out generously in their words, they were without power to produce any living result from their work. Let Paul plant and Apollos water, the increase is of God alone (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The spirit and the life are in His word. It is the word itself, not the ministry of it, that works within those that believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). This was a comforting assurance for the timorous disciples, seeing that everything in connection with their Messiah was going contrary to their expectations. They herein learned that the word of the Master would ultimately succeed, and however unpromising the day of sowing might seem, the day of harvest would follow at its appointed time. Such a truth as is conveyed in this parable would, on the one hand, encourage them to trust in God to work out His plans by the invisible and invariable agencies of His word and Spirit, and, on the other hand, condemn any feelings of vanity and self-satisfaction, as though the preachers of the gospel by their own power or godliness caused its spread among men.

It has been a matter of debate among students of the Scriptures whether the "man" in this parable was intended to represent the Lord Himself or His servants. Those who contend for the latter view point out that it cannot be imagined of the Lord that "He knoweth not how" the seed grows, nor that He leaves it to take care of itself. On the other hand, others urge that it could not be predicated of the servants of Christ that they will put in the sickle and reap the corn in the day of harvest.*

{*These paradoxes are evidence that the parables of our Lord are not in all cases designed to form, in their subordinate details at any rate, complete illustrations of the divine truth. And indeed this, in the nature of things, could not be, any more than a type could perfectlyrepresent the Antitype. If, however, we see the main principle of the parables the apparent contradictions will disappear. It is thus also with some of our Lord's proverbial sayings. For instance, we are told that our almsgiving should be in secret and unseen of men (Matthew 6:1-4), but, in seeming opposition to this we are also told to let our light so shine that men may see our good works (Matthew 5:16). If in these two cases we look for the underlying principles the two exhortations are seen to be in perfect accord. So, on the one hand, it is"as if"the Husbandman has left the seed to grow as it may; on the other hand, we know that when the apostles went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord was working with them, confirming the word by the signs that followed (Mark 16:20).} The truth is that neither the one nor the other of these interpretations is exclusively correct. The exact meaning lies, as it so often does in Holy Writ, between the two extremes. The Lord was conveying the important principle that in the ministry of the word its growth and ultimate fructification depended upon the intrinsic vitality of the word itself, irrespective of the personality of the minister. The central thought of the parable is the service, not the servant. This spontaneous activity of the seed's growth is equally true of the preaching of the Lord Himself and of His delegates. But what a beautiful example is here afforded of the unobtrusive humility of Jesus! In this self-effacement of the Servant of Jehovah, we are permitted to behold one element of the perfection of His service. Consumed with zeal for the glory of God, yet seeming to labour in vain and spend His strength for nought (Isaiah 49:4), He committed the results of His ministry to Him who gave Him the word to declare (John 17:8; John 17:14). Having sown the seed, He waited patiently for the fruiting time. We cannot but observe how peculiarly appropriate this feature of the Lord's ministry is in the Second Gospel, where alone it is so strikingly recorded by parable.

Such a spirit of meek dependence and patient perseverance in service in view of the long-distant harvest is, by implication, to be acquired by all those whom the Lord sends forth to serve. The apostle Paul had this outlook. Writing to the Thessalonians, he thus expressed himself, "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). His eye was upon the distant future day of "bringing in the sheaves," like his Master, who, in the pathway of the Faithful Witness, had His eye upon "the joy that was set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2). In this manner the spirit of true service first known in Christ was in measure reproduced in the apostles, and perpetuated in those who believed on Him through their word (John 17:20). In such a sense there is genuine "apostolical succession" in service, though not in ecclesiastical authority. So far as labour "in word and doctrine" is concerned, the words of the well-known epitaph apply, "God buries His workmen, but carries on His work." The servant will continue to sow until the day of harvest, but all the while the germination, the growth, and the ripe grain are incessantly wrought by an invisible and infallible Agent.

05.23. The Surprising Growth of a Tiny Seed

23. — The Surprising Growth of a Tiny Seed

" And he said, How shall*1 we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable*2 shall*1 we set it forth?3 It is like a*4 grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be*5 less than all the seeds*6 that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up,*7 and becometh greater than all the herbs,*8 and putteth out*9 great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.*10

"And with many such parables spake*11 he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it: and without a parable spake*11 he not unto them "but privately*12 to his own disciples he expounded*13 all things" (Mark 4:30-34, R.V.).

*1 "should," J.N.D.; "are we to," T. S. Green.

*2 "with what comparison," J.N.D.; "under what comparison," T. S. Green.

*3 "should we compare it," J.N.D.; "are we to set it," T. S. Green.

*4 "as to a," J.N.D.; "as unto," McClellan; "as a," T. S. Green.

*5 "is," J.N.D., T. S. Green.

*6 "all seeds," J.N.D.

*7 "and when it has been sown, mounts up," J.N.D.; "cometh up," McClellan; "and when it has been sown, it grows up," T. S. Green.

*8 "all herbs," J.N.D.; "becomes larger than all the herbs," T. S. Green.

*9 "produces," J.N.D.; "maketh," McClellan; "puts forth," T. S. Green.

*10 "birds of heaven can roost under its shadow," J.N.D. ""dwell," McClellan; "are able to roost under its shade," T. S. Green.

*11 "spoke," J.N.D., W.K., T. S. Green.

*12 "in private," J.N.D., W.K.; "apart," T. S. Green.

*13 "explained," J.N.D., W.K.; "interpreted," McClellan; "explained every thing," T. S. Green. This section is introduced by the phrase, "And he said." But whether the audience then addressed by the Lord consisted only of His disciples, or comprised also the multitudes at large we are not specifically informed. It is not, however, extravagant, judging from the nature of the questions which precede the parable, to assume that the Lord was speaking to the apostles. A point bearing upon the character of His ministry, as the parable does, would hardly be laid before promiscuous listeners in the crowd. The Lord had chosen the twelve that they might be "with Him." They were His personal attendants, and He constantly associated them with Himself in His service. When

emergencies arose He at times consulted them as to what should be done. Not that He needed advice from any, but to question them as He did was to educate them in the understanding (1) Of their own natural inefficiency in matters of the kind, and (2) of the vast resources at their Master's command. For example, when He saw the hungry multitudes He said to Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6). Again, we often find that, during His itinerary He graciously included them with Himself when expressing His intentions for the future,e.g.,"Let us go into Judaea again" (John 11:7); "Let us go over unto the other side [of the sea]" (Mark 4:35); "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem" (Matthew 20:18). On this occasion the Lord said, "How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth?" How gracious this speech was! What did the simple fishermen know of the real nature of the coming kingdom? Yet in this manner He acknowledged them as His fellow-servants, and even as more than this, for a "bond-servant knoweth not what his lord doeth" (John 15:15). They were admitted to the intimacy of His friendship, and He assumed that the object of His love would be the object of their love also, as He said on one occasion to them, "Ourfriend Lazarus is fallen asleep." This beautiful expression uniting the apostles with the Servant of Jehovah in divine ministry is only found in the Gospel of Mark. Matthew and Luke both give the pronoun in the singular: "Whereunto shall I liken it? "(Matthew 11:16;Luke 13:18; Luke 13:20). And in point of fact the Lord, as we know, provided the similitude Himself, needing no prompting from the twelve; yet it is good for us, as it was for them, to learn the lowly grace of the Saviour who put the matter so that the apostles might learn that they were chosen to share His service of declaring the kingdom of God. The Parable This parable of the grain of mustard seed has the distinction, shared only by that of the Sower and that of the wicked husbandmen, of being recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. It is short and simple in character, teaching by illustration what widespreading results may follow from a small and unpretentious beginning. A grain of mustard seed was proverbially minute in size; and on this account was, on another occasion, chosen by our Lord as a simile when referring to the least modicum of faith a person might exercise and yet remove mountains therewith (Matthew 17:20;Luke 17:6). Here the basis of the parable is the mustard seed. This a man took and sowed upon the earth ("in his field," Matthew; "in his own garden," Luke). But in spite of its relatively small size the seed grew until it exceeded in magnitude the herbs, and was worthy of being classed among the trees of the field. In the shadow of its spreading branches the birds of the heaven, which once might easily have devoured it as a seed, found shelter and shade. The mustard of the parable is generally supposed by students of Scriptural botany to be the variety known assinapis niger,from which the popular condiment is obtained. Though small in this country, the shrub, in the more southern latitudes in which Palestine is situated, attains a considerable size. Travellers report having observed it growing as high as a man on horseback. This is no great height for a tree, but it must be remembered that the main feature of the similitude is not the vast bulk of the tree, but the relative minuteness of the seed when compared with its subsequent development.* What from the size of the seed might be expected to grow no larger than a garden herb, in point of fact becomes a tree. Neglect of this consideration has led some to seek to identify the tree of the parable with members of another botanical family.

{*Since writing this article I have read with interest the subjoined paragraph in a well-known book of Eastern travel: "We are not to suppose that the mustard seed is the least of all the seedsin the world,but it was the smallest which the husbandman was accustomed to sow; and the tree, when

full-grown, was larger than the other herbs in his garden. To press the literal meaning of the term any further would be a violation of one of the plainest canons of interpretation. This ample size, with branches shooting out in all directions, yet springing from the very smallest beginning, contains, as I suppose, the special meaning and intention of the parable. It is in this sense only that the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. Our Saviour did not select it because of any inherent qualities, medicinal or otherwise, which belonged to it. True, it is pungent,andpenetrating,andfiery,andsearching,and must bebruisedorcrushedbefore it will give out its special virtues; and one might go on enumerating such qualities, and multiplying analogies between these properties of mustard and certain attributes of true religion, or of the Church, or of the individual Christian; but they are foreign to any object that Jesus had in view, and must therefore be altogether fanciful. Such exposition dilutes the sense, and dissipates the force and point of His sayings, and should not be encouraged." — TheLand and the Book,W. M. Thomson, D.D., new and revised edition, 1911, pp. 406-7.} The Tree as a Scriptural Metaphor

Trees were of comparatively rare occurrence in the Palestinian landscape, and by reason of this fewness were objects of greater prominence. And various striking metaphors used in scriptural language are founded upon them. It must now suffice to refer to two of the senses in which such allusions are made. A tree is used (1) as an emblem offruitfulness;and from this point of view the tree of the field was said to be "man’s life "(Deuteronomy 20:19); it is used also (2) as an emblem ofgreatness;"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Psalms 37:35). These two qualities might possibly be found combined in the same tree, but not necessarily so; and it is important to bear in mind these distinct characteristics of fruitfulness and of greatness in the consideration of this parable. Of the fruit trees mentioned in the Bible perhaps those of most frequent occurrence are the ones named by Jotham in his parable of the trees desiring a king (Judges 9:7-18), viz., the olive with its fatness, the fig with its sweet and good fruit, and the vine with its wine, cheering God and man. Each of these, as is well known, is employed on many occasions in figurative reference to the people of God and their responsibility to hear fruit for Him. The "blessed" man of the first Psalm is also compared to a tree with unwithering leaf, bearing fruit in its season. And the Lord Jesus, using the same metaphor, solemnly declared that good trees bring forth good fruit, and also that every barren tree shall be hewn down and cast into the fire (Matthew 7:16-20; cp. alsoMatthew 21:17-22).

Now it is clear that in this parable of the mustard seed the former of the two senses named is not implied, since fruitfulness is not the point at issue here, though it is in both of the preceding parables. But, as we have already remarked, a tree may also be regarded as an object of verdant beauty in an arid country, all the more noticeable because of its conspicuous size in comparison with commoner and lesser shrubs and herbs; and hence, emblematically, it may be regarded as an object of eminence. In the Old Testament a tree, viewed in this aspect, is used, in more than one instance, as a symbol of political power and earthly greatness. Thus, the Assyrian empire was compared by one of the prophets to a cedar of Lebanon, excelling in height all the trees of the field, the fowls of heaven nesting in the boughs, and great nations dwelling in the shadow. And the prophet applied the same simile to Pharaoh and the hosts of Egypt (Ezekiel 31:1-18). Again, the rapid rise and the vast extent of the Babylonian empire were presented to its king, Nebuchadnezzar, in a dream under the figure of a tree which "grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth; the beasts of the

field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the branches thereof" (Daniel 4:1-37). And in the New Testament we read, at this point, that the Great Prophet likened His kingdom to a small seed becoming a great tree, evidently teaching thereby that the kingdom was to develop into an earthly power conspicuous in the eyes of men by the magnitude it would attain in comparison with its initial exiguousness. The Little Becoming Great In all three of the parables narrated in this chapter, the ministry of the kingdom of God by the Servant of Jehovah is presented under the figure of the growth of seed. In the first it is shown that fruitfulness depended upon the suitability of the soil into which the seed was cast; in the second the parable illustrates how the growth and eventual fruitfulness of the seed was independent altogether of human aid. In the third parable, however, quite a different feature is prominent. Nothing is said of fruit for God which will be of so much account in the day of harvest. It is not the Godward side of the kingdom which is brought forward in this instance, but the man-ward. The rapidly-growing tree is the aspect which the kingdom was to assume in human eyes speaking of man generally. For man, apart from any divine revelation, would be able to appreciate the outward development and marvellous expan sion of what was originally as insignificant in appearance as a grain of mustard seed.

Though the interpretation of the parable given by the Lord to His disciples is not recorded in the Gospels, the general facts of the remarkable growth of the kingdom in the days of the apostles, through the spread of the word of the gospel, may be gathered from the later scriptures. And we need not, for our present purpose, refer to the testimony of other history as to subsequent times. At the time of the parable, it was truly the "day of small things," and the disciples were but "a little flock," yet it was the Father’s good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32), and this divine purpose could not fail of accomplishment.

It seemed a small thing in the eyes of men when the Saviour of the world was found as the Babe in Bethlehem’s manger. It was asked with scorn whether any good tidings could come out of Nazareth. The labours of Jehovah’s Servant appeared to the eye of flesh to be for nought. But the preaching of the gospel, at first restricted to the cities of Israel, was even in the days of the apostles carried into all the world to every creature under heaven (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). And, according to the Lord’s own word, men came from the east and the west and the north and the south, and sat down in the kingdom. God chose the weak things of the world to the confusion of what was mighty. And the preaching which began at an obscure village of Galilee spread in a couple of generations to the confines of the known world (Colossians 1:6; Colossians 1:23). Thus the tiny seed became the landmark of the countryside.*

{*Some expositors, Archbishop Trench, following others, for instance, have suggested that the mustard seed was selected as a figure of the word of the gospel because of its fiery, pungent nature. This suggestion, it may be supposed, is based, surely without adequate reason, upon another metaphor used in the prophecy of Jeremiah: "Is not my word a fire?" Jehovah asks (Jeremiah 23:29). This suggestion, however, is feeble and far-fetched. If the sense were applicable in the parable, it would also apply elsewhere in the Gospels; and we must then understand that when a person’s faith isweakenough to be likened to a grain of mustard seed (Matthew 17:20), it has become fiery and pungent. This consideration sufficiently shows that the idea is too extravagant to be commended.} Birds Finding Shelter and Shadow

Branches of trees provide for birds a natural shade from the burning rays of an Eastern sun, as well as a suitable site for their nests. This simple phenomenon, familiar to all, is frequently alluded to in the Old Testament (Psalms 104:12; Ezekiel 17:23; Ezekiel 31:6; Daniel 4:12; Daniel 4:21). It is also introduced in this parable of the mustard tree, which, it is said, "putteth out great branches, so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof." The birds find a harbour of refuge among the leafy branches.

What is the signification of this part of the parable? It has already been noted that we do not possess a record of the interpretation given by the Lord to His disciples. It remains, therefore, in this case, as in some others, to seek what light may be afforded by other parts of the scripture, and especially by the immediate context.

Take then the two parables that immediately precede this one. In each of these seed-time and harvest constitute the beginning and the ending of the tableau. The seed is sown with the object that it may ultimately bear fruit. But in the third case the question of fruitbearing does not come into view in the parable. Here the salient feature is the degree of the tree’s growth at its maturity when compared with its original size as a seed. In this stage it becomes the haunt of independent agents, which do not originate from the seed as fruit would do, but are altogether separate from the tree as an organism. The birds find protection in the tree, but in no sense do they form an integral part of it. As a seed, they were its natural enemies, and the first parable shows that the good seed was in certain instances devoured by the birds. This act of destruction the Lord interpreted to mean that the word of the gospel when preached was sometimes carried away by Satan. If then the birds of the air mentioned in the first parable represent the emissaries of the devil, we may, by easy analogy, regard them in the third of the same series as representing powers of evil. This parabolic intimation of future greatness has passed out of prophecy and become a familiar item of ecclesiastical history. The powers of the political world persecuted the church in its infancy, but upon its astonishing development, numerically and geographically, they ceased to persecute, and sought, not in vain, to patronise the power that could no longer be despised for its insignificance. Thus Christendom became a great world-system, the resort, the lodging-place of the forces of evil. This apostate condition of the professing church is delineated in vivid colours at the close of inspired testimony, and the language there employed echoes the figure of the birds employed in this parable. The declaration made in vision concerning this great system is, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2, R.V.). That the birds set forth agents of wickedness appears therefore to be the simple and unforced explanation of the parable. But such epithets cannot be applied to many of the interpretations offered of the passage. To say that it teaches how the gospel supplies shelter and protection from worldly oppression and the power of Satan is surely to distort the imagery in a manner that cannot be acceptable to the earnest student. Nor is Dean Alford’s somewhat vague explanation of the parable more satisfactory. He says, "We must beware of imagining that theoutward church-formis the kingdom. It has rather reversed the parable, and is the worldly power waxed to a great tree, and the churches taking refuge under the shadow of it."* The Dean sees that the tree cannot display the true church of Christ, and he alleges that it does set forth the worldly power under which the churches take refuge. There is here a confusion of ideas which arises from assuming that the church and the kingdom are synonymous terms. The latter is the heterogeneous mass of

professors, as depicted in several of the Lord's parables. In other words, Christendom, not the church, is the kingdom in its existing form, though the Dean would have us "beware of imagining" such a thing. The kingdom is not the incorruptible church but the mixed system which it became at a very early date, and which the Lord will finally cleanse by removing out of it all stumbling-blocks and persons that practise iniquity (Matthew 13:41).

{*Greek Testament, 4th ed., Vol. I., p. 135.}

We may conclude therefore that the most consistent explanation of the parable is that the tree is emblematical of the outward profession of Christianity, particularly in those vast proportions which the system has assumed among the various human institutions for many centuries, while within this extensive organisation are harboured many evil persons and principles which are totally opposed to the spirit of its Founder.

Measures and Manners

What a fund of truth accompanied the Prophet of Jehovah! There was truth concerning Old Testament mysteries, concerning the Messiah's mission, His ministry, His sufferings, and death, and concerning the kingdom-glories of a future day, as well as much beside concerning the Father and His love. And it was a part of the mission of the Servant of the Lord to communicate these things to His disciples. This He did, so that at the close of His public service He could say, addressing the Father, "The words which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:8). But at this juncture in Mark's Gospel we learn an important principle regarding the manner in which these communications were made by our Lord, and at the same time we may recognise that the principle is the same as that which characterised divine revelations in former days. During the forty centuries preceding the coming of the Messiah God had spoken to His people in divers measures and divers manners (Hebrews 1:1). And these varying portions and methods of instruction throughout the ages were such as in the great wisdom of God were suited to the need of men at the respective epochs, and also such as prepared the hearts of men to expect with a growing intensity the advent of the Redeemer. In accordance therefore with this principle of dispensational accommodation, the Heavenly Teacher, in speaking the word to His disciples, considered their capacity and the degree of their spiritual development, and adopted that succession of "measure and manner" in His teaching which was best suited for them. The parable and its interpretation was the medium employed by the Lord to impart the "word of the kingdom "in the proportion that their minds and hearts were ready to receive them, thus giving them "meat in due season." "With many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear." Their capacity for hearing was the measure.

We thus see that the Lord recognised spiritual growth in His hearers. On one occasion He had many things to say, but the apostles were then unable to bear them (John 16:12). When, however, the Spirit of truth came at Pentecost they were led forwards into all truth. But in the Epistles, as in the Gospels, we find that individual progress was considered in the ministration of the truth. Paul fed some with "milk," and others with "meat" (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12). Wisdom the same apostle spoke only among the perfect [full-grown] (1 Corinthians 2:6). And a believer's responsibility for walk is said to be in proportion to his individual measure of attainment (Php 3:16).

It may therefore be accepted that now, as then, there are progressive stages in the divine life, and the word of God is unfolded to the individual believer to suit the varying capacity. When the Lord by His Spirit teaches knowledge and makes men understand wisdom, He does not impart an ordered and codified system of divinity, but presents the truth by degrees, "precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10). To His disciples the Lord constituted Himself the sole judge of what and of how much it was best for them to know. And His mode of communicating the word of the kingdom was by parables, as Mark writes, "Without a parable spake he not unto them." This style of discourse was after the manner of the ancient prophets of Israel, concerning whom Jehovah said, "I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes" (Hosea 12:10, R.V.). The people at large heard the parables, but lacking faith, they could not understand, and remained in darkness as to the divine purposes. But to His own immediate circle of followers, the Lord expounded everything in private. For to those who "had" more was given, according to His own word. Hence this section closes with the statement, "But privately to his own disciples he interpreted all things."

05.24. The Servant's Word Stilling the Wind and the Sea

24. — The Servant’s Word Stilling the Wind and the Sea

"And on that day, when even was come,*1 he saith*2 unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude,*3 they take him with them,*4 even*5 as he was, into the boat.*6 And other boats*6,7 were with him. And there ariseth a great storm of wind,*8 and the waves beat*9 into the boat,*6 insomuch that the boat*6 was now filling.*10 And he himself was in the stern, asleep on a cushion:*11 and they awake him,*12 and say unto him, Master,*13 carest thou not that we perish?*14 And he awoke,*15 and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still!*16 And the wind ceased,*17 and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?*18 And they feared exceedingly,*19 and said one to another,*20

Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41, R.V.).

*1 "evening was come," J.N.D.; "it was evening," McClellan; "evening came on," T. S. Green.

*2 "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

*3 "having sent away the crowd," J.N.D.; "leaving the crowd," T.S.G. "leaving the multitude," McC.

*4 "with [them]," J.N.D.; omit "with them," T.S.G., McC.

*5 Omit even," J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

*6 "ship," J.N.D.; "bark," T.S.G.

*7 Add "also," J.N.D.; add "besides," T.S.G.

*8 "comes a violent gust," J.N.D.; "comes on a great squall," T.S.G.

*9 "were breaking," T.S.G.

*10 "so that it already filled," J.N.D.; "was already filling," T.S.G.; "insomuch that the boat was already filling," McC.

*11 "sleeping on the cushion," J.N.D.; "sleeping on the pillow," T.S.G.; "on the pillow asleep," McC.

*12 "awake him up," J.N.D.; "rouse him," T.S.G.

*13 "Teacher," J.N.D., McC.

*14 "we are perishing," J.N.D.; "we are being lost," T.S.G.

*15 "awaking up," J.N.D.; "woke up," T.S.G. McC.

*16 "Silence, be mute," J.N.D.; "Hush, be still," T.S.G.

*17 "fell," J.N.D.; "abated," T.S.G., McC.

*18 "Why are ye (thus) fearful? How (is it) ye have not faith?" J.N.D.; "Why are ye thus faint-hearted? How is it that you have not faith?" T.S.G.; "Why are ye cowardly? Have ye yet no faith?" McC.

*19 "(with) great fear," J.N.D.; "were afraid with great fear," T.S.G.; "were sore afraid," McC.

*20 "to each other," T.S.G.} The general subject of the ministry of the kingdom is continued in this section. The parables and the sayings of the Lord narrated up to this point show the characteristic features of the new preaching, and what would be the effects of this preaching in the world. The account of the miracle that now follows shows, by illustration, to what insurmountable dangers the witnesses of the kingdom will be subject, and, moreover, what striking deliverance out of such dangers those that trust in the humble and lowly Messiah will experience. This incident with its painful impressiveness was a needed training for the twelve, and formed a part of what may be truly called their "education for the ministry." The apostles had that day been alone with the Messiah in the house where they were privately inducted into the mysteries of the kingdom, but now they were called to accompany Him across the stormy sea, and in the course of the perilous journey to witness a demonstration of His omnipotence staying its "proud waves." Ashore they were taught that the word of Christ would, in spite of thievish birds and scorching sun and choking thorns, and apart from human agency and aid, grow secretly, silently, slowly, but surely, until the time of its maturity and fruitfulness; at sea they learned that the same word was effectual to quell into instant submission the mightiest forces of nature. In the parables the newly-called "fishers of men" were instructed what dangers beset theserviceof the gospel of the kingdom; and in the miracle what dangers confront theservantsthemselves, though at the same time they learned what an all-powerful Deliverer was with them. The Evening of a Laborious Day

It was written in ancient time, "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening" (Psalms 104:23). This indeed is the common lot of humanity, and the incarnate Lord accepted the conditions fully. Only His arduous and unremitting service in the days of His public activities was peculiar in this respect, that it consisted of the alleviation of man ’s physical and spiritual suffering. This beneficence comprised His healing works and His illuminating and quickening words. Of many busy days and weeks and months of the Lord’s ministry we are given no record whatever in the Gospels (John 21:25). But the day of this narrative was a particularly busy one. So far as we are able to recognise the chronological sequence, its events included among other incidents elsewhere recorded, those contained in this Gospel from Mark 3:20-35, Mark 4:1-41.* To consider now no more than Mark’s account, we have (1) the contest with the Pharisees which, Matthew tells us, arose out of His expulsion of a blind and dumb demon (Matthew 12:22-24); (2) the expostulatory visit of His mother and His brethren; and (3) the proclamation to the multitudes as He sat in the boat of the similitudes of the kingdom and their subsequent interpretation to His followers in the house.

{*Some think that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered early on the same day, but this chronological point is not a matter of great moment in our present inquiry.}

After these things, when evening had come, the Lord said to His own disciples, Let us cross over to the other side of the lake. Many mighty things had been said and done in favoured Capernaum that day. The good seed of the kingdom had been duly sown. That word was now left by the Sower to germinate and fructify. Previously in this same town the Lord had wrought many deeds of mercy

in the evening shadows (Mark 1:32-34); but not so on this occasion. After the time of speech, the night drew on — the time to "keep silence," as well as the time for rest, the time "when no man can work." He therefore bade His disciples to sail across the lake in search of retirement on its more solitary shores. The apostles, having dismissed the crowds who apparently were still waiting to see and hear more of the Great Prophet, obeyed His word and launched forth in their little boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, accompanied by other little boats.*

{*"As he was" (Mark 4:36). This phrase implies that the Lord being then on board, they forthwith put to sea, not waiting to make further preparation. So Bloomfield and Swete. The Greek phrase also occurs in2 Kings 7:7,2 Kings 7:10(LXX.). A similar but distinct expression is found inJohn 4:6;1 Corinthians 7:26;2 Peter 3:4. See J.N.D.'s notes on these passages in his New Translation. Here the twelve "take" the Lord; the same verb is also used(paral.)of the Lord taking them (Mark 9:2;Mark 10:32;Mark 14:33), and again of the Lord taking them to Himself at His coming (John 14:3; translated "receive").Cp.alsoActs 15:39. The boat was sufficiently large to hold them all (seeMark 6:30,Mark 6:32,Mark 6:45), so that the "little boats" probably contained some of the more enthusiastic of the public; acting as a self-constituted escort.} The distance to the other side, as the crow flies, was but a few miles, and under ordinary circumstances the journey might have been quickly accomplished. But a great hurricane suddenly arose, and the waters of the lake were quickly agitated into furious and mighty waves which dashed over and beat into the little bark, so that it was rapidly being filled. Some of the disciples, as Simon and Andrew and James and John, were local fishermen accustomed to the navigation of the lake, and they had no doubt encountered many a tempestuous night in the pursuit of their calling. But this storm was of such severity that their strength and skill were alike baffled, and they, as well as their less experienced colleagues, were filled with alarm. Their Master, wearied with the toils of the day, lay asleep on a cushion in the stern, amid all the turmoil and confusion of the terrified crew, and also amid the noise and discomfort of a tossing boat upon a billowy sea. Nothing is more illustrative of a state of peace than the sleep of the living. Here was such a spectacle, though in strange circumstances. The active faculties of divine beneficence were all quiescent, while the disciples were in a state of frenzied excitement. In the boat the prone Man of Sorrows was at rest; in the pitch darkness around was a scene of the wildest uproar and riotous contention between the forces of air and sea, threatening each moment to swamp the frail vessel and its precious burden. The twelve were at their wits' end. Calmness and courage deserted them. They lost all confidence in their own seamanship, but what was more serious still, they lost faith in their sleeping Master. Why did He sleep in the hour of their need? They awoke Him therefore with querulous cries, an overpowering anxiety pervading every heart. Some said one thing and some another. But with them all there was thee despairing refrain of selfish interest, "We perish." "Those whose words are reported by Matthew expressed the conviction that He had the power to help them, for they said, "Lord (kurie), save us; we perish "(Matthew 8:25). Others complained of His indifference to their welfare, seeing He slept in the face of their peril; they said, "Teacher(didaskale),carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:39). Others again were apparently more completely overcome by their fears. These showed their intense importunity by repeating His title of address, "Master, Master(epistata),we perish" (Luke 8:24). The first words of our Lord were a reproof to His disciples, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew). He then arose, responsive to their cry of distress, and immediately alleviated their fears. Speaking in His own right as Lord of the sea and the land, He addressed both the winds and the waves; for "the sea is his, and he made it," and He "walketh upon the wings

of the wind." There was no rod of delegated authority stretched towards the troubled elements, as in the case of Moses at the Red Sea. Neither was there a smiting of the waters with the mantle of the prophet's office, as in the case of Elijah at the Jordan. In the majesty of omnipotence He issued His brief but peremptory mandate — to the roaring hurricane, "Silence!" to the surging billows, "Cease, be at rest!" The response of both wind and sea was immediate and perfect. Man, nominal head of the earthly creation, for the most part, had no "ears to hear" the voice of the Son of God, but the inanimate forces of nature yielded their instant and implicit obedience. The rushing storm-blast became the soft zephyr, the mountainous wave sank to a gentle ripple. In the simple but sublime words of Matthew and Mark, "there was a great calm." But the service of the Lord did not end with the stilling of the tempest. There was a violent agitation in the breasts of those who formed the ship's company. The Lord had a word for the mental conflict also. This personal deliverance from imminent destruction afforded the apostles a profitable lesson in more than one particular. The incident revealed to them much concerning their Master; it also brought to light much concerning themselves. The former revelation the Lord had set before them in His miracle; the latter He proceeded to fasten upon their memories by His word.

Along with a lack of faith in Christ, the twelve exhibited a selfish concern for themselves which did not become the disciples of the lowly Nazarene. Moreover, they assumed that He was regardless of their danger, for they said, Dost Thou not care that we are perishing? The ungracious question arose, in point of fact, from a spirit of cowardice. This spirit He at once rebuked, even before silencing the winds and the waves, in the words already quoted, "Why are ye so cowardly, O ye of little faith? "He did not chide them for appealing to Him for help, but He would have them know that they were doubly wrong, (1) in being filled with fear, and (2) in being of little faith.

Hence when the calm ensued at His word, and the evidence of His interference was displayed to their senses, He reproached them by further questions, in which He repeated the charge of cravenheartedness, saying, "Why are ye cowardly? Have ye not yet faith?" Surely His ministry and His miracles in Galilee, of which they were chosen witnesses, afforded ample ground for their confidence. Yet in this crisis they had failed to trust Him. From Luke we learn that the Lord put to them a further question which revealed another aspect of their failure. He said to them, "Where is your faith? "They were following Jesus because they professed to believe in Him; where then was their professed faith in Him on this occasion? Their faith should be ready for use in emergencies such as this. If they had ears to hear, let them hear; if they had faith, let them believe. The apostles were dumbfounded at what they saw, and they had no reply to make to the questions of the Lord. They were awed into silence, as on a later occasion (John 21:12). Filled with great fear, they could only express their amazement one to another, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Jesus in the Storm This miracle is one of the few which were wrought in the presence of the disciples only, most being public occurrences. But this case was for the especial benefit of the apostles, and in the record of it we are permitted to observe three things concerning our Lord —

1 The Man sleeping

2 God commanding

3 The creature obeying

(1) The incident is remarkable by the fact that there is, beside this, no other specific reference in the Gospels to the sleep of Jesus. That the Lord did take rest is without doubt implied in such passages as Mark 1:35; but here the homeless Son of man, who Himself said He had not where to lay His head, is set before us asleep in an open boat during a raging tempest.

True manhood was there, and, moreover, the Man of perfect trust who, even in these singular circumstances of peril, exemplified the words of the Psalmist, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou, LORD, alone makest me to dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:8). As a man whose mind was stayed on Jehovah, He slept the sleep of absolute confidence in God, and was in this respect a contrast both with Jonah sleeping in guilty shame, and with the disciples sleeping for sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2) But while on the one hand we see the weariness of the Servant of Jehovah after the toils of the day, on the other we witness His instant readiness at a call for aid to serve yet more. And, again, we behold a further wonder: not only was the Servant of Jehovah in the boat, but Jehovah Himself was there. For He who spoke with such authority to the winds and the waves was indubitably God; and the One who spoke thus was He who slept and awaked at the cry of distress. This was indeed the God of Israel, for as the Psalmist said, none but Jehovah is "mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psalms 93:4). It was a great revelation. And, no doubt, in after years, as the disciples recalled the thrilling experiences of this night, as they looked again in memory from the tossing billows to the face of the placid Sleeper, from the fury of the creature to the repose of the Creator, they recalled also the later words of the Lord: "That in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

(3) Here also was the rare spectacle of the inanimate creature obeying the voice of its Creator (John 1:3). Such obedience is of course observable continually in the operation of what are known as the laws of nature, though these phenomena, by reason of their regular repetition from age to age, have diminished in wonder to the majority. But the sudden stilling of this storm was unmistakable evidence that there was a voice which was heard above the roar of the wind and the waves, and which was supreme in command. This divine Voice emanated from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, and was audible to His terrified disciples.

What a revelation was thus made to the followers of Jesus! What a Master was theirs! What a One to love and follow, to reverence and adore but not todoubt! The Jewish Remnant Safe Amid the Storm of Oppression

Many of the mighty works of Jesus are described as "signs." Indeed, in the Gospel of John this term(semeion)is invariably applied to the miracles, showing that the same work may be viewed as a sign as well as a miracle, and from yet another standpoint as a "wonder." The term, "sign," in the expression, "the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3), was used in the sense of a portent of what was in the future. And, employing the word in a similar signification, the disciples asked the Lord what was the sign of His coming (Matthew 24:3). In view of these considerations, it is not altogether unwarrantable to seek for a didactical, as well as a historical, purpose in the record of this miracle, which would then, as a sign, depict some national or other deliverance of the future upon a larger scale than the actual incident on the lake.

Now, for example, we find in Isaiah prophecies of a promised deliverance from the crushing power of a national enemy, and the language of the prophet in its imagery contains striking allusions which are allied in character with the history of this miracle (Isaiah 8:5-18).

Jehovah warned of the power of the king of Assyria, whose aid Ahaz was seeking, and compared his oppressive inroads into the land of Israel to a flood of waters which should overflow, reaching even to the neck (Isaiah 8:7-8). But while this overwhelming calamity would come upon the nation as a whole, there would be a faithful and godly remnant who would be delivered. And the pledge of this deliverance was that the virgin's Son, Immanuel, is with them (Isaiah 8:10). The land is Immanuel's, and He will be in the midst of His people as He was with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and as Jesus was with His disciples on the sea. The pious are therefore exhorted not to fear with the fear of the ungodly, but to "sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary" (Isaiah 8:12-14).

Now what was taught in precept by Isaiah was exemplified by this practical exhibition of the Lord's power in the storm. In both the prophecy and the Gospels there is training for faith in view of a dark and cloudy day ahead, when to sight alone it would appear that inevitable destruction was before the little flock. Indeed many of the apostles who witnessed this miracle lived to see the Roman armies overwhelm the holy city in unutterable horrors, and to see their ungodly nation scattered to the four winds of heaven, while they and other believers were preserved amid all these calamities; for "the Lord was with them." But Isaiah did not refer to the Roman power but to the Assyrian, though the assurance of the protecting Christ for the pious and persecuted remnant is equally applicable in both cases. In a day yet to come the enmity of that northern, foe of the people of God will break forth again, and his armies like an overflowing scourge will sweep through the "glorious land." In that day of direst distress there will be the occasion for the little flock of godly ones to trust implicitly in Immanuel. He most truly will be with them, though His delivering power may seem to slumber. However, there will then be those who will cry out in the language of a prophetic Psalm, "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? . . "Rise up, for our help, and redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake" (Psalms 44:22-26). In response to this appeal, the Man of Bethlehem, whose "goings forth have been of old, from everlasting," will become their peace, and will deliver them from the Assyrian (Micah 5:1-6), whom He will destroy by the "breath of his lips," and cast headlong into Tophet (Isaiah 30:31-33).

We also find the main features of this miraculous deliverance used figuratively in another place by Isaiah. He portrays the gathering together of many nations against the people of Israel to swallow her up like a mighty sea-storm. But God rebukes the enemies of His people, and, as it was upon the Galilean lake, what at eventide was trouble, in the morning was "not": "Ah, the uproar of many peoples which roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rushing of the nations that rush like the rushing of the mighty waters; but he shall rebuke them. . . . At eventide behold terror, and before the morning they are not "(Isaiah 17:12-14).

Other analogies occurring elsewhere may be recollected by the students of scripture, but those mentioned above are doubtless sufficient to suggest the line of comparison. The Needless Fear of the Disciples The behaviour of the disciples on this occasion was such as called forth the strictures

of the loving and gracious Lord. The tenor of their complaining words showed that the coward's fear had seized upon them. Hence His sharp reprimand, "Why are ye cowardly, O ye of little faith?" This reproof may seem to us stern and even excessive until we remember what the disciples, with little excuse, forgot — the power and love of the God of Israel, and also that this power and love was present in the boat in the person of Jesus. They, as alas, we too may do, overlooked the unanswerable reasoning of faith, "If God be for us, who (or, what) can be against us?" To fear a foe much mightier than oneself is not reprehensible, but to fear without occasion — when one is invincible, is cowardice indeed, and such a spirit is stigmatized in scripture. It is solemn to learn that the "fearful" (cowardly)* are classed with the "unbelieving" in the enumeration of those condemned to the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). An evil conscience makes a coward. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). To fear God is well, and this is enjoined throughout Scripture; and in the sequel we read that the disciples "feared exceedingly," when they beheld the effect of the word of Christ upon the stormy sea. This was a wise fear, for they were then conscious of what unworthy thoughts had possessed them in the immediate presence of Infinite Power and Goodness. It was the fear of reverence, not the cowardice of unbelief, which it had displaced in the hearts of the disciples.

{*That is, those who are habitually cowards in spiritual matters. The same Greek word is used by the Lord to the disciples as is used in Revelation 21:8. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, though cognate terms are found in John 14:27, "Let not your heart . . . be afraid"; and in 2 Timothy 1:7, "God gave us not a spirit of cowardice." A different word altogether is more commonly employed for "fear."}

Fear is opposed to the normal spirit of the follower of Christ, which is one of strength and courage and resolution. This bold and vigorous confidence is described in the well-known lines of T. Kelly.

"The cross — it took our guilt away,

It holds the fainting spirit up

It cheers with hope the gloomy day,

And sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave,

And nerves the feeble arm for fight;

It takes its terror from the grave,

And gilds the bed of death with light."

Little Faith In addressing His disciples the Lord said, "O ye of little faith." He recognised that they were not absolutely devoid of faith, for they appealed to the Master for help; it was, however, but a very little faith, for they conceived that they were perishing, although Jesus was with them. Faith must be feeble if it cannot trust until the cause of anxiety and alarm is removed. For them the storm was stilled that their apprehensions might be quieted, so that their faith did not rise to the level of that of Paul, who was confident of being brought safely through the storm. In the hour of peril, they lacked that strength of faith which could sit still in quietness and confidence, as the

prophet enjoined (Isaiah 30:7; Isaiah 30:15). But their little faith which wrought this fear had a further evil consequence. In their selfish distress, they so far forgot themselves as to utter upbraiding words to their Master. Such language is always improper upon the lips of a servant to his master, but much more so when addressed to such a Master as He was. "Carest thou not that we perish?" Was He then like some hireling shepherd who abandons his charge and flees when the wolf comes, because he cares not for the sheep? Theirs was the selfish, petulant spirit of Martha of Bethany, who so rudely said to Him, "Carest thou not that my sister has left me to serve alone? " This evil suspicion of the divine nature is directly descended from those doubts of God's goodness first insinuated into the heart of man by the serpent in Eden (Genesis 3:5). It is a sinful human failing to doubt the God who cares even for the oxen and the birds of the air, and who has expressly invited dependent men to cast their care upon Him who cares for them (1 Corinthians 9:9;1 Peter 5:7). And the disciples joined the common throng of humanity in suspecting the love of God; and in their unbelief they reproached the Servant of Jehovah, saying in the hour of trouble, "Carest thou not that we perish?" In this event we may see that ancient scripture in course of fulfilment which anticipated the cry of the Messiah upon the earth, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me" (Psalms 69:9;Romans 15:3). But how sad to observe that in this instance these reproaches emanate from His apostles! By this mistrust of their Master they were found among those who added to the sorrows of Him who had to say, "Reproach ha th broken my heart" (Psalms 69:7; Psalms 69:20). Yet as to this phase of their complaint He "opened not his mouth," making no mention of it for the ear of man, enduring this unmerited suspicion as part of the yoke of His servitude to Him that sent Him. And of this form of meek submission to the will of God, the Spirit of Christ had already spoken through the psalmist, "For thy sake I have borne reproach" (Psalms 69:7).

05.25. The Pitiable Plight of Legion

25. — The Pitiable Plight of Legion

"And they came to the other side of the sea,1 into the country of the Gerasenes.2 And when he was come out of the boat,3 straightway there met him out of the tombs4 a man with5 an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs:4 and no man6 could any more7 bind him, no, not with a chain;8 because that9 he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent10 asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces:11 and no man had strength to tame him.12 And always,13 night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting14 himself with stones. And when he saw15 Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him;16 and crying out17 with a loud voice, he saith,18 What have I to do with thee,19 Jesus, thou20 Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not.21 For he said22 unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man.23 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion;24 for we are many" (Mark 5:1-9 R.V.).

1 "lake," T.S.G.

2 "Gadarenes," J.N.D.

3 "immediately on his going out of the ship," J.N.D.; "when he was gone out of the ship," W.K.; "as he left the bark, there met him forthwith," T.S.G.; "when he was gone forth," McC.

4 "graves," McC.

5 "possessed by," J.N.D., T.S.G.

6 "one," J.N.D., W.K., McC.

7 "was able," J.N.D.; "could bind him," W.K.

8 "not even with chains," J.N.D., W.K.; "not even with a chain was any one hitherto able to bind him," T.S.G.; "not even fetters availed any longer," Swete. The malady had grown so that coercive measures had become futile, having been often tried in vain.

9 omit "that," J.N.D., W.K., T.S.G., McC.

10 "torn asunder," J.N.D., W.K., McC.; "snapped," T.S.G.

11 "were shattered," J.N.D.; "shivered," T.S.G.

12 "no one was able to subdue him," J.N.D.; "no one could subdue him," W.K.

13 "continually," J.N.D., McC.; "ever," T.S.G.

14 "mangling," T.S.G.

15 "But seeing," J.N.D.; "And on seeing," T.S.G.

16 "did him homage," J.N.D.; "did obeisance to him," T.S.G.

17 "cried out," McC.; omit "out," J.N.D.

18 "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

19 "What hast thou to do with me," T.S.G.

20 omit "thou," J.N.D., W.K.

21 "do not torment me," T.S.G.

22 "had said," T.S.G., McC.

23 "Come out of the man, unclean spirit," W.K.; "Come out, unclean spirit, from the man," T.S.G. " "Come out," etc., McC.

24 "Legion is my name," J.N.D., T.S.G.

After the supernatural calm of winds and waves that ensued upon the word of Jesus, the remainder of the night was most likely spent by the occupants of the boat upon the waters, and in the morning-light they landed upon the shore of what was called the country of the Gerasenes. If upon the sea they encountered the fury of the storm, they now encounter upon the land the mad and ungovernable fury of a man under the influence of a malign and demoniacal power. Satan, we know (Job 1) raised the storm of wind which slew the children of Job; and, though it is not so stated, Satan, who was to bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, may have brought about the tempest on the lake in one of his futile attempts to destroy the Son of man. But at any rate, here in the wilderness of Gadara was a sad example of the enthralling and debasing power of the devil over the sons of men. This diabolical influence was exemplified on both sides of the lake. In Capernaum, the town from which they sailed, a demoniac was found in the synagogue itself (Mark 1:23-27). Here one* runs to meet them, whose dwelling was in the tombs, himself the abode of unclean spirits.

{*The demoniac had a companion, as noted below. But in these remarks the more notable case only is considered.} In Mark's account three main facts are specified about this man's state: —

(1) He dwelt in the tombs;

(2) He exercised superhuman strength, so that it was impossible to restrain him by fetters and chains;

(3) He was a self-tormentor, inflicting injuries upon his own body. To these facts another may be added from Matthew's Gospel: —

(4) He was so excessively fierce that no one could pass that way. A further addition is made from the Gospel by Luke: —

(5) He wore no clothes, and he had been "possessed" by demons for a long while.

These facts combine to show what an utter wreck this man had become through the malicious and uncontrollable power of evil by which he was ruled. He was an exceptional case; his whole tripartite nature — body, soul and spirit — was affected.

Body. The man tormented and injured himself physically. He gashed himself with stones. He had lost all the self-respect that nature itself teaches, wandering shamelessly in nakedness, finding shelter in the caves of the hillside, which were the sepulchres of the dead.*

{*mnemeion is used of tombs hewn in the rocks, as well as of those built above ground, as in Matthew 27:60; Luke 11:47.}

Soul. The language the demoniac used to the Lord showed that he had abandoned his own personality. His own will and his individual responsibility were lost, so that the demons speak and act in and by him: "My name is Legion; for we are many," was his reply to the question of Jesus.

Spirit.The highest part of human nature within him was dethroned. That "inspiration of the Almighty," the in-breathed spirit whereby man, as distinguished from the brutes, is capable of religious feeling, is shown to be debased also; so much so that there was an utter disregard for even the most ordinary and most easily-obeyed prohibitions of the law of Moses. According to that law in which without doubt he had been well instructed, even a momentary contact with that which was dead defiled (Numbers 19:16). This man was so lacking in the feelings of an Israelite, as well as in those of a man, that he made his abode in the sepulchres. His spirit was in revolt against the divine will and paid no heed to the injunctions of God’s word. But the deplorable effects upon the Gadarene of his "possession" may be looked at in another way by viewing the maleficent influence of the demons from the five standpoints already named, the effects being practically identical, though differently arranged. This influence is shown by the Gospel narrative to be destructive

(1) of the religious sense. By dwelling among the tombs, he cut himself off entirely from the worship of Jehovah as enjoined by the law.

(2) of the sense of his duty to the laws of social and civil government. He would not, nor could not be restrained by chains or fetters, any more than by the love of home or of friends or of fellow-citizens.

(3) of the sense of his duty to himself physically.He voluntarily injured himself,

though he was responsible to care for the body as the servant of his higher nature.

(4) of the sense of his duty to others. Instead of loving his neighbours, he was "exceeding fierce," and, like some ravening beast, terrified them by his savage aggressiveness.

(5) of the sense of decency and propriety. "He wore no clothes" is the significant description of his appearance. The gloom of this picture is deepened by the fact that it was the manner of the man’s life which is portrayed here. This was no sudden outbreak of evil passion, but the symptoms had been such for "a long while." They had become habitual. And he was wont night and day to express his forlorn and hopeless misery by loud, inarticulate cries.

What the Deliverance of Legion Proved

It is clear that in this case of Legion* we have an impressive example of what a man may become when under the direct influence of the evil one. By his miraculous deliverance wrought before their eyes the apostles were instructed that the word of the kingdom of God (which they were about to preach) was directed to the emancipation of captives such as he from the kingdom of darkness. It

was another stage in their education as servants of Christ. The Lord had now shown them by parable and miracle the various characters which the opposition of Satan to the ministry of the gospel would assume. In His parables He taught that his emissaries would steal away the good seed when sown, scatter tares among the wheat, and make the grown tree a habitation of evil. On the lake they had to learn how Satan would awaken the tempestuous passions of lawless men for the destruction of the servants of the kingdom of God. In all these cases, however, they were at the same time assured of the ultimate triumph of the word of the kingdom. Here the converse side of the invincible nature of the gospel is exemplified. An extreme instance of Satan's cruel power over men is seen to be amenable to the word of the Servant of Jehovah. With but a sentence He set the poor bond-slave free. So that the word of Christ is shown to conquer by its active power in deliverance from evil as well as by its passive resistance to the insidious* corrupting forces of wickedness.

{*"The term "legion" in its strict application was used for a division of the Roman army, containing about six thousand men. Here it evidently signifies a great, but undefined number, and probably suggests also the fear and dread with which the Roman scourge was regarded by the conquered. Mary Magdalene was possessed with seven demons (Mark 16:9), but this man and his companion were possessed with a much larger number, though not necessarily with six thousand. For an example of an English military term used similarly in a general, indefinite way, see —

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,

But in battalions."}

Further, this narrative displays how far removed the spirit of evil, rampant in the Gadarene, was from the Spirit of Christ. The character of the deeds of the possessed are stated in lurid detail, and they are opposed in nature to the deeds of the Servant of Jehovah. Works of darkness and destruction characterise the man indwelt by unclean spirits, while works of life and mercy characterise the One indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Gadarene, dominated as he was by Satan, afforded a perfect contrast with the Prophet of Jehovah. The Son of man had come not "to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56), but the demoniac was under the control of the Evil One who "cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy" (John 10:10). He was destroying himself, and his impulse was to destroy others of his kind also. This destructive tendency is the true Satanic nature, as Scripture reveals it. Saul, under the influence of an evil spirit, sought the death of David, the anointed of Jehovah (1 Samuel 19:9-10). In the Apocalypse, Satan, or one of his chief agents, is named Apollyon, that is, the Destroyer (Revelation 9:11) a name in contrasted significance with that of Jesus the Saviour of men. Satan is destructive of that which is good, but Jesus is destructive of nothing but what is evil. For the Son of God was manifested that He might annul both the devil and his works (Hebrews 2:14;1 John 3:8). And the Servant-Prophet demonstrated this purpose of His in the country of the Gadarenes by the deliverance of this notorious victim of Satan. Was this deliverance the action of one in league with Beelzebub? On the contrary the miracle, by its divine power and by its beneficent nature, was a perfect reply, in deed, not in word and argument, to the blasphemous cavils of the Pharisees and scribes who said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils [demons] casteth he out devils [demons]" (Mark 3:22).

Legion’s Homage to Jesus The primary effect of the presence of Jesus upon that desolate shore was to draw the demoniac to Him. When he saw the Lord at a distance he came running, with great cries. Did he come in a paroxysm of fury, intending to do Him a mischief? or did he come with eagerness to seek deliverance from his miserable condition? Whatever may have been his original impulse, in the presence of Jesus he prostrated himself before Him, doing Him homage, and saying with a loud voice, What have I, enslaved of Satan as I am, to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? art Thou come to punish me before the time? I earnestly entreat Thee before God, do not torment me. In these words of the demonised man we may recognise: —

1. a sense of his personal uncleanness

2. an acknowledgment of the Incarnate Deity

3. a knowledge and fear of future punishment

4. the absence of any appeal for mercy.

We will consider these points seriatim.

(1) In the first place, the demoniac, by the phrase, "What have I to do with thee?" expressed his own feeling of the incompatibility of darkness and light. He was conscious that there was nothing in common between himself and Jesus. This question occurs elsewhere in both the Old Testament and the New with a similar significance. For example, it was used by Jephthah to the king of Ammon, by David to the sons of Zeruiah, by Elisha to Jehoram, by the Lord to Mary at Cana of Galilee (Judges 11:12; 2 Samuel 16:10; 2 Samuel 19:22; 2 Kings 3:13; John 2:4).

Here, however, the narrative at this period shows that unholiness recognised the Holy. One; uncleanness confessed its contrariness to divine purity; deception and lying shrunk from the presence of Him who was the Truth. Belial could have no concord with Christ.

(2) The demoniac prostrated himself before Jesus and did Him homage (proskuneo). It is the only recorded instance of demons acknowledging the Lord Jesus in this way. (See also Mark 15:19; Luke 24:52; John 9:38).

Moreover, the Gadarene addressed Him aloud as Jesus, Son of the Most High God, condemning utterly by the use of this title the false charge of the Pharisees that Jesus was under the control of the prince of the demons. And it is striking to observe what was the particular divine title used by the demonised man. For the "Most High" occurs in special connections in the Scriptures. It is the title of supreme sovereignty in the earth, and is particularly associated with the promises of divine rule during the millennium when the evil agents of Satan will be removed from the earth and Beelzebub himself confined in the bottomless abyss.

We find this association early in Genesis. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, met Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:18-20). This event appears to prefigure the millennial day when the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever (Daniel 7:1-28). Again, Balaam, through "the knowledge of the Most High," prophesied of the same time (Numbers 24:16). The prophetic Spirit in the psalmist employs the same title in songs the theme of which is the reign of Jehovah in the coming age (Psalms 91:1; Psalms 91:9;Psalms

92:1); and incidentally the subjection of the Evil One is alluded to in this scripture which declares that Messiah shall tread upon the lion and adder, and trample under foot the young lion and the serpent (Psalms 91:13). The "Most High," therefore, throughout the range of scripture, is an expressive title of God as the Sovereign Ruler in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17), and the demoniac confessed Jesus as the Son of the absolute Lord of the universe, even as the Pythoness owned Paul and Silas to be the servants of the Most High God (Acts 16:17). And they thus anticipate the divine decree that all infernal beings shall bow the knee to Jesus and confess Him Lord to the glory of God the Father (Php 2:9-10).

(3) As in the case of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum there was a manifest dread of the judgment of God, and of the consequent punishment of evil: "T adjure thee by God, torment me not." The unclean spirits knew that punishment must inevitably fall upon them, and, moreover, that the Father judgeth none, but that their sentence must come from the Son of the Most High, who is the appointed Judge of all.

Fear therefore characterised this utterance, not the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, but that fear of the chastisement of evil with which Satan always inspires man. Fallen Adam said at once to God, "I was afraid, and hid myself." Fear also is inseparable from idolatry, which is demon-worship (Deuteronomy 32:17). And is this a matter of wonder when the demons themselves believe God and shudder? They who are the cause of torment to others, dread it for themselves (Matthew 18:34; Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:10).

(4) This confession made by the Gadarene was of the power but not of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; for His mercy was not sought in it. It was the confession not of a contrite sinner but of an evil spirit. The apostle John wrote, "Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God "(1 John 4:2-3). To confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is to seek Him as the Saviour of sinners, since this was the purpose of the incarnation. But no word fell from the lips of the prostrate man beseeching for mercy and forgiveness. The publican in the temple, and blind Bartimaeus, cried for mercy, and were heard; for grace and truth had come for the deliverance of such. But apostate spirits are already doomed and beyond the pale of mercy. They wait only for the execution of their just sentence. Nevertheless the gracious Lord extended His mercy to this miserable man though not to the unclean demons.

Unclean Spirits In the Gospel narratives the terms "unclean spirits" and "demons" are in many instances used with reference to the same case. Thus, we read that the daughter of the Syrophenician woman "had an unclean spirit," and that she besought the Lord that He would "cast forth the demon out of her daughter" (Mark 7:23-30). Again, in the account of the boy at the foot of the mount of Transfiguration, we are told that when he was coming to Jesus "the demon dashed him down and tare him grievously. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the child "(Luke 9:42). Without citing other instances, these will suffice to show that the terms are used synonymously. The unclean spirit, therefore, was a demon. In other words the form taken by the demons in the cases of possession recorded in the Gospels was that of unclean spirits. They exercised their evil influence upon their subjects as invisible agents. This will also occur in a coming day, as the prophet John foretells from the vision he saw. He says, "I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false

prophet three unclean spirits as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons working signs which go forth unto the kings of the whole world to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:13-14). In a further vision he saw Babylon, the apostate church of the future, to be the "habitation of demons, and the hold of every unclean spirit "(Revelation 18:2).

Two Demoniacs, or One? The corresponding account in Matthew states that two persons afflicted by demons encountered the Lord on this occasion: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes there met him two possessed with devils, coming forth out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass by that way (Matthew 8:28).

It has been frequently observed by students of the Gospels that it is a peculiarity of the First Evangelist to note plurality in certain incidents which are narrated in the singular by others. For example, Matthew mentions two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34), while Mark and Luke only name one (Mark 10:46-52;Luke 18:35-43). He also mentions two cases in connection with the Lord's progress into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-5), where the other Evangelists speak of one only (Mark 11:17;Luke 19:29-35;John 12:14-15). The naming of one only in these cases is not a denial or contradiction of the record by the other Evangelists, the greater including the less; but it may fairly be taken to imply that in the cases of the two demoniacs in Gadara, and of the two blind men at Jericho, one of the two was more notable than the other, and on that account was selected for mention in Mark and Luke. At any rate the presence of two persons in these particular instances was an important feature in itself, since it established the fact that there was more than a single witness to the genuineness of the miracle. This form of corroboration was calculated to meet the prejudices of the Jews based upon their law of evidence which demanded two or three witnesses in a matter of valid testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6;Deuteronomy 19:15;Matthew 18:16). The following instance out of many others shows this Jewish character of the First Gospel. In the record of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, Matthew shows, by naming both the ass and the colt, how punctiliously the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9;Matthew 21:5). This is one of the points of detail we might very naturally expect, in accordance with its general scope, to find elaborated and emphasised in this Gospel, the purpose of which is to prove from the Scriptures that "Jesus is the Christ." In the companion narratives a more general reference was sufficient. The following quotation* expresses the same view of the question. "We know from elsewhere there were two [demoniacs]. The Gospel of Matthew, not in this only, but in various other cases, speaks of two persons "as, I suppose, because this fact fell in with his object. It was a recognised principle in the law, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established; and he among the Evangelists on whom, so to speak, the mantle of the circumcision fell — he it was who, speaking in view of the circumcison, gives the required testimony for the guidance of those in Israel that had ears to hear. Nothing of the kind was before Mark. He wrote not with any special aim of meeting Jewish saints and Jewish difficulties; but, in truth, rather for others that were not so circumscribed, and might rather need to have their peculiarities explained from time to time. He evidently had humanity before him as wide as the world, and therefore singles out, as we may fairly gather, the more remarkable of the two demoniacs."

{*Lectures introductory to the Gospels, by W. Kelly, 2nd ed., pp. 173-4.}

05.26. Legion Delivered and the Swine Destroyed

26. — Legion Delivered and the Swine Destroyed

"And he besought him much1 that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there on the mountain side2 a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And he gave them leave.3 And the unclean spirits came out,4 and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down5 the steep1 into the sea, in number about two thousand; and they were choked in the sea.7 And they that fed them8 fled, and told9 it in the city,10 and in the country.11 And they came12 to see what it was that had come to pass.13 And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with devils14 sitting, clothed15 and in his right mind,16 even him that had the legion: and they were afraid. And they that saw it17 declared unto18 them how it befell him that19 was possessed with devils, and concerning the swine. And they began to beseech20 him to depart from their borders.21 And as he was entering22 into the boaT1 he24 that had been possessed with devils besought15 him that he might be with him. And he suffered him not,26 but saith27 unto him, Go to thy house28 unto thy friends,29 and tell them30 how great things the Lord hath31 done for thee, and how he had32 mercy33 on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel" (Mark 5:10-20, R.V.).

1. "greatly," McC.

2. "just at the mountain," J.N.D.; "by the mountain," McC., T.S.G.

3. "Jesus immediately allowed them," J.N.D.

4. "going out," J.N.D., W.K.; "went out," T.S.G.

5. "ran violently," W.K.; "rushed headlong," McC.; "dashed down," T.S.G.

6. "steep slope," J.N.D.; "steep place," W.K.; "over the precipice," McC.

7. "stifled in the lake," T.S.G.

8. "those that were feeding them," J.N.D.; "feeders," T.S.G.

9. "reported," J.N.D.; "carried the report," T.S.G.

10. "town," T.S.G.

11. "villages," McC.

12. "Went out," J.N.D., W.K.

13. "taken place," J.N.D., W.K.; "happened," T.S.G.; "that was done," McC.

14. "see the possessed of demons," J.N.D., W.K.

15. "apparelled," McC.

16. "sensible," J.N.D.

17. "had seen [it]," J.N.D.

18. "related to," J.N.D.; "detailed to them how," T.S.G.

19, "had happened to the [man]," J.N.D.

20. "beg," J.N.D.; "pray," W.K.

21. "coasts," J.N.D., W.K.

22. "was going," McC.

23. "went on board ship," J.N.D.; "was come into the ship," W.K.; "was going on board the bark," T.S.G.

24. "the man," J.N.D.

25. "prayed," W.K.

26. "did not allow," T.S.G.

27. "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

28. "thine home," J.N.D.; "home," McC.

29. "home to thine own people," W.K.

30. "report," T.S.G.

31. "has," J.N.D.

32. "has had," J.N.D.

33. "had pity," T.S.G. In the conversations which took place on this occasion, especially as they are reported by Mark and Luke (who refer to one only of the two Gadarene demoniacs), there is evidence of the significant fact that the personality of the possessed man was overridden by the indwelling demons. It is not intended to investigate the psychological effects of this fact. The result, however, is noted because of its serious importance; and while this condition no doubt exists in every case of possession, it is here thrown into unusual prominence, since not a single demon but many had entered into this man. We have, therefore, alike in the dialogue and the narrative, the use both of the singular number (indicating the man himself) and the plural (indicating the evil spirits). The phrases used and the speakers are shown in the following statement:

Singular Number:

(1) By the man to Jesus: "What have I to do with thee?" "Torment me not" ""My name is Legion."

(2) By Jesus to the man: "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*"; "What is thy name?"

{*It is to be observed that Jesus first addressed the unclean spirits in the singular number, implying that there was a unity in the company, which possibly acted under a leader. Luke in his narrative

also speaks in the singular number first, using the plural subsequently: "For he commanded the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him; and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the bands asunder he was driven of the devil into the wilderness." "And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss" (Luke 8:29, Luke 8:31, R.V.).

Plural Number:

(1) By the man to Jesus: "We are many."

(2) By the demons to Jesus: "All the demons besought him, saying, Send us into the swine that we may enter into them."

(3) By Jesus to the demons: "Jesus gave them leave." He said unto them, "Go," using the plural form of the verb (Matthew 8:32). The two forms, singular and plural, are to be seen in close juxtaposition in Mark 5:9-10 : "And he asked him (sing.), What is thy (sing.) name? And he (sing.) answered, saying, My (sing.) name is Legion; for we (plur.) are many. And he (sing.) besought him much that he would not send them (plur.) away out of the country." The Lord addressed the man as the responsible person, asking him, "What is thy name?" and He also distinguished between the man who was oppressed and the evil powers which possessed him, saying, "Come forth out of the man, thou unclean spirit." The man is regarded as tenanted by the evil spirit. This distinction and identification is found in another connection of an opposite nature. As this case was one of a man indwelt by unclean spirits for purposes of evil, so we learn from the Epistles that those who believe the gospel of salvation (Ephesians 1:1-23) are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, who is assuredly distinct in His personality from those whom He indwells, bearing witness indeed, as He does, with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). At the same time He, in a blessed way, identifies Himself with us, helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. The Lord Himself declared to His followers, referring to their testimony, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20).

Such facts as these shed some light upon the higher part of man’s complex nature, and show that it is subject to that comprehensive law enunciated by the apostle Paul, when he said, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16)?

Into the Swine but not the Abyss The demons who feared the time of future torment had their requests to prefer to Him whom they knew and addressed as the Son of the most high God. They acknowledged His supreme authority even as Satan did when he came before Jehovah in the matter of His servant Job (Job 1:1-22).

Here they besought the Lord that He would not send them out of the country, and, as Luke states, that He would not command them to go into the deep, or the abyss (Luke 8:31). The abyss is the Scriptural term for the place of confinement of evil spirits. The word in the original Greek is translated "bottomless pit" in the Apocalypse (Revelation 9:1-2, Revelation 9:11). From thence the "beast" will arise who will make war upon the two witnesses and overcome them (Revelation 11:7, Revelation 17:8). According to the same series of prophecies, Satan will be imprisoned in the abyss during the thousand years of glorious peace under the reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3).

Possibly the abyss is the place of constraint, mentioned by Jude, in which certain evil angels have been already placed: "And the angels which kept not their first [proper] estate but left their own habitation, he path reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6).

There was at any rate an evident fear on the part of these evil spirits, lest they should be forthwith condemned to confinement in the abyss, and thus be prevented "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

They admitted that Jesus had authority to eject them, for, as Matthew reports, they said, "If thou cast us out" (Matthew 8:31); and their desire was to enter the unclean swine, as if to exhibit and gratify their love of destruction. As Satan disguised himself as the serpent for subtlety (Genesis 3:1-24), and, to deceive the unwary, now transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), also walking about as a roaring lion to devour the unresisting (1 Peter 5:8), so here theuncleanspirits sought permission to enter the herd ofuncleanswine. "Suffer us," they said, thus owning, like Satan of old (Job 1:1-22), their impotence apart from the Supreme Will. The Lord acceded to their request, and immediately they abandoned their human prey, and took possession of the herd of swine, wherein to display their destructive aims and thus to inspire men with a fear and dread, apart from which they have no power over them. Their maleficent propensities were at once exemplified; for the whole herd of animals was irresistibly impelled down the steep cliffs and perished in the sea. This destruction of property by Satanic influence acting through secondary causes is not without its parallel in Old Testament times. In the history of the calamities which came upon Job we are permitted to see that the sudden losses of his flocks and herds and children were attributable to the malice of Satan. To outward seeming the Sabeans captured the oxen and sheep; the Chaldeans carried away his camels; the fire from heaven burned up his sheep; the hurricane slew his sons and daughters; but all these casualties arose, as we learn from the inspired narrative, from the evil plottings of Satan which were permitted by Jehovah, who, however, overruled them all for the eventual and enhanced blessing of the patriarch. In the instance at Gadara the fate of the swine forms a plain and unmistakable example of the tendencies and objects of Satan and his demons. The violent end of the beasts was but an analogy of the ultimate end of those who are under the direction and power of darkness. Only in the absence of that superior nature which man possesses in contrast with the brutes, destruction followed immediately after the entrance of the demons into the swine. They at once rushed to their death. In the case of man the end is similar though it may be reached more slowly. Whatever men may be deceived to think, the object of the evil one is to destroy, while that of the Holy One of God is to deliver and save. The question of the loss incurred by the keepers of the swine, who were probably faithless Jews, is not discussed in the Gospels, neither is the question whether this loss came upon them by way of retribution for keeping the unclean animals contrary to the law of Moses. Indeed the "utility" argument, sometimes used as an objection that this destruction of animal life should be permitted by the gracious Saviour, is irrelevant; since the wholesale loss of property has ever been of frequent occurrence through those inexplicable catastrophes which form such noticeable features in the inscrutable ways of divine Providence. Until we know the ultimate intention of Sovereign Wisdom, we are not in a position to understand nor to discuss the righteousness of such events, or of the miracle in question. Without knowing, faith is confident that all is working for good.

It may be added that another point concerning this and analogous cases is made clear by this incident. Demon-possession has a specific character. It is not, as some would allege, a form of disease nor the result of overpowering sinful propensities; the behaviour of the animals when possessed proved the contrary. They were not carried away suddenly by some disease nor as suddenly filled by a swinish perversity to compass their own destruction. The truth was that the power of Satan was acting in a special manner to destroy them. The Delivered Man

Those who witnessed the mad rush of the swine over the precipice spread the news in town and country, and numbers ("the whole city," Matt.) flocked to Jesus to see the Author of this thing. They beheld not only the Prophet of Nazareth but the wild untameable man of the hill-tombs. In the latter they could not but observe the pacific change wrought by the Lord’s word. They found him sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. He now possessed that demeanour characteristic of the mental sobriety (sophosune) which is enjoined in the Epistles as a necessary element of Christian character (Romans 12:3; 1 Peter 4:7; et al.). The inward influence of that hateful power for evil and self-destruction had been withdrawn. The man was now under the benign and gracious influence of the meek Man of sorrows whom demons fear and obey. The voice that had hushed the riotous elements the previous night had spoken peace to this troubled spirit. And he who had hitherto resisted all human efforts to curb his violence is seen to have succumbed to the word of the Master.

Thus the deliverance was complete; and this mental and physical emancipation is an illustration of the liberating effect which the gospel ever exercises upon the whole man who comes to the Saviour. There is a spiritual liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. The Lord Jesus delivers the believer from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13), from the course of this age, from the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2), bringing him from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). The Grossness of Gadara When the inhabitants of the district beheld Jesus who had delivered the demoniac, but who was, in their estimation, the destroyer of their swine, they were unanimous in expressing their desire that He should leave the neighbourhood immediately. It was an ungracious, and indeed an insolent, petition, but it was granted, as was that of the demons when they besought Him that they might enter the swine and not be consigned to the abyss. Like Legion, the besotted Gadarenes said, in effect, What have we to do with Thee? There was with them an utter absence of appreciation of either His power or His grace. And they preferred to remain undisturbed with their naked, howling, demonized men and with their filthy swine. This callous spirit was really a gloomy but accurate reflexion of the attitude of the whole nation towards the Messiah, who "came unto His own, but His own received Him not." And the Lord expressed His sense of this refusal in His lamentation over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37). They did not desire His presence, and were ready enough to raise the cry, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." It is happy, however, to remember that there were exceptions to this general feeling. While those at Gadara besought Him to depart, those at Capernaum, seeing His miracles, "stayed him that he should not depart from them" (Luke 4:42). And while at a certain village of Samaria the inhabitants refused to receive Jesus (Luke 9:53), at Sychar, another Samaritan town, they besought Him that He would tarry with them (John 4:40). But whatever the attitude of the few, the spirit of Gadara prevailed throughout the favoured land. The Lord had entered the domain of the strong man and

spoiled his goods, as the people could not but admit. In spite of this, such was their obstinacy, that they did not desire that this Deliverer from the great and cruel oppressor should dwell in their midst. This rejection of absolute goodness in the person of Christ was the culminating feature of the sin of man. It proved that he not only did what was evil, but hated what was good. The will and the affections were equally alienated from God.

However debased man may become, he is still capable of pride. The degraded Gadarenes were well satisfied with themselves, and wished for no help. To overvalue self is to undervalue Christ. "He who thinks he hath no need of Christ hath too high thoughts of himself. He who thinks Christ cannot help him hath too low thoughts of Christ." The Witness for Decapolis The delivered man, on seeing Jesus enter the boat to cross the sea and leave the country, besought the Lord that he might accompany Him. Who can wonder at this desire? The poor fellow owed everything to his Deliverer. And what a relief was his to be freed from the power of such tormentors. And how safe he would feel in the presence of Jesus from any further attacks of the demons. Now he had a pure heart and a right spirit, and nowhere could their renewed aspirations find such satisfaction as in the Person at whose feet he sat. He, like so many others then and since, was irresistibly attracted to the Prophet of Nazareth, and he was ready to leave everything to follow and be with him. But the Lord had other duties for him. The Servant of Jehovah, in the spirit of omniscient wisdom, regarded the future of this delivered demoniac as it affected the service of the gospel, and not according to the personal inclination of the suppliant. Here was a district which prayed to be relieved of the ministrations of the incarnate Son of God. To this offensive request the lowly Nazarene acceded. But it was a feature of the divine plan for man’s eternal blessing that when God’s "Faithful and True Witness" was rejected and slain, the place of testimony in the world should be filled by those who, having received of His "fulness," were His loving and loyal followers. Such a phase of divine service is indicated here by the post of duty which the Master assigned to this recipient of His mercy in Gadara. He was to remain as a witness. If the gross darkness of Decapolis comprehended not the shining of the Light of life, it should still have a light-bearer in the person of the healed demoniac. So the Lord said to him, "Go to thy home unto thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee." His home he had formerly abandoned for the charnel-house. His friends he had outraged by his violence. His domestic circle, including these friends and acquaintances, had witnessed his excesses under the demoniacal influence, and to these he was now bidden by the Lord to return that they might judge of the reality of the change wrought in him. As the Lord sent the cleansed lepers to the priest that the genuineness of their healing might be authoritatively attested, so the Lord sent this man to his house that his friends might have opportunity of judging by his conduct what a complete deliverance was his, and moreover that they might hear for themselves from his own lips, eloquent in the enthusiasm of his gratitude, what the Lord had done for him. He was to testify to the Lord’s power and to His mercy. For it was a greatthing for Jesus to deliver him from the power of Satan with a word, and it was also amercifulthing inasmuch as the man had wilfully and wickedly abandoned himself to the power of the evil one.

Such a simple strain of gratitude is acceptable to God. For we find in the Psalms that "great things done" will be the keynote of the song of thanksgiving adopted by the blessed and delivered remnant of Israel when they enter into their millennial joys, as it also was when Jehovah brought back the exiles from Babylon: "When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion we were like

them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongues with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalms 126:1-3). The man owned the right of the Lord to direct his movements, and obeyed His commands. He thus became a preacher of Christ in ten cities (Decapolis), where he rendered a testimony which resembled the present preaching of the gospel. For while preaching is not itself a miracle, it is essentially a testimony founded upon a divine work. The witness concerning the miracle created a sensation in the district, for we read "all men did marvel," as it is the way of man to do at things he can neither comprehend nor imitate. But such an emotion does not affect either the heart or the conscience. This characteristic is several times recorded of the unthinking populace (Matthew 9:33;Luke 11:14;John 7:21), but not of them only, for it was true of the Pharisees and Herodians when they received the Lord's wise answers to their cunning questions (Mark 12:17), as well as of the apostles when they beheld the storm stilled at the word of Jesus (Matthew 8:27;Luke 8:25). On the other hand, the word is applied to our Lord, for we read that Jesus marvelled at the obdurate unbelief of men's hearts (Mark 6:6), an application which may well form a topic for our meditation. The Sign to Israel

There are elements in the narrative of the Gadarene miracle which appear to have a striking analogy to the future history of Israel, and this imparts to it the character of a sign. In scriptural teaching from early days, idolatry is considered a form of demon-rule and demon-worship (Deuteronomy 32:17;Joshua 24:2,Joshua 24:15;Psalms 106:37). The apostle Paul thus speaks, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God," and going on to refer to the Corinthians eating that which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, he adds, "I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). And what the Gentiles did as idol-worshippers, Israel had done (Ezekiel 20:7-8), and will yet do again. Idolatry, which had been intermittent in the chosen land, was established as a national rite by Jeroboam and continued as such until the captivity. From that time until the present the nation has preserved itself from the pollutions of idolatry. But according to prophecy the abomination of desolation shall yet stand in the holy place, and the apostate mass of the Jews shall yet unite in the worship of Antichrist and his image. Israel will again become Gentile in religion. The Lord set out this future lapse of the Jews into idolatry parabolically. He said, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man it walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then it saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when it is come it findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth it and taketh with itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43-45). This prediction has not yet been fulfilled, but according to it, the unclean spirit of idolatry expelled from the nation some five centuries before the advent of Christ will return, and in a sevenfold greater degree defile and abase the people in the uncleanness of idol-worship.

Using, therefore, the language of this narrative, the herd of swine — the unclean majority or mass of the Jews — possessed by the powers of darkness, will be irresistibly impelled to their own perdition. Wheresoever the [unclean] carcase is, thither will the eagles [of judgment] be gathered together" (Luke 17:37). Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord cast the seven demons, well represents the delivered remnant of that day. The undelivered ones perish in their uncleanness before the millennial dawn. For in the important prelude to the reign of peace, both mercy and

judgment will be in exercise. And while the idolaters are swept away, the nation will be purged from the uncleanness of idolatry in accordance with the prophecy of Zechariah: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zechariah 13:1-2). With this a prophecy in Ezekiel agrees. There Jehovah promised the people: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25; see also Ezekiel 36:18). The following extract* has reference to this aspect of the narrative, "The world beseeches Jesus to depart, desiring their own ease, which is more disturbed by the presence and power of God than by a legion of devils. He goes away. The man who was healed — the remnant — would fain be with Him; but the Lord sends him back (into the world that He quitted Himself) to be a witness of the grace and power of which he had been the subject.

"The herd of swine, I doubt not, set before us the career of Israel towards their destruction, after the rejection of the Lord. The world accustoms itself to the power of Satan — painful as it may be to see it in certain cases — never to the power of God."

{*Synopsis of the Books of the bible, by J, N, Darby, p. 318.}

05.27. The Petition of Jairus

27. — The Petition of Jairus

"And when Jesus had crossed over1 again in the boaT1 unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered3 unto him: and he was by the sea. And there cometh4 one of the rulers5 of the synagogue, Jairus by name;6 and seeing him,7 he falleth8 at his feet, and beseecheth9 him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death:10 I pray thee, that thou come11 and lay thy hands12 on her, that she may be made whole,13 and live. And he went14 with him; and a great multitude15 followed him, and they thronged16 him" (Mark 5:21-24, R.V.).

1. "having passed over," J.N.D.; "was crossed over," McC.

2. "ship," J.N.D.; "bark," T.S.G.

3. "crowd gathered," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "multitude gathered,"

4. "comes," J.N.D., T.S.G.

5. "chiefs," T.S.G.

6. "by name, Jairus," J.N.D., T.S.G.

7. "when he saw," McC.

8. "falls down," J.N.D.; "falls," T.S.G.

9. "besought,"McC.; "beseeches," T.S.G.

10. "at extremity," J.N.D.; "at her last gasp," T.S.G.

11. "[I pray] that thou shouldest come," J.N.D.; "I pray thee come," McC.; "it is that thou mayest come," T.S.G.

12. "lay hands," T.S.G.

13. "healed," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved," McC.

14. "went away," McC., T.S.G.

15. "large crowd," J.N.D.; "great crowd," T.S.G.

16. "pressed on," J.N.D.; "were thronging," T.S.G. At this point in the course of the gospel narrative, events in Capernaum are introduced which illustrate yet another phase of the ministry of Jehovah’s Servant, exercised in connection with Israel. It will be recalled from what precedes that (1) the parables in the fourth chapter, (2) the stilling of the storm in the presence of the apostles alone, and (3) the healing of the demoniac in Gadara beyond Jordan, all combined to instruct the followers of Christ concerning the singular nature of the ministry of the kingdom. Taking the three points as enumerated, it is shown (1) that the word of God as preached by the Lord would not be

immediately and invariably successful in fruitbearing, (2) that the difficulties and opposition to the gospel would sometimes be so great that the servants of the kingdom would be in danger of complete destruction, (3) and that the witnesses of Christ may expect to be left alone in a world that had rid itself of the presence of the Servant of Jehovah Himself.

Evidence is now furnished by the raising of Jairus's daughter of the positive nature of the Lord's gracious mercy in His ministry which was then proceeding. Jesus was the Lord of life and death. And let Israel be so dead in all spiritual perception as to be oblivious to the advent of the Messiah, He would, in answer to faith, bestow life upon the dead. Moreover, if only touched in faith He was ready to respond in healing power to the weak and ailing. The Lord came to save Israel's life, though the condition of the nation in reality proved to be death when He came. But beside this main purpose such was the fulness of grace that wherever there was faith in the midst of the surrounding crowd, healing flowed forth from the Fountain of mercy present.

Another new feature of divine ministry is introduced in that the incident shows that the Lord was accessible on behalf of others. A person whose name (in contrast with the usual practice in the Gospels) is recorded,* approached the Prophet to solicit mercy for his daughter. In the instances mentioned previously, the Lord dealt directly with the persons whom He blessed, and though it is recorded that the inhabitants of Capernaum brought their diseased to Jesus for healing (Mark 1:32), and that the sick of the palsy was borne to Him by four, nothing is stated of any intercession being made by the interested friends of the afflicted. Here the parental anxiety of Jairus for his only daughter who lay dying is manifest in the earnest solicitude of his petition for her recovery. We are shown how Jesus graciously responded to this request; but most striking of all is that part of the narrative which contains the words of comfort and assurance addressed to the agitated father upon the receipt of the news that his daughter had died before Jesus reached the house: "Be not afraid, only believe."**

{*Luke also records the ruler's name, but not Matthew. The Hebrew equivalent of Jairus occurs in Numbers 32:41, and Deuteronomy 3:14.

**It has been suggested that Jairus was one of the rulers who came to Jesus on behalf of the centurion who built a synagogue at Capernaum (Luke 7:5). This is no more than conjecture, but if true, the Jewish ruler had not the faith of the Roman soldier, who expressed the confidence that the Lord need not come to his house but could heal his servant with a word only.}

We thus have illustrated that feature of the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah which is of such value in a world of suffering and sorrow, still groaning beneath the distressing effects of the presence of sin. The previous portion of the Gospel demonstrated that the word of Jesus had power to heal disease, to deliver from Satan, and to still the storm. Here it is displayed that the Servant had come to administer the word of comfort which was suited to sustain the wounded spirit until the actual deliverance is effected. Such words of support and cheer are specially needed by those who walk by faith, and not by sight. The Chronological Order

It may be of some interest to inquire in what chronological order this miracle occurred; though it is admitted that as a general rule the exact order of occurrence is a point of subsidiary importance in the reading of the Gospels, and in many instances the notes of time given in the narratives are altogether inadequate as determining factors in settling the chronology. In examining such

indications of relative order as exist in this case, it is found that by Mark and Luke the healing of Jairus's daughter is placed in immediate juxtaposition to the Lord's return from Gadara, while in the First Gospel the two events are separated by the healing of the sick of the palsy, the call of Levi, the feast in his house, and the conversations with the Pharisees and with the disciples of John the Baptist. Is it then possible to ascertain the exact sequence of these various events? In the narrative of Matthew it is shown distinctly that the Lord's words to John's disciples about the piece of cloth and the wine-skins were immediately followed by the petition of Jairus. It is there stated that "while he yet spake these things unto them, behold, there came a ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead" (Matthew 9:18). Now this interview with the disciples of the Baptist was held in Levi's house where the newly-called apostle had made a feast in honour of Jesus, inviting many publicans and sinners to be present. And it was the social standing of these guests which awakened the contempt of the Pharisees (Matthew 9:11-13). Now it is to be noticed further that the objection made by the Pharisees to the character of these guests immediately preceded the visit of John's disciples. This is determined by the connective phrase, "Then(tote)come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the 'Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" (Matthew 9:4). At this juncture, therefore, while the conversation was proceeding in Levi's house, Jairus came, and in response to his request, Jesus left the "house of feasting" to visit the "house of mourning." The cure of the sick of the palsy and thecallof Levi precede the feast, in Matthew's account.* They are there interpolated for topical reasons, since the strict order of occurrence (in the case of the first two events) is shown by Mark and Luke to have been before the Lord crossed the sea of Gadara. Although in all three Gospels the notice of the feast which Levi made immediately follows that of his call, this position in no way proves that the feast was arranged on the same day. Some time would be necessary to make preparations and to invite the guests. But though the call and the feast were not immediately consecutive in the happening of events in Capernaum, they are placed together in the narrative to show that one was the outcome of the other; the feast expressed the gratitude of the tax-gatherer to Him who had called him.

{*InMark 2:15-22 the feast and the encounter with the Pharisees are named earlier in the narrative, and thus out of chronological sequence. Such an arrangement is unusual with this Evangelist. In the words of another, it is "one of the exceptional dislocations, if not the only one, in Mark; for it would appear fromMatthew 9:18, that while the Lord was speaking of the wine and the bottles the ruler Jairus came about his daughter."} The Lord's journey across the sea to the country of the Gerasenes does not appear to have occupied more than twenty-four hours. He seems to have left Capernaum towards the evening of one day, and returned in the course of the next. And the sequence of the events that immediately ensued was probably as follows, the last four taking place in the house of Levi: —

1. The return from Gadara by boat

2. The welcome of Jesus by crowds on landing

3. The feast in the house of Levi

4. The criticism of the Pharisees

5. The question by the disciples of John the Baptist

6. The application of Jairus concerning his child

Dying or Dead? In comparing the three accounts of this incident it is observable that the words of Jairus to the Lord appear to be reported differently. In these reports Matthew and Mark give the language used by the ruler, while Luke records them in the third person: thus we read:—

Matthew— "My daughter is even now dead" (Matthew 9:18) Mark— "My little daughter is at the point of death" (Mark 5:23) Luke— "She lay a-dying" (Luke 8:42). The ostensible difference is that according to the first Evangelist Jairus told the Lord that his daughter was actually dead, but according to Mark and Luke it would seem that she was at death's door. This variation is in itself an unimportant one, especially as we learn from the Gospels that a messenger brought the news of the child's actual death, while Jesus was on the way to the ruler's house — a circumstance, be it observed, not named by Matthew who represents the daughter's death from the outset of his narrative.

Apart from an explanation, this difference is valuable inasmuch as it proves the absence of collusion between the several Evangelists; but the antagonists of the Gospels have made much of this so-called discrepancy, alleging that their credibility is weakened if not destroyed thereby. But it is quite possible to justify both expressions, and to produce more than one reasonable explanation of the difference in phraseology. As already remarked, the Synoptic Gospels were evidently not written in collaboration to satisfy the demands of critics that they should be in exact mechanical alignment. And indeed the remarkable brevity of these memoirs is such that difficulties like that now under consideration are inevitable. The severe compression of both matter and style is phenomenal. Consider the comparative length of the Gospels as biographies. In an ordinary octavo Bible, with double columns of references, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke occupy about forty pages each, John about thirty, and Mark about twenty-five pages only. And these slight pamphlets constitute the sole authentic memoirs of the life and ministry of the Incarnote Son of God whose public service was characterised by incessant activity. How insignificant these seem in point ofsizewhen compared with the ponderous biographical tomes of the world's nonentities! Confessedly, brevity is one of the striking features of the divine Gospels.

Bearing this characteristic in mind it will be admitted to be impossible, under such stringent restriction, that the whole of the minor details necessary to a complete picture of a given incident should be recorded. A selection must be made, subject, of course, to the purpose of the narrative; and the briefer the allotted space the more extensive the exclusion must become. Thus each Evangelist in his selection (under the superintend ence of the Holy Spirit) was governed by the special object before him, and not by the details recorded by his fellow-evangelists, with whose compilation he may or may not have been familiar. In other words, each writer was, in this sense, independent.

Now in the incident under consideration, if we were in possession of the whole of the events of that day the particulars recorded would fall into their due chronological order, and the apparent discordance would disappear. However, without claiming that the following hypothesis has a historical basis, an examination of the various accounts will reveal phrases which afford strong probability to the explanation advanced. And this explanation, it is believed, will be sufficient to meet the demands of even this case, which has been described as "the most perplexing difficulty in the whole of the Gospel history."

1. In the accounts of Mark and Luke we read that Jairus came to the Lord after He had landed and while He was still near the lake: "And he was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, etc."; "And as Jesus returned, the multitudes welcomed him; for they were all waiting for him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus," etc. (Mark 5:21-22; Luke 8:41). In the absence of direct proof to the contrary, it seems clear that before the Lord went to the feast of Levi He received the petition of the ruler who besought Him "much" to come and lay His hand upon his little daughter who was at the point of death.

2. Matthew describes the Lord as seated in Levi's house and instructing the disciples of John the Baptist on the question of fasting when Jairus presented his request: "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a ruler and worshipped' him, saying, My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him" (Matthew 9:18-19). It has already been noted that this interrupted interview with the Baptist's disciples took place in the house of Levi, it would seem therefore that Matthew, in his account, is not referring to the occurrence chronicled by the other two Evangelists, but relates how the anxious ruler sought the Lord's presence a second time. If this was so, we must suppose that the Lord did not respond at once to the first prayer of Jairus, even as in His perfect wisdom He did not immediately respond to the urgent message of the sisters of Bethany concerning Lazarus. Therefore while Jesus was at the feast, Jairus renewed his petition in somewhat altered terms. He had become impatient at the seeming delay of the Master. She who at his first application was at her last gasp had by this time died. This he may have judged from her condition when he left her. At any rate he seems on the second occasion to have worded his request from this point of view. "My daughter is even now dead," was his plea this time. Yet even in this extremity. there remained in his heart hope and trust in the Great Physician, for he added, "Come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." The Lord tarried no longer, but"arose"(an expression not found in the parallel passages) and followed him. The fact of the damsel's death was subsequently confirmed by the messenger. The child was dead, and the mourners were already in the house; why should the Master be troubled further? Thus ran the message.

Viewed in this light, the terms of the petition of Jairus as stated by Matthew are in perfect accord with those recorded by Mark and Luke, and no further remarks are necessary. But it may be added that some have questioned whether the precise meaning of the original phrase in Matthew is conveyed by the usual rendering, "My daughter is even now dead." It is to be remarked that the verb used here is eteleutesen and not the same as that employed by the messenger (apethane);moreover, the adverb is not nun, but arti, which may be translated, "just about to happen" (Revelation 12:10). There is not the precision in the coincidence of time indicated by arti as by Mark 5:5. Such a distinction between these adverbs may be observed in John 2:1-25. Speaking at Cana of the waterpots, the Lord said to the servants at the marriage feast, "Draw out now (nun)," i.e., draw out at this very moment. Later, the ruler of the feast, having tasted the wine, said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now (arti)," i.e., until the conclusion, as opposed to the commencement of the feast. There is less exactitude of time implied in the latter than in the former instance. But it is doubtful whether this distinction in usage is invariably observed in the New Testament, and it is only named here for the consideration of students.

Many translators have attributed this greater latitude of meaning to this adverb in the phrase in question, as if Jairus had said, My daughter by this time has come to her end. This is in agreement with Mr. Darby's rendering, "My daughter has by this died." In a footnote to the Translation he adds, "arti is what comes up to nun, says Suidas, quoted by Wetstein in loco; as autika, what in the future joins now. Mark has 'is at extremity'; Luke 'was dying'. Nor has 'now died' any other sense, only it is less clear. It is, however, quite possible that Matthew may give the result of the servant's message and all. It may be translated, 'has just now died,' or, 'has even now died.' Chrysostom and others give it as in text" [that is, "has by this died"]. In another place* Mr. Darby wrote: "arti etel., 'now at her end,' 'dead by this.' We know that the father received the news that she was actually dead on the way. arti is the point up to which time reached, nun the thing exists already."

{*Collected Writings, Vol, 24. p. 209.} The Father's Petition

It is noticeable that the prominent person in this episode was not one of the common people, as was the case in the events narrated in the former part of this Gospel history. Jairus, the petitioner, was a man of social and religious eminence, and moreover of that class from which the active opposition to Jesus sprang. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were honourable exceptions, but of the rest, it was once scornfully asked, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (John 7:48). Here then the Lord's mercy to the ruler shows that He is rich towards all who call upon Him, and that the testimony of good works which Capernaum was so obdurate in refusing (Matthew 11:23) ranged throughout all grades from the chiefs of the synagogue downwards.

Jairus, coming to Jesus in his distress, did him reverence by falling at His feet, a mark of respect the more striking, coming, as it did, from a person of local distinction such as a ruler of the synagogue was. The trouble of Jairus concerned his affections as a parent. He had one only daughter about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying. He therefore kept beseeching the Lord that He would come to his house and lay His hand upon her and heal her. Did the ruler recollect that in that very town not so long before, Jesus had entered the house of Simon where his wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and taking her by the hand, lifted her up and healed her? At any rate such was the request he made. But Jesus did hot immediately go to the sick child; for He was never swayed by secondary considerations. Personal friendship did not hurry Him to the sick man at Bethany, and his sorrowing sisters (John 11:3; John 11:36). His movements then, as ever, were regulated as to time and place only by the glory of God which would accrue. In this case He who would pause in His progress at the cry of a blind beggar by the roadside was not to be induced to alter His plans because a chief of the synagogue knelt at His feet. The ruler might have supposed that the party of tax-gatherers at Levi's house might very well wait until his own case was dealt with. But Jehovah's perfect Servant was above all such motives of worldly policy. He Himself was learning obedience by the things He was suffering; here was an opportunity for Jairus also to learn a lesson of patience and submission to the will of God. And thus his sorrow and anxiety over his daughter would be turned to account in his spiritual development. He would become possessor of that inward peace which is the result of patient submission to the divine Will. For this priceless boon we shall all do well to pray: —

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness

Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress

And let our ordered lives confess

The beauty of Thy peace."

Jesus then arose from the table of Levi, and accompanied the sorrow-stricken ruler. The disciples of the Lord went with Him, and a crowd of people also followed him and thronged Him as He passed through the narrow winding thoroughfares of Capernaum.

05.28. The Woman's Touch of Faith

28. — The Woman’s Touch of Faith

"And a woman1 which had2 an issue3 of blood, twelve years, and had suffered many things4 of many physicians, and had spent all that she had,5 and was nothing bettered,6 but rather grew worse,7 having heard the things8 concerning9 Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment.10 For she said, If I touch11 but his garments,12 I shall be made whole.13 And straightway14 the fountain of her blood15 was dried up; and she felt in16 her body that she was healed17 of her plague.18 And straightway19 Jesus, perceiving20 in himself that the power proceeding from him had gone forth, 21 turned him abouT1 in the crowd, and said, Who touched23 my garments?24 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging25 thee, and sagest thou, Who touched me? And he looked26 round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing27 and trembling, knowing what had been done in her,28 came and fell down29 before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole;30 go in peace, and be whole31 of thy plague32" (Mark 5:25-34, R.V.).

1 "certain woman," J.N.D., T.S.G.

2 "had had," J.N.D.; "had been in," T.S.G.

3 "flux," J.N.D., T.S.G.

4 "much under," J.N.D.; "undergone much at the hands of," T.S.G.

5 "everything she had," J.N.D.; "her all," McC.; "all her means," T.S.G.

6 "had found no advantage from it," J.N.D; "was nothing profited," McC. ; "was in no way bettered," T.S.G.

7 "had got worse," J.N.D.; "grown worse," McC.; "became worse," T.S.G.

8 "the things," omitted by J.N.D., McC., T.S.G.

9 "of," McC.; "about," T.S.G.

10 "clothes," J.N.D.; "outer garment," McC.; "mantle," T.S.G.

11 "shall touch," J.N.D.

12 "but his clothes," J.N.D.; "if it be but his outer garment," McC.; "even his clothes," T.S.G.

13 "healed," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved," McC.

14 "immediately," J.N.D., McC.; "forthwith," T.S.G.

15 "her fountain of blood," J.N.D.; "the issue of her blood," T.S.G.

16 "knew in," J.N.D.; "was made aware by," T.S.G.

17 "cured," J.N.D., T.S.G.

18 "from the scourge," J.N.D.; "of the scourge," T.S.G.

19 "immediately," J.N.D., "at once," T.S.G.

20 "knowing," J.N.D.; "made aware," T.S.G.

21 "the power that had gone out of him," J.N.D.; "his healing virtue was gone out," McC.; "of the power that had issued from him," T.S.G.

22 "turning round.," J.N.D.; "turned round," T.S.G.

23 "has touched," J.N.D.

24 "outer garment," McC.

25 "pressing on," J.N.D.; "thronging," McC.; "closely thronging," T.S.G.

26 "was looking," T.S.G.

27 "frightened," J.N.D.; "afraid," McC., T.S.G.

28 "what had taken place in her," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "that which was done unto her," Mc.100.

29 "threw herself," T.S.G.

30 "healed thee," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved thee," Mc.100.

31 "well," J.N.D.; "sound," T.S.G,

32 "scourge," J.N.D., McC. On the way through Capernaum to the house of Jairus the Lord was approached by a weak and ailing woman who sought and found healing for her body by secretly touching the border of His garment. How plenteous and overflowing is the mercy found in Him! It is like the fruitful bough of Joseph, "whose branches run over the wall." The Spirit of power and mercy in Him was "like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:2-3). The Touch and the Push This woman came to Jesus, so far as the Gospel narratives inform us, without any intervention on the part of other persons, and she thus affords an instance of what simple, direct, personal faith in Christ may effect. Her case was sad and desperate, as well as distressing (Leviticus 15:19-27). Her issue of blood had continued for twelve years without relief, though she had spent all her living upon physicians. They took their fees and she took their potions, yet she was nothing bettered but rather grew worse. The continual drain upon her life’s blood weakened and dispirited her, but the news of the marvellous works of healing wrought by the Prophet of Nazareth awakened new hopes within her. She resolved to seek His face, and implore His mercy. But the crowds that beset Jesus and followed Him thwarted this purpose. Besides how inopportune the moment! Who was she to hinder the Master when upon such an urgent errand on behalf of the ruler of the synagogue?

There are usually difficulties and obstructions of some sort in the way of a needy person seeking the aid of the Saviour. But faith is only quickened and strengthened by the presence of obstacles.

And it was so in this case. Seeing that a formal interview with the Teacher was impracticable under the circumstances, surely something less would suffice. She believed that the plenitude of His power was such, that the slightest contact with Him would be sufficient for her recovery. So the woman kept on saying in her heart, "If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be made whole." She knew that, according to the Mosaic prescription, when a sacrifice was brought to Jehovah for an unclean Israelite, the offerer laid his hands upon the animal, and it was acceptable and vicarious for him. In some inexplicable manner the virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice was communicated to him who touched it. She determined therefore to touch Jesus in order that the power of healing so abundant in Him might be communicated to her.

Thus faith wrought within the heart of this suffering woman, and she, weak as she was, struggled through the crowd, and, coming up be hind Jesus, she contrived to touch the fringe of His garment, edged, as probably it was, with its riband of blue (Numbers 15:37-41;Deuteronomy 22:12). The heavenly mercy which had come down to earth at once responded to the touch of faith. Immediately she was healed and felt within herself an accession of new life and strength. And profiting by her example, many others were subsequently encouraged to seek to obtain blessing in a similar manner, and they, like her, did not seek in vain (Matthew 14:36). For it was the day of grace now, not of law. Sinai, the symbol of that great legal system instituted under Moses, affrighted the people of Israel. There was fire and darkness and tempest to deter any that would approach; and then there was death in a touch, for if so much as a beast touched the mount it was to be stoned (Exodus 19:10-13;Hebrews 12:18-21). But Jehovah set no such bounds to mount Zion. Grace said, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). Who Touched Me? This miraculous recovery from a wasting disease obtained by the woman in a surreptitious manner did not, however, escape the perception of Jesus. He knew (as He knew epignous] the unuttered thoughts of the Pharisees and scribes, and as He knew all things) that power had gone out of Him. His service, therefore, was not a blind mechanical distribution of merciful power. The power truly went forth from Him,* but with it was blended love and interest and compassion. And this constituted a revelation of God to man, for it exemplifies in a striking manner the operation of the providential powers of God in the terrestrial creation. The mighty forces of nature in their silent and systematic movements do not form a gigantic mechanism merely but are directed and controlled by divine love and wisdom to the accomplishment of the purposes of divine beneficence.

{*We read that He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38).} The Lord who responded so readily to the touch of faith by an act of healing did not require for His own information the answer to His question, "Who touched my clothes? He inquired primarily, we may suppose, for the instruction and enlightenment of the woman herself; secondarily, for the benefit of His disciples and the attendant crowd; and finally, for the profit of all readers of Holy Writ. The disciples viewed the question of the Lord from the standpoint of "common sense," which is always a source of deception in divine things. Faith, not common sense, was certainly required in this case where the whole of the circumstances were the reverse of "common." They ignored the unique personality of the Questioner, or Peter and the others would not have said in that deprecatory manner, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus distinguished between the touch of faith and the jostle of idle curiosity. It has been said, "Flesh presses; faith touches." The multitude were there to hear or see some new

thing. They were impelled by the common craze for novelty. Such a superficial desire could be satisfied for the moment by any unusual event — by the occult wonders of Simon Magus, by some strange natural phenomenon, by a fairy tale, by anything out of the common. But the touch of the woman was of a different order. The contact of her finger gave expression to a deeply-felt need for the interference of Jehovah's mercy on her behalf. It also expressed the confidence that the requisite mercy of Jehovah was available for her in the person of Jesus, and nowhere else in this sad and disappointing world. The Lord recognised what motive impelled the woman to touch His robe, and He said with gentle gracious dignity in answer to the harsh ungracious remarks of His followers, "Someone did touch me; for I perceived that power went forth from me" (Luke 8:46). "This was not a result of His taking careful note of peculiarities of action and character manifested to the eye by those around Him, but of His perceiving in His spirit and knowing in Himself the unuttered reasonings and volitions which were taking shape, moment by moment, within the secret souls of men, just as clearly as He saw physical facts not ordinarily appreciated except by sensuous perception." The woman began now to enter upon the second stage of her lesson. She had learned the Saviour's omnipotent mercy; she was now to learn His omniscient love. "She saw she was not hid." In the language of the Psalmist — Whither should she flee from His Spirit? Adam and Eve under the trees of Eden learned the futility of seeking to conceal themselves from the divine eye, and so did Nathanael under the fig tree. David's psalm expresses the same experience in lofty diction (Psalms 139:1-24). The friends of Jesus learn His attribute of omniscience to their blessing, but His adversaries to their shame and confusion. Of the latter many will, in a coming day, call to the mountains and rocks in their terror, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). But how salutary for the followers of Jesus to live habitually in the consciousness that His eye is ever upon them. It was in this consciousness that conscience-stricken Peter was ultimately brought to rest, when he confessed to the Lord, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). The woman, flushed with the joy of a wondrous healing, saw now that Jesus was aware of her cure, and that His question, though couched in general terms such as might apply to any in that crowd, was addressed especially to her and indeed to no one else. She came therefore to the Lord to confess to Him what she had done, and she went "fearing and trembling." For she now knew she had done a bold thing, and she feared what the consequences might be. In the fact of His knowledge of her secret act she had gained a glimpse of the divine majesty of Him whose garment she had touched. And while He was so holy and so mighty, how unworthy was she! Was she not, according to the prescription of Jehovah's sacred law, a polluted and defiled woman (Leviticus 15:19)?* Had not the stern prohibition gone forth that if either man or beast touch the mountain of Jehovah's holiness, it should be stoned (Exodus 19:12-13)? Jehovah who came down on mount Sinai of old was now in Capernaum; and the woman, as she came to Jesus, feared and trembled, for though she had become the vessel of His power, she knew not, as yet, the word of His grace — that He was there in the midst of the poor of His land to heal and bless and save.

{*A Pharisee would have regarded her action as an intolerable insult. Witness the scornful comment of Simon upon the conduct of another woman: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him; for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39),}

She who had stolen behind Him to gain her blessing, now fell down before Him and told Him all the truth. And the disciples of Jesus heard her declare "for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately." The faith in her heart was thus supplemented by the confession of her lips in the hearing of all present. And this combination of faith and confession, illustrated in this instance, is, in the Epistles, enforced doctrinally as the twofold requisite from man for his blessing through the gospel: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:10-11). The Reward of Confession

It was not the purpose of the Lord Jesus that His mighty works should be done "in a corner," but openly and before all the people. Accordingly the public confession of the woman was made. She then received the additional and inestimable benefit of the assuring words of the Lord addressed personally to her. She learned from His own lips that her application to Him for healing was not unwelcome, and that His gift of mercy was not made grudgingly but with His whole heart. Her fears were calmed and her soul set at rest. And the words spoken were such as would be her inward strength and stay when the Messiah was no longer present. The Lord said to her:

1. Daughter, be of good comfort,

2. Thy faith hath made thee whole (saved thee);

3. Go in peace,

4. Be whole from thy plague. The last phrase occurs only in Mark. The tense (perfect) of the verb employed was a guarantee for the future. It indicated the thorough nature of the cure and precluded a recurrence of her trouble. The words implied, "Be permanently whole [hale, healthy] from thy plague."

(1) The considerate words of comfort used by the Lord are illustrative of that tender compassion of His, ever in active exercise towards those who sought Him in their distress. He knew the intense mental depression which accompanies protracted physical suffering, and especially so when, as in this case, the disease repeatedly baffles human attempts to cure. The heart is sick with oft-deferred hope, and the debilitated frame is further weakened by the added burden of nervous anxiety and worry. But while "heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop, a good word maketh it glad" (Proverbs 12:25).

There are many instances of the Lord removing such feelings of distress by His word. To the trembling woman before Him, whether her fears were the indirect result of the wasting disease from which she had now been freed, or whether they arose from her apprehension that she had offended the Great Physician, He addressed her with the words, both tender and strength-giving, "Daughter, be of good comfort." The term of address, "Daughter," recalls His words to the weeping women who bewailed and lamented Him as He was led to the place of crucifixion. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28). To the bowed woman, He said, not "Daughter," but, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity," though He also spoke of her, referring to her faith, as "a daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:12; Luke 13:16). But this occasion is the only recorded one on which the Lord used this title of "Daughter" simply, and it soothed the woman’s tremors and fears. She caught a glimpse of that "perfect love which casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

(2) It is here recorded for the first time in the course of this Gospel that faith is the means of obtaining blessing. There is no encouragement of any superstitious veneration for the tassel of His robe which was touched. The Lord declared to the woman in the hearing of all that the faith within her had saved her, or made her whole. Her cure was not a right which she could have claimed as an Israelite, but the blessing was accorded to her because she had exercised faith in Jehovah's Servant. This faith of hers the Lord undoubtedly "saw," as He did that of the paralytic and his friends (Mark 2:5); only in this case by His words to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee," He made it clear to all concerned that faith on the part of the recipient is essential whether the salvation is physical, or moral as in the case of another woman (Luke 7:50). The report of the sayings and doings of the Prophet of Nazareth had spread abroad throughout Galilee, but with little effect upon the people generally. Isaiah might well ask in prophetic view of this time, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" But this woman had believed the report, for we read, "having heard the things concerning Jesus she came in the crowd behind and touched his garment." And having believed the report, the strength of the arm of Jehovah for healing was revealed to her and in her (Isaiah 53:1).

Faith in the heart may express itself in a variety of ways — in importunate earnestness, like Abraham pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah, or in patient endurance of suffering, as in the cases of Job and Joseph. Here the mute appeal of the woman's touch shows how eloquent before God the very silence of faith may be. In like manner the dumb posture of Hannah did not escape the pitying eye of Jehovah (1 Samuel 1:1-28). For it is with the heart man believes, whatever the mode in which faith expresses itself before man.

It is worth noticing that the word sozo, usually translated in the New Testament "save," is employed in its general sense of deliverance in regard to the healing of this woman in all three accounts: Matthew 9:21-22; Mark 5:28; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48. It is also applied to the restoration of the daughter of Jairus, Mark 5:23; Luke 8:50; to the healing of Bartimaeus, Mark 10:52, Luke 18:42; of the Gadarene demoniac, Luke 8:36; of the Samaritan leper, Luke 17:19; of many that touched Jesus, Mark 6:56; of the impotent man at the temple gate, Acts 4:9; of the cripple at Lystra, Acts 14:9. In these instances the Greek word is translated "made whole," or, "healed." The disciples, speaking to the Lord concerning Lazarus, also made use of the word, and in this passage it is rendered "do well," or, "recover": "If he sleep he shall do well" (John 11:12).

(3)The utterance by our Lord of this form of benediction, "Go in peace," is only recorded in one other instance in the Gospels, and there, as on this occasion, it is associated with the faith that saved. To the woman who sought the Lord in Simon the Pharisee's house for the forgiveness of sins He said, as He did to this woman who came to Him for a temporal benefit, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). On account of this connection we are fairly entitled to regard these words as of greater significance than the ordinary farewell salutation of the East, such as we find in Exodus 4:18; Judges 18:6; 1 Samuel 1:17, 1 Samuel 20:13; 1 Samuel 20:42; 2 Kings 5:19; Acts 15:33. The Lord was infinitely above human conventionality in speech, such as James condemns (James 2:16). He had come to "ordain peace" for His people in the best and surest sense.

Peace, as it is here regarded, is an inward possession of the soul. It is the antithesis of fret and anxiety which, in its gravest forms, may arise within a person from the sense of guilt before God or

from the fear of death. Divine assurance alone can dispel this anxiety; hence peace is the sequel of faith, and is associated with the mind and heart. Confidence and calmness are connected in the oft-quoted promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). And, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:7).

Here the woman who came to the Lord in fear and trembling is bidden to depart in peace. The Prince of peace bestowed His royal boon upon her whose spirit had been broken by sorrow of heart (Proverbs 15:13); while He, at the same time, proved Himself to be the Jehovah of prophecy giving first strength and then peace: "The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace" (Psalms 29:11).

(4) In the phrase already noted as peculiar to Mark’s Gospel, "Be permanently recovered from thy plague," we observe another of those minute touches which emphasise the special object of this Evangelist. Mark was inspired of God to show how thoroughly the divine Servant did His work. And it is in his Gospel therefore that it is recorded that the people said of Him, "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37). The cure of this woman is an instance in point; hers was not a temporary relief but a complete deliverance from the disease which had afflicted her throughout the previous twelve years.

05.29. The Dead Child Restored

29. — The Dead Child Restored

"While he yet spake,1 they came from the ruler2 of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead:3 why troublesT1 thou the Master any further? But Jesus, not heeding5 the word spoken,6 saith unto the ruler7 of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe. And he suffered8 no man to follow with9 him, save Peter, and James and John the brother of James. And they come10 to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he beholdeth11 a tumult,12 and many13 weeping and wailing greatly.14 And when he was entered in,15 he saith unto them, Why make ye a tumult,16 and weep? the child is not dead,17 but sleepeth.18 And they laughed him to scorn.19 But he, having put10 them all forth, taketh21 the father of the child and her mother and them that were with him, and goeth in22 where the child was.23 And taking24 the child by the hand,25 he saith unto her, Talitha cumi;26 which is, being interpreted, Damsel,27 I say28 unto thee, Arise.29 And straightway30 the damsel rose up,31 and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway33 with a great amazement.32 And he charged them much34 that no man35 should know this; and he commanded36 that something37 should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:35-43, R.V.).

{1 "was yet speaking," J.N.D., T.S.G.

2 "chief," T.S.G.

3 "has died," J.N.D.

4 "worriest," McC; "dost thou give further trouble to," T.S.G.

5 "having heard," J.N.D.; "overhearing," McC., T.S.G.

6 "the saying as it was spoken," McC.; "the speech spoken," T.S.G.

7 "synagogue-chief," T.S.G.

8 "allowed," T.S.G.

9 "accompany," J.N.D., T.S.G.

10 "he comes," J.N.D.

11 "sees," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "seeth," McC.

12 "uproar," McC.; "stir," T.S.G.

13 "people," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "folk," McC.

14 "howling," McC.; "making great outcry," T.S.G.

15 "entering in," J.N.D.; "when he was come in," McC.; "on going in," T.S.G.

16 "Why be ye in an uproar," McC.; "Why are you making a stir," T.S.G.

17 "has not died," J.N.D.

18 "sleeps," J.N.D.; "is sleeping," T.S.G.

19 "derided him," J.N.D.; "jeered him," T.S.G.

20 "having turned out," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "when he had put," McC.

21 "takes with [him]," J.N.D.; "takes with him," T.S.G.

22 "enters in," J.N.D., McC.; "enters," T.S.G.

23 "lying" added, J.N.D.

24 "having laid hold of," J.N.D.; "laid hold of," McC.; "having grasped," T.S.G.

25 "the hand of the child," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "the child's hand," McC.

26 "koumi," J.N.D.; "coum," McC.; "kumi," T.S.G.

27 "Girl," T.S.G.

28 "bid," T.S.G.

29 "Rise," T.S.G.

30 "immediately," J.N.D.; "forthwith," T.S.G.

31 "arose," J.N.D.; "rose again," McC.

32 "astonished with great astonishment," J.N.D.

33 "straightway" omitted, J.N.D., T.S.G.

34 "strictly" added, McC.

35 "one," J.N.D., McC., T.S.G.

36 "desired," J.N.D.; "spike," McC.; "bade," T.S.G.

37 "there," McC.}

There had been what appeared to the impatient and distressed ruler many vexatious delays to the visit of Jesus to his house where his sick daughter lay. It would seem, as already noted, that Jairus* made two separate applications to Jesus before He acceded to the request and accompanied him. The crowd that gathered in the narrow streets — that multitude who, not knowing the law, were regarded by the rulers as accursed (John 7:49) — made progress slow and difficult. The episode of the healing of the woman appeared to be a further impediment in the way of the Master's mercy for him. And now while Jesus was pronouncing His final benison upon the woman (cp. Genesis 26:29) some arrived from the ruler's house with the sad tidings, anticipated but dreaded by him, that death had supervened. "Thy daughter is dead" was the message, closing, as he supposed, the last door of his hopes. He felt like Martha and Mary of Bethany, and might have expressed his feelings in their language, "Lord, if thou hadst been there, my daughter

had not died."

{*Jairus sought the Lord himself on behalf of his daughter; Martha and Mary sent a message about Lazarus; but the mercy to the widow of Nain was unsought by her. So diverse are the channels of divine blessing!} In the estimation of the messenger* who delivered the message, the incident of the appeal to Jesus was of necessity closed. There now was no more to be done. "Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Teacher" (Luke). And as if the distracted father was seeking to attract the attention of Jesus while He continued speaking to the woman, some said to Jairus, "Why art thou still troubling the Teacher?"

{*Luke speaks of one messenger only, probably the chief; while Mark mentions some, including his companions. Though the Cushite only was sent to David to announce the death of Absalom, Ahimaaz accompanied him at his own request (2 Samuel 18:1-33.)}

They gave expression to what would be the practical matter-of-fact opinion of the populace, if not of the apostles also, "What could the prophet of Nazareth do when death had seized its prey?" Believing He could do nothing, they would trouble Him no further. But, as an old writer quaintly puts it: "Here were more manners than faith; Trouble not the Master.' Infidelity is all for care, and thinks every good work tedious. That which nature accounts troublesome is pleasing and delightful to grace. Is it any pain for a hungry man to eat? O Saviour, it was Thy meat and drink to do Thy Father's will; and His will was that Thou shouldest bear our griefs, and take away our sorrows. It cannot be Thy trouble which is our happiness that we must still sue to Thee." The Comforting Word to Jairus The rendering of the Revisers here, "But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken," etc., has been justly questioned, since it is in direct conflict with the context. Jesus did heed the word spoken to Jairus and spoke in reply to counteract it, as the verse shows. The verb,parakouo,translated "hear" in the Authorised Version, occurs also inMatthew 18:17, where it is rendered "neglect to hear." But in this connection (Mark 5:36) many scholars see sufficient ground for rendering it "over-hearing," as the Revisers have done in their margin, and McClellan in his translation. The general sense of the word seems to be that Jesus heard what the speaker did not intend He should hear, but He ignored the literal remark, and said what expressed His own purpose and allayed the anxiety of Jairus. Referring to this passage W. Kelly wrote, "It is doubtful whether the marginal 'overhearing' should not rather have taken the place of the Revisers' text, not 'heeding,' which would have suited if the Lord had said nothing. But He heeds the word spoken enough to bid the synagogue-ruler, "Fear not, only believe."* {*The Revised New Testament,"Bible Treasury,Vol. 13. p. 301.} The Lord who prayed for Simon Peter that his faith might not fail in the hour of temptation and trial (Luke 22:32) also knew what untoward influence would be exercised upon Jairus by the tidings of the messengers and their abandonment of hope. "Perhaps the father's hope would have perished too and no room have been left for this miracle, faith, the necessary condition, being wanting, if a gracious Lord had not seen the danger, and prevented his rising unbelief. 'As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.' There is something very gracious in that as soon as.' The Lord spake upon the instant, not leaving any time for a thought of unbelief to insinuate itself into the father's mind, much less to utter itself from his lips, such as might have altogether stood in the way of a cure, but preoccupying him at once with words of encouragement and hope." In like manner He said to another father, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

Thus He strengthened the wavering faith in the ruler’s heart by His word of comfort and assurance, "Fear not, only believe," adding, according to the narrative by Luke, "She shall be made whole." The Mourners Who Scoffed The Prince of Life passed onwards to the house of death. Mourners were already there, making a great tumult with their weeping and wailing. It is a divine injunction to "weep with those that weep," and examples are not wanting in scriptural history. The house of, Joseph and his brethren mourned for the death of Jacob with a "very great and sore lamentation" at Abel-mizraim (Genesis 50:10-11). Job’s three friends wept for him in his sorrow, with loud voices, rending their mantles and sprinkling dust on their heads, and then sat with him in silence for seven, days (Job 2:1-13). Jeremiah lamented the death of king Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:25), and also for the desolation of Jerusalem and of the temple in the book of his Lamentations.

These examples possessed sincerity, but genuine mourning which arises from neighbourly sympathy became perverted into shallow professionalism. Lamentation degenerated into an art, in which some acquired eminence by reason of their skill (Amos 5:16). Mourning women held themselves in readiness to come and take up a wailing for the departed (Jeremiah 9:17-18), sometimes expressing themselves in elegies (2 Chronicles 35:25). The Lord who was Himself ever tender and gracious to the distressed and afflicted rebuked the display of perfunctory grief over the daughter of Jairus. Entering the court of the ruler’s house, He said to the hirelings, "Why make ye this tumult and weep? The damsel is not dead but sleepeth." This severity of the Lord was directed against their hypocrisy and sham, for their sympathy was not sincere like that, for instance, of which the Psalmist wrote, when he says, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth I afflicted my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother: I bowed down mourning as one that bewaileth his mother" (Psalms 35:13-14, R.V.). The words of the Lord drew forth only laughter and derision from the ignorant and insolent attendants. In the house of the ruler of the synagogue there would be an exceptional number of these owing to his rank, and the menials would be more insolent to the prophet of Nazareth because of the contrasted social position of their employer. His words, "The damsel is not dead," came into direct conflict with their professional knowledge, and they had no faith in Him nor reverence for His sayings to counterbalance His seeming contradiction of fact. Hence the Lord’s dignified reproof of their clamour only awakened in them a sense of the grotesque coupled with some malice at His interference; and they laughed Him to scorn.* It was the laughter of folly, as that of Abraham and Sarah was the laughter of incredulity (Genesis 17:17;Genesis 18:12).

{*The word used here in Mark (katagelao), is used also by the other Synoptists, but it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is found in the Septuagint.}

Alas, that it fell within the scope of the appointed sufferings of the Messiah to be exposed to such ridicule from man. But it was written of Him, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn" (Psalms 22:7), and the climax in the fulfilment of this scripture was reached at the cross. He was the Servant whom man despised and the nation abhorred (Isaiah 49:7).

It is profitable to study in the New Testament records the variety of forms in which man exhibited his scorn and contempt for the patient and gentle Saviour. Some passages are collected below. We read that men

(1) mocked (empaizo) Him, Matthew 20:19; Matthew 27:29; Matthew 27:31; Matthew 27:41; Mark 10:34; Mark 15:20; Mark 15:31; Luke 18:32; Luke 22:63; Luke 23:11; Luke 23:36.

(2) reviled Him (blasphemeo), Matthew 12:31; Matthew 27:39; Mark 3:28; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65; Luke 23:39. (oneidizo), Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32. (loidoreo), John 9:28; 1 Peter 2:23.

(3) derided Him (ekmukterizo.), Luke 16:14; Luke 23:35.

(4) spoke evil of Him (kakologeo) Mark 9:39.

(5) spoke against Him (antilego; "contradiction"), Hebrews 12:3.

(6) wagged the head at Him (kineo T. K.), Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29.

(7) laughed Him to scorn(katagelao)Matthew 9:24;Mark 5:40;Luke 8:53. The perusal of the above passages will induce the sad and humbling reflection that divine goodness when manifested in the Incarnate Son of God became an object of malicious mirth and insensate mockery to all classes of men. As the Psalmist foretold, He was the song of the drunkards, and those that sat in the gate spoke against. Him (Psalms 69:12). Yet Eternal Love triumphed over all such obduracy and hatred, and the testimony for God shone ever brightly, and never more so than amid the gross moral darkness displayed at Calvary.

"'Mid sin, and all corruption,

Where hatred did abound,

Thy path of true perfection

Shed light on all around.

O’er all, Thy perfect goodness

Rose blessedly divine;

Poor hearts oppressed with sadness

Found ever rest in Thine." The Witnesses The multitude which had followed Jesus through the town were not allowed by Him to approach the house of Jairus, which indeed was already occupied by another crowd. The Lord having entered the house put forth the noisy mourners, as Peter afterwards did in the case of Dorcas. They, accustomed through their ill-favoured calling to the sight of the dead, knew that the damsel was certainly dead, and it was beyond them to understand that what was death to man was sleep to the Lord. They were quite out of place where the Quickener of the dead was, and accordingly they were ejected, like the chaffering traders from the temple-courts at Jerusalem. Not all the apostles even were admitted to the death-chamber; three only were selected — Peter, James and John. The raising of the widow’s son and of Lazarus was done before the eyes of the public. In this case the dead child was within doors, and therefore the circumstances must necessarily be more private. The three disciples chosen were adequate to render testimony to the fact of the resurrection. For while two witnesses were sufficient to render evidence valid from a judicial standpoint, three ensured an amplitude. Two witnesses, according to the Apocalypse, will be raised up to testify of imminent judgment (Revelation 11:1-19), but there are now three that bear witness in the world to the gospel of the grace of God — the Spirit, the

water, and the blood (1 John 5:8). The father and mother were present also; for the Lord recognised the prior claims of natural affection. This feature is particularly prominent in connection with the miracles of the resurrection. Those raised by Him were this damsel, theonlydaughter of Jairus, twelve years old; theonlyson of his mother, and she a widow; and Lazarus theonlybrother of his two orphaned sisters. In each of these instances there were special reasons for the poignant grief of the bereaved. And now with what tender compassionate solicitude did the Blessed Master lead the grief-stricken parents into the presence of the silent dead, accompanied by the three wondering apostles. The number of the company was six, but this was quickly increased to seven, for, to the astonishment of the spectators, the little maid was brought back to the "land of the living." The Damsel Raised The Lord acted at once with simple directness. He took the child by the hand — a similar action is recorded in the restoration of Peter’s mother-in-law. He then called to her, saying, "Damsel, arise," Mark preserving the actual Aramaic words employed, "Talitha cumi."

There was an immediate response from the spirit-world. In the words of Luke, "her spirit came again." This is in accordance with the general phraseology of scripture wherein death connotes the departure of the soul and spirit from the body. Rachel, "as her soul was in departing," named her son Ben-oni (Genesis 35:18). Elijah prayed concerning the dead son of the widow of Zarephath, "Let this child’s soul come unto him again" (1 Kings 17:21). Stephen at his stoning said,"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). The re-animated body of the daughter of Jairus rose up instantaneously, strengthened as well as vivified, for she was able to walk about, as Mark states with the detail characteristic of his style. She was twelve years old, and therefore able to walk in the ordinary course of nature, but here the action demonstrated that her restoration was as perfect as it was immediate.

It is instructive to note that the Lord in this instance, as in others, recognised the identity of the person with the body. He took the child by the hand, and called toher,not toit, "Damsel, arise." At main He said to the body on the bier, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." At the grave in Bethany, He said, "Lazarus, come forth." This is also the scriptural usage elsewhere: thus in the Acts we read that "devout men carried Stephen to his burial" (Acts 8:2). And at the appointed moment the Lord will come with a shout (that is, a call of relationship) and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18); according to the Lord’s own words, those that are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28-29). The simple and dignified conduct of the Lord on this occasion is in striking contrast with that of the Old Testament prophets in the performance of similar miracles. The Lord spoke and acted in His own right, while the prophets had to look above with earnest fervour for the power that was not in themselves to raise the dead. Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD . . . . And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:21-22). So also Elisha, after prayer, "lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (2 Kings 4:34-35). How different was the procedure of the Lord: taking the child by the hand, He said, "Talitha cumi," and immediately she arose. The Lord having restored the damsel’s life by His own inherent power, directed the parents to give her food. For the life restored needed the usual means of sustenance, and it was in their power to supply this, no miracle being

required. The Lord expects us to do what we are able of ourselves to do, and only exercises His own might where our impotence is displayed.

Eating a meal afforded, in a simple manner, further evidence of the reality of this resurrection, and such a test the Lord applied in His own case (Luke 24:41-43).

Reticence Imposed The small company of beholders was amazed with a great amazement at this miracle. Giving life to the dead was a climax to the mighty miracles and wonders and signs wrought by Jesus. The public raising of the widow’s son probably preceded this case in point of time, and with it constituted the two witnessing works of this kind in Galilee, the third of these miracles being performed at Bethany in Judea. The Lord charged them (presumably those present in the room where the damsel was) that no one should know this. The injunction seems to be in the sense that they were not to set themselves to spread the news of the miracle. It could not imply that the raising of the child was to remain a secret; for the fact of the dead daughter of a public personage such as J airus coming back to life could scarcely be hidden. A similar injunction laid on the disciples by the Lord on another occasion is recorded in this Gospel, and in that case the context throws some light upon the reason for this prohibition. After the Transfiguration, speaking to the same three witnesses, the Lord "charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9). This restriction was removed after His own resurrection, for He said to them, "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Accordingly at Pentecost Peter testified in Jerusalem to the Jews of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you" (Acts 2:22). In like manner Peter testified to Cornelius of the same wonderful works (Acts 10:38).

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the apostles had not learned the secondary value which miracles have in the dealings of God with men, as compared with the moral and spiritual power of the word of the gospel. The Lord had to rebuke the exhilaration of the Seventy because they found themselves able to work miracles (Luke 10:17-20). Here He restrained their natural impulse to spread the news of this marvellous work of His. The Sign-Character of this Miracle The raising of the daughter of Jairus, together with the episode of the healing of the woman in the crowd, forms a further illustration of the character the service of the Messiah would and did assume in consequence of His rejection by the nation at large. In the fourth chapter He is set forth, by parables, as the Sower; in this as the Healer and Life-giver, by miracles. And while He demonstrated, in the country of the Gerasenes, His power over Satan who had the power of death, He showed, in the house of Jairus, that one actually dead was not beyond His salvation. The dead damsel was a true figure of the daughter of Zion when her King came to her. A few "babes and sucklings" cried, Hosanna, when Messiah came to Jerusalem in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, but the nation, through the mouth of its leaders, solemnly denied Him in the presence of Pilate, and declared, "We have no king but Caesar." Israel, knowing not the anointed Son of David, was like Nabal of old, whose "heart died within him, and he became as a stone." This figure of death applied to the Jews is a stronger metaphor than that of the unfruitful soil employed in the preceding parable. Indeed no more impressive term is used throughout scripture to describe the hopeless spiritual condition of the people, beyond all human remedy as it was. But the Lord was able to restore even in such a case as this. For this purpose He had come, and He was on His way

to accomplish redemption for Israel. And during His progress to the house of death He was accessible to any needy person who had faith enough to touch Him as He passed by. But in a coming day all Israel shall be saved in accordance with divine promise. The Lord will yet bless the daughter of Zion, and will give life to His people, even though they be not only dead like the daughter of Jairus but in the grave like Lazarus. This figure of resurrection was applied by the prophets to the national restoration of the chosen people. Daniel spoke of the day when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). And Ezekiel prophesied still more precisely of the time of Israel's future blessing, under the vision of the valley, full of dry bones which lived and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. This vision was explained to he a token of what Jehovah meant to do. He said to the people through the prophet, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:12). In the New Testament the apostle Paul used the same figure in connection with the same subject. Writing, in the Epistle to the Romans, of the setting aside of the children of Israel, and of their future restoration, he says, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15).

05.30. Rejection at Nazareth

30. — Rejection at Nazareth

" And he went1 ouT1 from3 thence; and he cometh into4 his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath was come,5 he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him6 were astonished,7 saying, Whence hath this man these things?8 and, What is the wisdom that is given9 unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands?10 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Jude 11 and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended12 in him. And13 Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour,14 save15 in his own country, and among his own kin,16 and in his own house.17 And he could there do no mighty work,18 save19 that he laid20 his hands upon a few sick folk,21 and healed22 them. And he marvelled23 because24 of their unbelief" (Mark 6:1-6 (R.V.).

{1 "departed," T.S.G.

2 "forth," McC.

3 omit "from," J.N.D.

4 "came to," J.N.D.; "cometh," McC.

5 "sabbath-day came," T.S.G.

6 "the many as they heard," McC.; omit "him," J.N.D.

7 "amazed," J.N.D.

8 "Whence come these things to this man?" T.S.G.

9 "hath been given," McC.

10 "and such miracles are being done through his hands," T.S.G.; "and such works of power are done by his hands," J.N.D., W.K.; "and the mighty works in such wise done by his hands," McC.

11 "Jude," McC.

12 "were stumbled," T.S.G.; "fell backward into a deadly snare," McC.

13 "But," J.N.D.

14 "despised," J.N.D., W.K.; "un-honoured," T.S.G.

15 "unless," T.S.G.

16 "kinsmen," J.N.D., W.K.

17 "household," T.S.G.; "home," McC.

18 "work of power," J.N.D. "miracle," T.S.G.

19 "except," T.S.G.

20 "laying," J.N.D.

21 "infirm persons," J.N.D., W.K.; omit "folk," T.S.G., McC.

22 "cured," T.S.G., McC.

23 "wondered," J.N.D.

24 "on account," T.S.G.} His Own Country

"And he went out from thence; and he cometh into his own country: and his disciples follow him." Nazareth was His country, His fatherland (patris), and is so called elsewhere in the Gospels (Matthew 13:54; Matthew 13:57; Luke 4:23-24; John 4:44). And Nazareth was a despised town or village in the despised province of Galilee. Remote from Jerusalem and Judah, it was in the most northerly part of those tribal districts of Israel which in the days of idolatrous Jeroboam revolted from the rule of David's royal line. In the prophecies of Isaiah it is described as Galilee of the nations — the land of darkness and the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:14-16).

There in the purpose of God Jesus was brought by Joseph. "Directed by God in a dream Joseph carries Him into Galilee whose inhabitants were objects of sovereign contempt to the Jews, as not being in habitual connection with Jerusalem and Judah — the land of Judea — the land of David, of the kings acknowledged by God, and of the temple, and where even the dialect of the language common to both betrayed (Matthew 26:73) their practical separation from that part of the nation which by the favour of God had returned from Babylon. Even in Galilee Joseph established himself in a place, the very name of which was a reproach to one who dwelt there, and a blot on his reputation." While people of Judea looked down upon Galilee, the people of Galilee looked down upon Nazareth. The "guileless" Nathanael, who was himself a Galilean, said of Jesus in mild contempt, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Men were loth to think that the northern province should be the scene of the ministry of the Prophet of Jehovah. Some said, "What! doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:41-42; John 7:52). But the speakers forgot that another scripture definitely foretold concerning Galilee of the Gentiles that its people who walked in darkness should see a great light — upon them the Light should shine (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Many prophets had testified that Messiah would become an object of scorn to men when they saw Him. And their united witness to this character of the King of Israel in His first presentation to the nation was fulfilled by the Lord's residence in Nazareth, the village of Joseph and Mary (Luke 1:26; Luke 2:39). This fulfilment is explicitly stated in the first Gospel: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:23).*

{*This is not the verbal quotation of a particular prophecy of the Old Testament, but the sense of many prophetic passages — that which was spoken, not by one prophet only, but by many, "by the

prophets." compare Isaiah 53:1-12; Micah 5:1; and other texts.}

There in the darkest corner of a benighted province, the Lord remained for some thirty years till the time of His manifestation to Israel, increasing "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Of the events of those years we are not permitted to know more than a fragment (Luke 2:39-52). But who can tell whether we may not learn the marvellous story in a day which is to come? The Evangelist now records the visit of the Lord Jesus to His own "country" after a period of extended ministry in Capernaum and the neighbourhood. Mark had at the commencement of this Gospel showed that the public life of Jesus began from Nazareth: "And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan (Mark 1:9). The history then recounts the manifold service of the Prophet of Jehovah throughout Galilee, but especially in the favoured town of Capernaum, which was the scene of most of the Lord's miracles and parables mentioned in the early part of this Gospel. And it was to Capernaum that His kinsfolk, His mother and His brethren came to expostulate with Him in reference to His service (Mark 3:21; Mark 3:31-35). The Lord who on that occasion publicly repudiated the right of human relationship to interfere with Him as the Servant of Jehovah doing the will of Him that sent Him, now visits with His disciples the place where He was brought up. The former incident showed that He was above the human weakness that would swerve from perfect rectitude through the influence of natural ties. The latter proves the Lord's own consis tency with His own instruction to the delivered demoniac in Gadara, "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee" (Mark 5:19). The Lord did not neglect Nazareth, despised and debased though it was reputed among men to be. He went to His own, though His own received Him not.

Jesus of Nazareth (the Nazarene) is the term of reference to the Lord most frequently used by contemporary persons of all classes. He was so known not only in Galilee but also in Judea; for when the whole city of Jerusalem was stirred at His final visit, the multitude said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:11). This name too was the one used on the inscription placed in mockery by Pilate upon the cross: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." But if this title is one of dishonour and disrepute among men, angels are not ashamed to use it. The angel at the tomb said to Mary Magdalene, "Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6). To Jesus of Nazareth the apostles in their preaching testified expressly under this designation as the crucified but risen and glorified Messiah and Lord (Acts 2:22; Acts 3:6;Acts 4:10;Acts 10:38). And more striking still, the exalted One Himself speaking from the glory to Saul of Tarsus, the bigoted Jew and haughty Pharisee, declared Himself under that name of reproach: "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest" (Acts 22:8). Was This a Second Visit? The Lord went to Nazareth on this occasion in His public capacity as the Prophet of Jehovah and the anointed King of Israel, accompanied by the apostles who had devoted themselves to His service. In this respect this official visit seems to be distinguished from the previous occasion when the Lord made the announcement of His Messiahship in the synagogue there (Luke 4:16-21). The two accounts, however, are supposed by some to have reference to the same event. And there are undoubtedly points of resemblance between the narratives as given by (a) Matthew and Mark, and (b) by Luke. For instance,

(1) In both cases, the words of our Lord uttered in the synagogue excite the astonishment and envy of the townsfolk of Nazareth.

{2) In both cases the Lord cites the same proverb, viz., "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country."

(3) In both cases allusion is made by the audience to the humble origin of the parentage of Jesus. But there are differences certainly as striking as these resemblances, among which are the following: —

(1) In one case the Lord is alone (Luke); in the other He is accompanied by His disciples (Matt., Mark).

(2) The proverb as recorded by Matthew and Mark has the added reference to His kindred and to His house: "No prophet is acceptable in his own country" (Luke 4:24); "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57); "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

(3) In one case His life is threatened (Luke). In the other case, after marvelling at the unbelief He heals a few persons before His departure (Matt., Mark).

(4) In one case He left Nazareth to go to Capernaum (Luke); in the other He left Nazareth to go round the villages teaching (Matt., Mark). The exact chronology of events of the Gospels is a matter of minor importance, and in many cases must remain an open question. But here the records seem to point with sufficient distinctness to two separate visits to Nazareth. The similarities enumerated above are such as might naturally occur in connection with His ministry in the synagogue there on successive occasions. A parallel case in the Gospels is that of the cleansings of the temple-courts at Jerusalem by the Lord, John recording the one at the beginning and the Synoptics that at the close of His ministry.

Sabbath Service in Nazareth

It was the practice of the Lord to teach and to preach the word in the synagogues where the Jews habitually assembled (John 18:20) upon the sabbath. The fact of the people coming together in this manner afforded an opportunity of placing the truth before many at once, and of this opportunity the Lord continually availed Himself (Matthew 4:23;Matthew 12:9;Mark 1:39;Luke 4:44). It was His "custom" to do so (Luke 4:16). By this service in the word of Jehovah on the seventh day the Servant-Prophet most truly did the will of Him that sent Him, and most effectually honoured and observed the sabbath. Such a spirit was enjoined in the prophecies of Isaiah: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD,andhonourable, and shalt honour it, not doing thine, own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD" (Isaiah 58:13-14). In none was this fulfilled in the degree that it was in. Him who said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." His ministry to others in word as here and in deed as elsewhere was a perfect observance of the holy day and also the occasion of His own ineffable joy arising from the accomplishment of the Father’s will in spite of the unbelief with which His service was received by man. The audience in the synagogue at Nazareth was "astonished." Apparently the amazement was not only at what the Lord Jesus taught but also at the mariner in which He

taught it; for He "taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). Those who were present knew Joseph and Mary, and Jesus was to them as "a root out of a dry ground." They had observed Jesus as He grew from boyhood to manhood. And they would not suffer one they knew so well to teach them. Where was His authority? Who made Him a teacher? How knoweth this man letters? (cp.John 7:15;Matthew 21:23;Mark 11:28). What was the wisdom given to Him? Why were such mighty works wrought by His hands? Was He not the carpenter, and the son of a carpenter? They knew His brothers, and were not His sisters in their midst? The Stone of Stumbling The inhabitants of Nazareth were destitute of belief in the Lord. The evangelist says, "They were stumbled in him." It had come upon them already as it was quickly coming upon both the houses of Israel, for the national stumbling had been foretold. The Lord of hosts was in the midst of the nation even then, in accordance with Isaiah's prediction, as a sanctuary for those who would come to Him. But He was there also "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." And many would "stumble thereon and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken" (Isaiah 8:13-15). The Stone of Israel was in lowly form then, and the proud Pharisees stumbled at Him and His sayings (Matthew 15:12), but He was soon to be exalted and to become the headstone of the corner (Psalms 118:22). In the day of His glory Messiah will be "marvellous" in the eyes of His people, though in His humiliation they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. They will be a humble people then and the stumbling-block will be removed, and they will find that the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity dwells also with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit (Isaiah 57:14-15). And then will be brought about the full accomplishment of the prophecy of aged Simeon spoken to Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). The unbelief at Nazareth was therefore the precursor of the unbelief of the nation which delivered Him to the Gentiles to be crucified. The builders thought they knew the Stone well, and it did not please them, and they rejected it.

We may find this hostile spirit foreshadowed in the historical types of Messiah. Was it not so foreshadowed in the house of Jacob? God communicated visions of his coming power and wisdom to the elder son of Rachel. This was offensive to his brethren. "Shaltthou," they said, "reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they envied Joseph, and hated him for his dreams and his words. Did not the same evil spirit animate the hearts of the brethren of David when he spoke of the dishonour which the name of Jehovah was suffering from the vaunts of Goliath the idol-worshipper? They hated him, and their anger was kindled against him for his words: Why earnestthoudown hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" The sons of Jesse stumbled at the stumbling-stone; they were not prepared to accept that their shepherd brother was the anointed of Jehovah though the prophet Samuel had declared it. Thus the proverb was true then also: neither a king nor a prophet is accepted in his own country and among his own kin.

Mary's Unbelieving Household The human imagination in poetry and art has in its retrospect woven many sensuous legends around the private life of our Lord. But scripture is strikingly reticent upon this subject. Where so many holy mysteries are thrown open for our learning, such a reservation should be regarded as a warning to us to avoid any intrusion into what is thus guarded. The Spirit of God makes some few but brief references in the Gospels to the early days of our Lord which "were spent in the physical and mental growth of the true humanity which He had assumed."

But the general tone of the allusions throughout the Gospels to Mary and her family suggests that their attitude towards Jesus as the Messianic King, and Saviour was one of incredulity if not of actual hostility. Mary in her canticle of praise as we have it in Luke (Luke 1:46-55) expressed her confidence in the immediate coming of Him who was God her Saviour, but this seems subsequently to have been overshadowed somewhat. Her faith diminished like that of the austere prophet of the Highest who testified, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," but afterwards sent from prison to Jesus his depressed inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The humble guise and ways of the Lord Jesus seem to have been to Mary and to John the Baptist as well as to the mass the stumbling-block, and their early visions of His majesty and dominion and earthly power all faded into dimness, if not into obscurity. On this occasion the lack of interest on the part of Mary and her household appears to have been cited by the men of Nazareth as evidence against the divine claims of the Master. They said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and J ores and Jude and Simon? and are. not his sisters here with us?" And in another connection we are told definitely that His brethren, whose names are all so strikingly patriarchal, did not believe on Him (John 7:5). The Lord’s words in the synagogue therefore created great astonishment among the audience by their wisdom, but His lowly origin and His poor relations confounded them, and they "fell backward into a deadly snare." Their inconsistency illustrates how ill men reason when they lack faith. They could see there was nothing in the household of Mary, with all of whom they were well acquainted, to account for the extraordinary nature of the ministry of Jesus, but they failed to seek a divine origin. They could see His power was not derived from man, but they would not see it was derived from heaven.

Such misunderstanding arising among His own and developing into hatred and persecution was foretold by the Spirit of prophecy: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6). But though this detraction sprang not from strangers, but from those who might rank as "familiar friends" the pain of it was borne by our Lord with the utmost patience and without retaliation. He looked not to men, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously, as it was written again: "A man’s enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; nix God will hear me "(Mark 7:6-7). But Jesus had come to bless men, and unbelief could not altogether prevent the accomplishment of this work. It might diminish the stream of blessing for a time or divert its channels, because faith is essential to its outflow. "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief." In a future day the righteousness which is by faith will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; for the just shall live by faith. But now the unbelief of Nazareth was as phenomenal in its nature as the faith of the Roman centurion, and Jesus marvelled at both (Matthew 8:10).

05.31. The Twelve Commissioned

31. — The Twelve Commissioned

"And he went round about1 the villages2 teaching. And he called3 unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by4 two and two; and he gave them authority5 over the unclean spirits; and he charged6 them that they should take nothing for their journey,7 save a staff only; no bread, no wallet,8 no money in their purse;9 but to go shod10 with sandals: and, said he,11 put not on two coats.12 And he said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide13 till ye depart thence.14 And whatsoever place15 shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them.16 And they went out,17 and preached that men18 should repent. And they cast out many devils,19 and anointed with oil many that were sick,20 and healed21 them "(Mark 6:6-13, R.V.).

{1 Omit "about," J.N.D.; T.S.G.

2 Add "in a circuit," J.N.D.

3 "calls," J.N.D.; T.S.G.; "calleth," McC.

4 "out" instead of "forth by," J.N.D.; T.S.G.; McC.

5 "power," J.N.D.; T.S.G.

6 "commanded," J.N.D.; "gave them a charge," T.S.G.

7 "for the way," J.N.D.; "for travel," T.S.G.

8 "no scrip, no bread," J.N.D.; "no wallet, no bread," W.K.

9 "belt," J.N.D.; "pocket," McC.

10 "be shod," J.N.D., T.S.G.

11 Omit"said he,"J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

12 "body-coats," J.N.D.; "shirts," McC.

13 "remain," J.N.D.; "stay," T.S.G.

14 "go thence," McC.

15 "whosoever," or "as many as," many authorities read so, see J.N.D.’s note, and Burgon.

16 Most authorities add here as in the A.V. nearly, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city."

17 "forth," J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

18 "they," J.N.D. "people," T.S.G.

19 "demons," J.N.D., T.S.G.

20 "infirm," J.N.D.; "sick folk," T.S.G.

21 "cured," T.S.G., McC.} The reiterated rebuff which the Lord received at Nazareth did not deter Him from continuing His service. In unabated diligence He went on with His work, going round the Galilean towns and villages teaching. This Gospel throws into special prominence the zealous activities of the Servant of Jehovah. At the same time it shows that the end of His labour, judged from the common standpoint of human life, was not such as is usually seen in the careers of busy public men. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Proverbs 22:29). The Lord stood before kings truly, but He stood before them not for reward, but for unjust condemnation. From the outset He knew that He was going on to be "numbered with the transgressors"; but He shunned no man, standing in lowly submission before the obscure men of Nazareth to serve even them — only they could not endure Him.

These men of Nazareth were full of unbelief, and "where there was this unbelief, our Lord would not remove it by dazzling feats of power, because there would have been no moral worth in a result so produced. He had given already abundant signs to unbelief; but men had not profited by them, neither was the word that He spake mixed with faith in them that heard it. The consequence was that He ’could there do no mighty work’; as here only it is recorded — yes, of the Man before whom no power of Satan, no disease of man, nothing above or around or beneath could prove the smallest difficulty. But God’s glory, God’s will governed all; and the display of perfect power was in perfect lowliness of obedience.

"Therefore this Blessed One could there do no mighty work. It is needless to say that it was no question of power as to Himself. It was not in any wise that His saving arm was shortened "not that there was no virtue in Him any longer, but there was the lovely blending of the moral glorifying of God with all that was wrought for man.

"In other words, we have not here the mere setting forth of the power of Jesus, but the gospel of His ministry. Therefore it is a weighty part of this, that because of unbelief He could do no mighty work there. He was really serving God "and if man only is seen, not God, we may wonder that He could do no mighty work there. But what at first sight seems strange, the moment you take it in connection with the object of God in what He is revealing, becomes striking, plain and instructive." The Twelve Summoned for Active Service

During, or at the conclusion of this Galilean circuit, the Lord called the twelve to Him, and formally despatched them in various directions for the work of preaching. They had hitherto been "with Him" to learn from His own lips the nature and character of His teaching. Thus we read that He "went about through the cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God; and with him the twelve" (Luke 8:1). This companionship with the Master was specified in the original terms of their apostolate. The record of their call is that the Lord "appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons "(Mark 3:14-15).

Mark accordingly shows how the chosen band accompanied the Master and how they were instructed by Him in the things of the kingdom of God, set out in parables which He afterwards expounded to them (Mark 4:1-41), while they were also made witnesses of His power over the

elements of nature (Mark 4:35-41) and over unclean "spirits and disease, and even over death (Mark 5:1-43). This comprised their training for service. At the fountainhead they learned what they were to preach, and, more important still, what a transcendent power was behind the ministry of the kingdom to make it effectual. The discipline of the inward man for days of suffering and disappointment is not noted here as elsewhere. The immediate object of their mission on this occasion was to announce the gospel of the kingdom of God — to make known what they had seen and what they had heard. And this feature of personal acquaintance must, of necessity, characterise all divine testimony (1 John 1:1). The twelve disciples were now sent forth by the Lord in twos, Mark alone recording this arrangement. The lists of the names of the apostles are arranged in pairs (Matthew 10:2-4;Luke 6:14-16), and this dual arrangement may therefore indicate the order adopted by the Lord in sending them to preach. At any rate two ensured mutual help and adequate testimony. As the Lord’s purpose was to send them to preach, so it was to bestow upon them power over demons (Mark 3:15). They were able to exhibit the credentials of apostles — "signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Corinthians 12:12). They were able to produce marvellous acts which were samples of the powers of the age to come." They were sent into the domain of the prince of this world to announce the imminence of the kingdom of Jehovah and His anointed; and in the commission for this service the Lord showed His divine power and Godhead by bestowing upon His followers authority over the demon-servants of Satan. A mere man could never delegate to others such power over unclean spirits; but Jesus possessed this authority Himself (Mark 1:27), and moreover imparted it to the twelve.

Personal Directions The Lord gave the apostles precise directions with regard to their outfit for this travelling mission. Their preparations were to be marked by lowliness and simplicity. How incongruous any appearance of luxury and pomp would have been in the emissaries of the poor and despised Nazarene. Accordingly the apostles were to take nothing for their journey, save a staff only. This article was essential to the poorest traveller. Jacob, referring to his poverty when fleeing to Padan-aram, and contrastedly to the riches he possessed on his return, said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies" (Genesis 32:10).

Further, the apostles were prohibited from taking with them any bread, or any bag to carry provisions, or any money in their girdle to purchase necessaries even. They were to use ordinary footwear, and not to put on two coats. Though invested with inimitable power over unclean demons, they were to he in circumstances which would make them outwardly dependent upon the "cold charities" of a selfish world. By these directions the apostles were prepared to learn by experience the elementary but fundamentally important lesson of spiritual service, viz., dependence upon God for those things after which the Gentiles habitually seek (Matthew 6:32). They would find during their mission that their Master had the control of providence as well as of winds and waves and demons. And we know historically from their own confession that the Lord did care for them without fail. He Himself said to them on the night of His betrayal, "When I sent you forth without purse and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." But from that time onward their circumstances would alter, for He said, intimating the approaching change, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword "(Luke 22:35-36).

These instructions of the Lord all point to the simplicity which, it was His will, should mark them as His servants. So Paul wrote to Timothy, "No soldier on service entangleth himself with the affairs

of this life, that he may please him who hath enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4). The absence of luggage would enable them to be more expeditious in their travelling. Their work was among the simple peasantry of Galilee where signs of affluence would hinder the reception of their preaching. Besides, if they possessed two coats, for instance, would it not have been their duty to have imparted one to him that had none (Luke 3:11)? The following remarks on the subject were made by a traveller in the East. "The entire outfit "of these first missionaries shows that they were plain fishermen, farmers or shepherds; and to such men there was no extraordinary self-denial in the matter or the mode of their mission. We may expound the instructions given to these primitive evangelists somewhat after the following manner "Provide neither silver, nor gold, nor brass in your purses. You are going to your brethren in the neighbouring villages, and the best way to get to their hearts and their confidence is to throw yourself upon their hospitality. Nor was there any departure from the simple manners of the country in this. At this day the farmer sets out on excursions quite as extensive, without a para in his purse; and the modern Moslem prophet of Tarshiha thus sends forth his apostles over this identical region. Neither do they encumber themselves with two coats. They are accustomed to sleep in the garments they have on during the day, and in this climate such plain people experience no inconvenience from it. They wear a coarse shoe, answering to the sandal of the ancients, but never take two pairs of them; and although the staff is an invariable companion of all wayfarers, they are content withone." The Preaching of Repentance

These twelve men went forth therefore in six different directions, and the burden of their message wherever they went was that men should repent. The verb "repent," and its related noun, "repentance," only occur three times in the Gospel of Mark; for the words, "to repentance," in Mark 2:17, are omitted in critical editions of the New Testament. The occurrences, however, illustrate the unity of purpose in the Gospel. They are the following:

(1) "John came who baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).

(2) "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

(3) "And they [the twelve apostles] went out, and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12). The continuity of the testimony to the fundamental necessity for man’s repentance in view of the coming kingdom is strikingly shown by this sequence. What John the Baptist declared, the Lord emphasised, and the twelve echoed: Except men repented they would all perish. But should one sinner only repent on earth, this would become an occasion of rejoicing in heaven, as the Lord Himself declared (Luke 15:1-32). But scripture is clear that repentance was and is a necessity for men — not only in the land of Israel but in all the world. It is therein placed on record that the Lord before His departure instructed the apostles that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Paul also, "the apostle of the uncircumcision," in harmony with this commission to the twelve, announced in Athens that now, in contrast with the former times, God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

There is therefore a necessity, and an urgent necessity, enforced by divine command, and laid upon men without exception for that radical change which is implied by the scriptural term "repentance." It is, however, outside our present purpose to discuss whether this change is one (1) of heart or disposition, (2) of mind or thought, (3) of aim or purpose, or (4) of life or conduct. The essential fact to note is that repentance involves change, and that of the most momentous nature. Inwardly, this change extends to the deepest springs of a man’s conduct; outwardly, it corrects his attitude Godward, for repentance is primarily "toward God" (Acts 20:21), being also manward by inevitable consequence. This need for repentance was insisted upon in view of the earthly kingdom as it was presented in the days of our Lord, and it was no less pressed in the preaching of the heavenly kingdom in the days of the apostles. Paul himself declared how he testified to Jews and Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and do works worthy of repentance (Acts 26:20), the last phrase being an echo of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:8). This necessity rests, not upon the avowedly impenitent only, but upon those who bear the name of Christ. Witness the messages of the Lord Himself to the seven churches of Asia. Five of them, Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea, are definitely exhorted to repentance (Revelation 2:5; Revelation 2:16; Revelation 2:22; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 3:19). Judgment will begin with the unrepentant in the house of God, therefore let every man beware lest he cherish the vain delusion that he is one of the "ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

Staff and Staves The prohibition of the Lord having reference to a staff shows some variation in the records of the first three Evangelists. The passages are as follows:

(1)Matthew 10:9-10 : "Provide neither gold, nor silver . . . nor yet staves." The Revised Version reads, "Get you no gold nor silver . . . nor staff."

(2)Mark 6:8 : He charged "them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only." The R.V. and the A.V. are in agreement here.

(3)Luke 9:3 : "He said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip." The R.V. reads "staff" not "staves." The variation in the phrase, taking the readings adopted by the Revisers, may thus be set out:

(1) Matthew: Do not get a staff.

(2) Mark: Take a staff only.

(3) Luke: Do not take a staff.

Thus, the critics allege that according to both Matthew and Luke, the apostles were forbidden to take a staff, while according to Mark they were permitted to do so. It is true also that Matthew and Mark differ in their phraseology. The former forbids the apostles to get or to provide a staff, that is, in addition to the usual one, while the latter grants permission to them to take a "staff only," but not one additional to the ordinary one. Understood in this sense, the difference in the phrases does not constitute any essential disagreement between the two statements. The expression in Luke at first sight raises a difficulty, since it seems to say, Do not take a staff at all, in opposition to Mark. But the "discrepancy" is only an apparent one, for it will be observed that the prohibition is directed entirely to the preparation for the journey contemplated, and the staff is included with the scrip and bread and money: "Take nothing for your journey, neither staff nor scrip nor bread nor money."

The very commonest article was not to be procured by the twelve in view of their mission. They might make use of the ordinary walking staff, but they might not provide one specially for their new enterprise, This seems to be the simple and unstrained solution of the problem, and preferable to the elaborate and forced hypothesis of McClellan, who supposes that the word staff is used in these passages in a double sense, viz., (1) the staff for travelling, and (2) the staff of apostolic office. The latter they were enjoined to take, but not the former. This is pure assumption, and is altogether unnecessary for adequate explanation of the passages; for the plain import of the phrases in all three evangelists is that the apostles were not to make any special preparation for the journey.

Anointing with Oil The apostles in the course of their ministry "cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." The circumstance of the anointing is only mentioned in Mark, but the healing of the sick is also associated with oil in the Epistle of James: "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:14).

It is known that oil was used throughout the East as a remedial agent. Not to make reference beyond the Bible, the Good Samaritan administered oil as well as wine to the wounded man (Luke 10:34). Isaiah refers to the mollification of wounds with oil (Isaiah 1:6). Is it not therefore reasonable to suppose that the disciples and the elders of the church applied oil to sick persons, as a natural remedy, this being a simple specific within the power of those lacking medical knowledge and skill? And they did so, relying on the power and blessing of the Lord to make the means efficacious. Further than this we have no warrant for imitating their example in these days. The Words Omitted in Mark 6:11 by the Revisers The latter part of Mark 6:11 in the Authorised Version (1611) contains the solemn warning by our Lord against such as refused the preaching of the apostles: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. [Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city]." The Revisers (1882) substitute "whatsoever place" for "whosoever," and omit, without any marginal comment, the whole of the words placed between the brackets []. It is true that the words thus deleted in this Gospel are found in substance in two others, viz., inMatthew 10:15and inLuke 10:12, so that the general truth of the warning clause expunged in Mark is still maintained by these passages; but the question may well be asked on what grounds the omission is made in the Second Gospel.

It is not, however, proposed to discuss in these notes the adequacy or otherwise of the evidence upon which these words are denied a place in Mark’s Gospel, but it may sufficiently serve a useful purpose to point to this passage as one among many others in the New Testament where, in the opinion of scholars competent to judge in matters of textual authority, the Revisers were unduly influenced by the testimony of a few ancient witnesses to disregard that of the more numerous documents. The late Mr. Kelly, writing in July, 1881, on the "Revised New Testament,"* a month or two after its publication, said in reference to this passage, "The latter half of Mark 6:11 seems an accommodation fromMatthew 11:1-30andLuke 10:1-42with changes. Yet the ancient testimony is so ample (eleven uncials, nearly all the cursives, and some of the best versions) that it surprises one to see no remark in the margin on such a difference," that is, on such an extensive omission in the face of weighty evidence for its retention.

{*Bible Treasury, Vol. 13. (1881), p. 301.} The summary treatment of this passage by the Revisers is adversely criticised, but more decisively than by Mr. Kelly, in a posthumous work of Dean Burgon, arranged and edited by Prebendary Miller. He rightly points out how destructive of the individuality of the Gospels such unwarranted excision becomes. These are his words: "The value — may I not say the use? — of these delicate differences of detail becomes apparent whenever the genuineness of the text is called in question." He then goes on to refer to the words withdrawn from Mark. "It is pretended," he says, "that this [passage] is nothing else but an importation from the parallel place of St. Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 10:15). But that is impossible for, as the reader sees at a glance, a delicate but decisive note of discrimination has been set on the two places. St. Mark writes,Sodomois e Gomorrois; St. Matthew,ge Sodomon kai Gomorron.And this threefold, or rather fourfold, diversity of expression has existed from the beginning; for it has been faithfully retained all down the ages; it exists to this hour in every known copy of the Gospel, except of course those nine which omit the sentence altogether. There can be therefore no doubt about its genuineness. The critics of the modern school (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Westcott and Hort) seek in vain to put upon us a mutilated text by omitting those fifteen words. The two places are clearly independent of one another.

"It does but remain to point out that the exclusion of these fifteen words from the text of St. Mark has merely resulted from the influence of the parallel place in St. Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:5), where nothing whatever is found corresponding with St.Matthew 10:15, [or] St.Mark 6:11."* {*"Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text," Burgon and Miller, pp. 118-9, 181-2.} The passage inLuke 9:5refers to the rejection of the apostles' preaching, but has no warning based on the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha. The Revisers have made Mark agree with Luke by omitting the clause. It must be noted, however, that the warning occurs in the following chapter of Luke, though in slightly different terms, being applied to the city rejecting the witness of the Seventy: "It shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city" (Luke 10:11-12).

It will be gathered from the above criticism that the internal evidence for the exclusion of this passage is very weak, just as the external evidence is very scanty. The assumption that the words were inserted in the Gospel of Mark by some scribes in order to agree with either Matthew or Luke rests upon a most slender basis.

(1) If the words were taken from Matthew, why is there such diversity still remaining? Matthew reads "for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah," but Mark reads "for Sodom and Gomorrah." In the Greek the distinction in the words is more apparent still, because the proper names have different case-endings in the two Gospels — in Matthew the genitive case is used, and in Mark the dative. The conjunction differs also: in Matthew kai (and), in Mark e (or). These points of difference are not likely to have occurred if the phrase in question was copied into Mark from Matthew, as the critics allege.

(2) Neither does it appear that Mark copied from Luke, for the latter names only Sodom, but Mark both Sodom and Gomorrah. Again, Luke has "in that day," but Mark has "in the day of judgment." These verbal distinctions make it most improbable that the sentence was added from Luke. Besides, it has already been noted that the Lord's warning is given in Luke in connection with the preaching of the Seventy and not with that of the Twelve as in Mark.

It seems therefore incredible that the received text in Mark 6:11 should possess so many indications of originality if of spurious origin. And we may still reflect upon the significant fact that all three Gospels unite to show that not temporal only but eternal issues hung upon the acceptance or rejection of the apostles' preaching.

05.32. John's rebuke of Herod's sin

32. — John’s rebuke of Herod’s sin And king Herod heardthereof;for his name had become known1: and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him2. But others said, It is Elijah. And others said,It isa prophet,evenas one of the prophets. But Herod, when he heard thereof, said, John, whom I beheaded; he is risen. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. And Herodias set herself against him3, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe4. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed and he heard him gladly5" (Mark 6:14-20, R.V.).

1 "public," J.N.D.; "famous," T.S.G.

2 "works of power are wrought by him," J.N.D.; "the mighty powers do work in him," McC.; "the Powers were busy in him," T.S.G.

3"kept it in her mind against him," J.N.D.; "had a spiteagainst him," McC.; "bear him spite," T.S.G.

4 "was regardful of him," T.S.G

5 "did many things," J.N.D., T.S.G. The activities of the Lord Himself and the separate testimonies of His apostles at this period reached the ears of king Herod. The name of Jehovah’s Servant was becoming famous through His own mighty works, and now through the labours of His servants. Herod did not know Jesus of Nazareth, but his memory was full of John the Baptist, for he had but recently pronounced the cruel sentence of his execution. And when tidings came of one who was working the works of God in Galilee, he could only think of the righteous and holy prophet who had been as the mouth of God to him. But how were these miracles of Jesus Christ, so numerous and striking as they were, to be explained? The testimony of the Baptist was not accompanied by signs as the people said of him on one occasion, "John did no miracle," his service differing in this respect from that of the Messiah. But the superstitious king had an explanation satisfactory to himself, an explanation which his own terrified conscience supplied. John in the flesh wrought no miracles, but John returned from the grave must be, and was, full of supernatural energy. Herod said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him." And yet though this wicked ruler professed to believe there was a messenger from the dead in the land he did not repent, and he is therefore a solemn example of the truth of "father Abraham’s" words in our Lord’s parable — "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:30-31).

Popular opinion said of the Lord that he was Elijah, the promised prophet (Malachi 4:5), or one of God’s prophetic messengers. There was no unanimity in the estimates of the public, as the apostles also stated in their reply to the Lord’s question concerning current opinions (Matthew 16:14; Mark 8:28; Luke 9:19). Herod however had personal reasons for his own theory. It was he who beheaded John. And he now believed that John lived again in the prophet of Galilee.

There was some substratum of truth in Herod’s opinion, though he was unconscious of it. He was wrong as to the identity of the Person who was preaching the kingdom of God, but he was right in that John’s testimony of truth and holiness was still being declared. He had removed the head of the Baptist, but the voice that spoke of righteousness and purity was not silenced. The witnesser for the truth may be slain, and his gory head displayed in the orgies of the wicked, but truth itself is not put to death by the sword. And Herod was not mistaken in thinking that the Voice then preaching in Capernaum and Chorazin was saying to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her."

It is well to note that the Gospel history here becomes retrospective. Mark, in the early part of the book, mentions the imprisonment of John in connection with the commencement of the ministry of Jesus (Mark 1:14), but makes no further mention of the Baptist until now, when he turns back to narrate his violent end. John was truly the forerunner of the Messiah the righteous Servant of Jehovah, to the very last act of his public testimony. He witnessed to the Anointed Sufferer not less in the prison than in the wilderness for both he and his Master were cut off in the midst of their days. Peter and others followed the Lord to a martyr’s end, but John had the unique privilege of immediately preceding Him. The Jews under the Power of Daniel’s Fourth Empire The historical references here to the death of John the Baptist by Herod, bring in the subject of the civil government of the Holy Land at the time of our Lord. The people and country were tributary to Rome, that Western power which had then but recently assumed absolute supremacy in the political world. This subjection was not a surprise to those in Israel who had drunk of the spirit of prophecy. The Roman Empire was prefigured in the Image-vision of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1-49), the "iron" government being the fourth in order of succession of the Gentile empires there portrayed. Daniel also saw it in prophetic vision under the figure of the fourth beast, terrible and powerful "with great iron teeth (Daniel 7:7). In the New Testament history we find this "iron" rule in exercise at the time of the birth of Christ. Caesar Augustus issued a decree that "all the world should be taxed," or enrolled (Luke 2:1). In obedience to this edict Joseph and Mary, lineal descendants of the royal line of David, went up submissively from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. The position of servitude in which the chosen people stood to the great Empire is further shown by the circulation in their midst of the Roman currency in which they paid taxes to their over-lords (Luke 20:19-26).

Again, the supremacy of the Roman government in the land of Israel was demonstrated by their exclusive exercise of the function of condemning prisoners to the extreme penalty. After the flood the authority of man in government to punish the murderer by death, previously reserved by God, was conferred by Him upon Noah and his descendants. God decreed that "Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6). This power was recognised and in use throughout the successive forms of government in Israel, and after Israel’s subjugation it was exercised by the Gentile empires. For instance, Daniel testified of Nebuchadnezzar, the "head of gold," that "all peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive" (Daniel 5:19). And the Roman emperors, though not so absolute in their rule as their Babylonian predecessors, "reserved to themselves and to their local representatives the right of judicial execution. The Jews admitted to Pilate their lack of this authority: "It is not lawful," they said, "for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). This authority was in the hands of the Roman governor who arrogantly and insolently said to his Just and Holy prisoner, "Speakest thou not unto me?

knowest thou not that I have power [authority] to crucify thee, and have power [authority] to release thee? "(John 19:10). This authority of Pilate Jesus did not deny, but rather traced that authority to its true source — not to his imperial master at Rome but to the Sovereign Ruler of all: Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (cp. Romans 13:1-4). Never was this judicial authority more flagrantly abused than it was by Pilate, the representative of the Roman empire. Weakly submitting to the will of the Jews, he freed Barabbas the malefactor whom he should have executed for murder, and condemned Jesus the Benefactor to be crucified. The Herodian Rule The rule of the Herods was subservient to Rome. Several members of the Herod family are mentioned in the New Testament history, but most were enemies to Christ and to those who bore His name.

(1) Herod the Great, one of the worst tyrants of all time, massacred the children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

(2) Archelaus was the son of Herod the Great whom Joseph feared (Matthew 2:22).

(3) Herod Antipas executed John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12), and mocked Jesus (Luke 23:11).

(4) Herod Agrippa I. executed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2).

(5) Herod Agrippa II. had Paul brought before him as prisoner (Acts 25:13-27). The Herods were Idumean in origin, and were placed in the position of titular rulers in Judea and Galilee by the Roman government. The name Idumea is the Greek equivalent of Edom, the land of the descendants of Esau. So that the position of the Jews in the days of the Gospels was humiliating in the extreme. They were not only under the dominion of the Gentile power at Rome, but a son of Esau ruled over them in the land. This order was not according to the purpose of God announced from the beginning — that, of Jacob and his brother, the "elder should serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). But through the unfaithfulness of the chosen people, this divine order was for the time reversed, and Esau was in the ascendant, though an enemy of God and His truth. Indeed hatred and jealousy and bitter animosity against God and the people of God characterise the Edomites throughout the Old Testament records. The last of the prophetic "burdens" declares them to be the people against whom Jehovah has indignation for ever (Malachi 1:4). And the New Testament opens with the effort of the Edomite, who was ruler of Edom as well as of Judea and Galilee, to destroy Him who was born King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-23). The bloodthirsty Herod was a true descendant of Doeg the Edomite, the murderer of the priests at Nob (1 Samuel 22:9-19).

Herod Antipas and John

Herod Antipas*, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee, the northern part of his father’s dominions, when John the Baptist came into the country round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and the immediate coming of the Messiah (Luke 3:1-3). This voice crying in the wilderness resounded in the palace of the king. John spoke of an Anointed One whose coming was imminent, and Herod may have feared in Him, who was announced to appear, a possible rival to his throne, the tenure of which was so notoriously frail. He could hardly have entirely forgotten the incident which happened less than thirty years before when there came Eastern magi to his father’s court in Jerusalem, seeking Him who was born King of the Jews. He may also have remembered, amongst other of his father’s deeds of blood and

cruelty, the horrible slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem perpetrated to ensure the death of the Royal Child. We think it must have been so, for conscience stimulates the most sluggish memory, and Antipas was riot altogether dead to conscience.

{*Antipas was the son of Herod by Malthace a Samaritan, so that he had not, in Jewish eyes, the slight redeeming feature of his brother Archelaus who was by a Jewish mother.}

Moreover, that conscience was appealed to by the dauntless testimony of the Baptist. For John came "in the way of righteousness." Like Noah, he was a "preacher of righteousness" in a day of unnatural corruption. Like also his prototype Elijah, he delivered his words of truth in a profligate court. John reproved the king for the many notorious evils he had committed; but perhaps his blackest crime was to marry his brother Philip's wife, and the intrepid prophet did not shrink to denounce the incestuous adulterer to his face, although he sat upon a throne, condemning him by the laws of God and man (Leviticus 18:16; Leviticus 20:21). "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" summed up his charge. The king's guilt was trebly great; for the wife of Herod was alive, the husband of Herodias was alive, and Herod and Herodias stood in the relationship of uncle and niece. But there was no repentance. The words of John did not turn this disobedient one "to the wisdom of the Just" (Luke 1:17). Herod hardened his heart, and as the Spirit of God says, in view no doubt of the ancient precept, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," that he "added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison," and would have done worse to him, but "when he would have put him to death he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14:5). This popular opinion in favour of John was so strong that the chief priests and elders also feared to oppose it (Matthew 21:26).

Herod's Fear of John The king was of a weak and vacillating nature, but not without a susceptibility to influences for good. We read that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed: and he heard him gladly." The invincible nature of truth and righteousness is exemplified in the king's attitude toward the Baptist. It was Herod, not John, who feared. The empurpled voluptuary was a moral coward in the presence of the prophet, as such must be before the righteous and the holy. The licentious monarch had abandoned himself to the luxurious gratification of his every evil passion, for which the manners of his court gave him every facility. In contrast with this royal self-indulgence, John had learned the difficult lesson of self-denial and self-conquest in the solitudes of the wilderness. His hairy garment and his frugal diet were outward indications of the moral attitude of the man who by severe self-discipline, qualified himself (so far as man may do so) for his dignified mission. John, who called the people to sackcloth and ashes, was not a man "clothed in soft raiment" himself. He came neither eating nor drinking, for it was a day of fasting, and a day for men to afflict their souls. His practice corresponded with his preaching. The divine object, announced in the song of his father Zacharias, was that the people of Israel might serve God "in holiness and righteousness" all their days. And accordingly the forerunner of the Messiah was a righteous and a holy man himself, and this character of John was so well-known and well-established that even the evil and suspicious king knew it, and feared him in consequence.

Nevertheless, in spite of this admission, the unrighteous and unholy ruler did not release his righteous and holy prisoner, but held him in custody. Yet this attitude was no strange event in the world's history, for evil's enmity of the good it sees in another has repeated itself from the

beginning. Why did Cain slay Abel? Because his own works were evil; and like Herod he knew that his brother's were righteous (1 John 3:12). It was so also in the history of Israel when their Messiah came. He whom they denied, and delivered over to Pilate for crucifixion, was pre-eminently the Holy and the Righteous One (Acts 3:14), concerning whom even the crucified robber testified, "He has done nothing amiss." And is it not the constant experience of those who are the possessors of the kingdom that they are persecuted for righteousness' sake? (Matthew 5:10; 1 Peter 3:10-14). It is true that the followers of Christ are called to a higher standard of suffering-testimony, viz., that which arises out of a confession of the name of Christ; but this highest standard cannot be truly attained unless it is based upon righteousness and holiness of truth, the twin principles of the new creation (Ephesians 4:24).

Herod then feared John, if not as a prophet of God as a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe* from the malice of his paramour Herodias who sought to kill him. And during the Baptist's imprisonment Herod appears to have summoned his prisoner before him on several occasions, and the faithful words and fearless bearing of the prophet were not without their effect upon the profligate king. "When he heard him, he was perplexed," or as many read it, "he did many things." He sought to compromise with the truth by carrying out some minor reforms. But of the foul sin of which he was guilty before the eyes of his kingdom and before the eyes of his God, he was impenitent. He did many things, but not the one thing. He heard John gladly too; and it is also said elsewhere, that the common people heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). But such gladness is not associated with the hearing by which faith comes.

{*The word so translated may bear the sense of "observing him diligently," or "being regardful of him." But on the whole the above rendering seems more in keeping with the context, as Trench points out. See also the note on the verse in J.N.D's translation.}

05.33. The Death of the Forerunner

33. — The Death of the Forerunner

"And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went out and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger* the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat, he would not reject her. And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger*, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard thereof, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb." (Mark 6:21-29, R.V.).

{*"dish," J.N.D., McC.} The ways of God with men are altogether removed in their nature and character from human ideas. Though we so frequently forget the truth, it is impossible for us to foretell what the end of a man's career upon the earth will be, even though that man is an honoured servant of God. The common opinion is that the last days of the pious and upright will be days of honourable peace and prosperity.

Such a thought may have given rise to the vain wish of Balaam, that consummate hypocrite, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Numbers 23:10). But the prayer of the wicked is declared to be an abomination to the Lord, and certainly the end of Balaam the soothsayer was not peaceful, but violent, for he perished by the sword of the people whom he sought to curse (Numbers 31:8).

John, the prophet of righteousness, the harbinger of the Messiah, was an utter contrast to Balaam, yet his end was one to call for serious contemplation. The Lord said of him that he was the burning and shining lamp (John 5:35), He Himself being the true Light come into the world to light every man. Hence it might well have been expected that the Old Testament principle would have been applicable in John's case, and that his earthly testimony would have closed in a climax of brilliance. Was it not said of old that "the path of the righteous is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18)? And yet the greatest of the prophets appears to end his life in dark disaster, and is put to a violent death. And of this gloomy close he himself seemed to have had some premonition, when he said of his Master, "He must increase, and I must decrease."

John saw the salvation of God like aged Simeon, and he was, as Simeon was not, the chosen herald of the Lamb of God; yet it was not John's like the venerable father of Israel, to depart in

peace — the portion of the perfect and upright man (Psalms 37:37). The crown of martyrdom was for John, not the hoary head, the earthly crown of glory, for ’he did not live out half his days. He was slain ignominiously by a woman, like Sisera the cursed Canaanite, and like Abimelech, the murderer of seventy of his brethren. Like Elijah, in whose spirit and power he came, John too was hated by a Jezebel. Elisha saw Elijah disappear in a blaze of transcendent glory, but the disciples of John had to save the bleeding and headless corpse of their master from the vultures and the dogs. The truth explaining the seemingly contradictory facts is that God was not then vindicating the righteous in the earth, as He will yet do (Psalms 58:10-11).

Thus John the Baptist, the last of the line of the prophets to Israel, was slain by Israel’s Edomite king in Galilee. But Jesus, who was pre-eminently the Prophet of Jehovah was crucified at Jerusalem, the city so favoured of God, yet notorious for killing the prophets and stoning those who were sent to her (Luke 13:33). Not but what Herod would fain have killed Jesus as well as John; so the Pharisees said (Luke 13:31), and we may well believe it. Only it was to Zion that Messiah offered Himself, and upon her would rest the guilt of His rejection and delivery to the Gentiles for crucifixion. The Deed of Darkness The scriptural narrative touches lightly and without emphatic force of language the tragic particulars of the Baptist’s death. The circumstances are eloquent in themselves of the terrible power of sin and Satan over the human heart.

Herod, as seen in the Gospels, was a weak-minded, impressionable man. Thus, the straight talk of the prophet impressed him. The presence of his lords and captains at his feast excited him. The dancing of the daughter of Herodias before him and his guests carried him away in a whirl of exuberant pleasure. Devoid of all self-control, he gave utterance to the most extravagant promises: "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee," he said, adding no qualifications. And to show that this was not mere Eastern hyperbole, he confirmed his promise with oaths. The man who inherited a fourth of his father’s kingdom swore to the damsel, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee unto the half of my kingdom." In such a wild impetuous way do infatuated and inebriated men sometimes speak. So Ahasuerus more than once promised Esther to grant her petition up to the half of his kingdom (Esther 5:3; Esther 5:6; Esther 7:2), and Herod may have foolishly thought to emulate the great world-emperor in this boastful pledge.

Receiving such an unlimited promise, the damsel sought advice from her mother, who according to Eastern custom was not present at the banquet. Such consultation was in itself a proper step to take. Alas, that her mother could only counsel her for evil and not for good. It would seem that Herodias had plotted for this issue. She had set a trap for Herod and baited it with her own daughter. Knowing his disposition, she counted upon some such promise from the monarch when well in his cups. And now the "convenient" moment had come. The sweets of revenge being more to her than half Galilee, she instructed her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist.* {*Herodias spoke of John as ’the Baptist,’ showing that he was known generally by that title.} The depraved instincts of Herodias appear also in the daughter, for returning with haste to the king, she delivered the message of her mothers with additions of her own. On comparison of the words of the mother with those of the damsel, it would seem that it was the daughter who desired that the gruesome reward should be handed to her upon a dish in the presence of all the guests. She demanded also that the hideous gift might be made to her immediately, being fearful lest the weak-minded king might repent of his rash vow, and recall his promise. Give it mehere,she said

with incredible savagery (Matthew 14:8); let me have it at once on a platter. A guardsman was accordingly sent there and then on the errand of execution, and in the presence of the assembly of rank and nobility, the shameless damsel received her chosen reward, and carried the trophy of blood on the dish to her mother as her share of the feast.

David took the head of Goliath, the uncircumcised enemy of Jehovah and His people, to Jerusalem, but that was an act of retributive justice, and a witness to the deliverance of the nation. The repulsive action of Herodias and her daughter was the gratification of their private revenge on John the Baptist because he had condemned Herodias' uncle, Herod, whose wife was still living for having his niece, Herodias, whose husband was also alive.

Herod Sorry but not Repentant

Herod was a man of extreme but superficial feeling. He heard John gladly, though the prophet, denounced the sin of which he was guilty. We also read that he was sorry, "exceeding sorry,"* when he discovered to what a cruel outrage he had committed himself. So was the rich young ruler sorry to refuse the call of Jesus, but in neither the king nor the ruler did the sorrow work repentance (Luke 18:23; 2 Corinthians 7:8; 2 Corinthians 7:10). When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod he was glad, 'exceeding glad,' to see Him (Luke 23:8). But the result of that interview was only to demonstrate the callous ferocity of his nature. Herod "with his soldiers set him at nought and mocked him, arraying him in a gorgeous robe and sending him back to Pilate." With all his sorrow, Herod slew the servant in Galilee, and with all his gladness he derided the Master at Jerusalem.

{*The Greek word is a very strong one, and is also used of our Lord in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38).}

"We have in Herod the history of a soul that had his conscience reached by the word of God, but nothing more. We know well that there is such a thing as resisting the Holy Ghost on the part of unconverted men; it is the commonest thing possible where God's word is known, though it is not only resisting the word, but the Spirit of God. Therefore it was that Stephen said, when addressing the Jews, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." The Holy Ghost so far uses the word as to touch the conscience, and whosoever refuses this resists both the word and Spirit of God.

"In Herod's case it was only John's testimony, but it was a mighty one, so far as the conviction of sin was concerned. John the Baptist did not pretend to bring in redemption; his main object was to point to One who was coming. But there was a mighty work produced through him in leading men to the sense that they could not do without the Lord.

"Thus he brought before men that all was ruined in the sight of God, and that, so far from things being prosperous or happy, the axe was lying at the root of the tree, judgment was at the door And so it was, only that, first of all, the judgment that man deserved fell, by grace, upon Christ. That was the unlooked-for form in which Divine judgment took place then — in the cross. It was a most real dealing of God, but it was a judgment for the time stayed from falling upon the guilty, which fell upon the guiltless Son of God, and thereby redemption is accomplished. The whole work of Christ for the church of God has come in during the time of man's — Israel's — being left by the Lord to Himself. It is the time of God's long-suffering, the world being permitted to follow its own way in the rejection of the Gospel as much as in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what the world is doing now,

and is soon to consummate, when judgment will come.

"Thus [in the case of Herod] conscience is shown in a man that felt what was right, and heard the word gladly for a time. But there was no repentance, no submission of his soul to the conviction that for a moment passed before his mind of what was true, just, and of God. The consequence was that circumstances were so managed by the enemy and permitted of God that Herod should evince the worthlessness of natural conscience, even as regards the very person whom he had owned as a prophet. But at any rate all was lost now, and a guilty hour at a banquet, where the desire to gratify one as bad or worse than himself ensnared his weakness and involved his word. There is the end of natural conscience. Herod orders what he would not have conceived it possible for him to do."* {*Exposition of the Gospel of Mark, by W. Kelly.} The Disciples of John The followers of the Baptist appear to have kept in touch with him during his imprisonment. Thus John sent from the prison two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" And the messengers carried back to their master the answer of Jesus (Matthew 11:1-30). At the time of John’s execution they were near enough to the place of imprisonment to learn quickly the sad fate of their master, and were able to perform for him their last loving office. They took up the poor mutilated remains, and laid them in a tomb. The Lord who buried His servant Moses and took away Elijah provided honourable interment by reverent hands for John the Baptist. The disappearance of the body being noted by the servants of the king may have given rise to Herod’s surmise of John’s resurrection when he heard of the miracles of Jesus.

Moreover, the fact that the disciples of John carried away the body of their master may have given support to the false story circulated by the Jews to explain away the reported resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:13). There was no real analogy between the two cases, but the suggestion was plausible enough for those who wished to evade the truth. From the Gospel of Matthew we learn that these disciples, having buried their master, went and told Jesus (Matthew 14:12). May we not conclude that thenceforth they followed Him of whom John said, "Behold the Lamb of God"?

34. — Seeking a Short Seclusion

1914 39 "And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus and they told him all things whatsoever they had done and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. Andthe peoplesaw them going, and many knewthem,and they ran there together on foot from all the cities. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:30-34, R.V.). The execution of John the forerunner constituted an epoch in the ministry of the Blessed Lord. It showed that Israel would not receive divine testimony. From this point onwards He instructed His disciples plainly concerning His own sufferings and death which would follow at Jerusalem. In the appointed order of God John was constituted the pioneer of the Faithful and True Witness, bearing testimony to Him in a remarkable manner from his earliest history. Was it not through the son whom she had not seen that Elizabeth was first able to hail Mary as the mother of her Lord? (Luke 1:41-45). That light of witness which shone so feebly at the outset rose to the zenith of its full brilliance when John’s clarion call rang out for all who had ears to hear, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." From that moment the lamp of

prophecy waned, for John was soon delivered up to prison, and Jesus Himself came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). And the preaching of Jesus continued up to the period to which we have arrived — some two years later.

During this lengthy period — for him — John had languished in confinement, waiting for the day to break and the shadows to flee away. The voice of the Messiah was heard in the land, throughout Judea and Galilee. When he himself had cried in the wilderness, multitudes had flocked to his preaching and to his baptism. Now One was speaking whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. Yet week after week, sabbath after sabbath, new moon and passover went by, and the kingdom was not restored to Israel. As we consider John's long and dreary imprisonment, can we chide him as an impatient man because he sent disciples to Jesus, asking, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? The Master did not upbraid him nor may we. The truth was that the lofty ideals of Messiah's glorious kingdom were not to be realised in a human fashion, and since signs of immediate deliverance from the oppressor were wanting, many of the sons of Israel would on that account stumble at the Stone Jehovah was setting in Zion. The humble guise of the Messiah caused the thoughts of many hearts to be revealed, and the Baptist's among others. Nevertheless the Lord said to the disciples of John, "Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me" (Matthew 11:6).

It would seem that God in His inscrutable wisdom delayed the final removal of John from the earth until Messiah had delivered an adequate testimony to the people of Israel, and that testimony was seen to be unheeded and rejected. The martyrdom of John was in effect a public act, signifying that Israel was not ready to receive the One of whom John spake (Mark 9:12-13), just as the martyrdom of Stephen was the public act which proclaimed that the nation would not accept the crucified Messiah whom God had glorified and whom Stephen was preaching. The coincidence of the testimonies of John and Jesus, and the personal love Jesus had for the Baptist are special features of Matthew's Gospel more than Mark. It is there noted how the news of his death affected Him. "Accomplishing in lowly service (however personally exalted above him) together with John, the testimony of God in the congregation, He felt Himself united in heart and in His work to him; for faithfulness in the midst of all evil binds hearts very closely together; and Jesus had condescended to take a place in which faithfulness was concerned (SeePsalms 40:9-10). On hearing therefore of John's death He retired into a desert place." The kingdom which John proclaimed was not then to be set up in power, and he was therefore taken away, for the time of his public reward as a righteous prophet was deferred until the Son of man should come in His glory, and the people should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Thus the powers in authority wrought their evil will upon the Baptist, as they would shortly do upon Jesus. This the Lord knew, though His apostles did not. Hence we find that about this period the Lord began to withdraw Himself more from the populace, and to devote Himself to the instruction of the apostolic band in regard to the sufferings and death that awaited Him at Jerusalem. It was needful for them to know the mysteries of His person and work, and thus in measure to be equipped to become able ministers of the new covenant in the particular form in which it was soon to be introduced. A summary showing the connection referred to may be helpful. Comparing the first three Gospels, it will be observed that following immediately upon the account of the death of John the Baptist we have a record of the events named below:

(1) Jesus taking His disciples apart (Matthew 12:1-50;Mark 6:1-56;Luke 9:1-62).

(2) Jesus feeding the crowds who sought Him out, but leaving the apostles to cross the lake alone, though He eventually came to their deliverance in the storm (Matthew 14:1-35, Matthew 15:1-39;Mark 6:1-56, Mark 7:1-37;Luke 9:1-62).

(3) Jesus inquiring what men said of Him, and eliciting personal confession from the apostles (Matthew 16:1-28;Mark 8:1-38;Luke 9:1-62).

(4) Jesus speaking precisely of His sufferings and death at Jerusalem, and of the cross of discipleship.

While the general order of this sequence is found in the three Synoptists, the several events enumerated are brought into closest juxtaposition in the Gospel by Luke.

Gathering to Jesus The apostles at the bidding of their Master had gone in various directions in the service of the kingdom. That particular service being now completed they "gather themselves together unto Jesus." It is not stated that they were directed to do so. In a sense it was the natural thing to do. To assemble to Him was the instinctive act of their spirits. To whom else should they go? For them there was now but one Master upon the earth, and accordingly they spontaneously gathered themselves together to the Lord and told Him all their doings and all their sayings. The act was a simple, natural, obvious one historically; but it is often forgotten that the principle of it abides true, so long as there is service to Christ in exercise upon the earth. Are there deeds to be done, and words to be said in His Name in an unfriendly world? When the mission is ended let the report of the proceedings be made at headquarters: whether the necessity arises daily, weekly, or yearly, the principle underlying it is the same. The Master tells His servants what to do; the servants tell their Master what they have done. In a well-known promise, He Himself has shown that this practice was to be continued during the time of His absence. Laying down the general principle, He said, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst" (Matthew 18:20).

Taken Aside On the one hand, we find that the apostles returned of their own accord to Jesus at Capernaum after their tour of service; on the other ’hand we find that the Lord upon their return took them aside for a season of privacy. This was the Lord’s own arrangement for their well-being as His servants. An Eastern house is open to any one who will enter, and meal-times form no exception to the freedom of general access which every one expects to be allowed. Jesus said therefore to the apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." They had no leisure, or rather they had no convenient opportunity to eat, on account of the incessant intrusions of the people. ’Leisure’ may be thought to imply absence of occupation, but the turn here seems to be that there was no suitable occasion even for meals, on account of persistent interruption.

It is well to note that the Great Master, who sent out these men into active enterprise, also led them apart to rest awhile. Not that their work was all finished. The harvest was as plenteous as ever: the labourers were still few. A world of need was around them. But the same voice that said on one occasion, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4), also said to the same persons, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." Need it be said that He is the Lord, and that He will say to us ’Work’ or ’Rest,’ as He in His perfect wisdom sees best. It is ours to respond cheerfully and readily to either of these

calls or to any.

"Strike, Thou the Master, we Thy keys,

The anthem of the distinies." In point of fact the apostles had been passing through a perilous experience. They had been preaching their first sermons, and performing their first miracles. They were therefore exposed to the deadly snare of the novice (1 Timothy 3:6). Is it extravagant to suppose that they, like the seventy shortly afterwards, were highly elated at the outward signs of what appeared to be their brilliant success? "The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name" (Luke 10:7). But the Lord showed them how, by reason of their immature judgment, they had failed to grasp the true proportion of things. The endowments of grace far exceeded in value the equipment for service. Their names were written in heaven and not in the dust of the earth; and this enrolment for heavenly blessing was the fit subject for their rejoicing rather than their delegated power over unclean spirits. For a like reason, mayhap, the Lord said to the twelve, Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile. The rest would sober their spirits. The Lord had many things to say to His servants, but He could not say themtherewhere so many were coming and going. Communications that could not be made to the twelve on the seashore were made on a former occasion indoors (Matthew 13:36), but when the house became overcrowded privacy must be sought elsewhere. An individual might secure this privacy by entering into his closet, and barring his door (Matthew 6:6), but the circumstances were different in this case. There were a number of them, and the Lord turned aside to the solitudes of the wilderness with His little company.

Instances are not wanting in Scripture history which establish the necessity for seasons of retirement in the public life of men of God. In the presence of fellow-men, the manifold activities and responsibilities of mutual relationship tend to exclude the sense of the invisible and the eternal; but in privacy, faith, hope and love are quickened into exercise and strengthened for the day of conflict. It was by the river Chebar that the heavens were opened to Ezekiel the priest, and he saw visions of God. And it was while exiled in Patmos that John beheld the glorious Son of man among the seven golden candlesticks, and saw vistas of the future depicted in the gorgeous imagery of the Apocalypse. Moses found the "burning bush," not in. Egypt but in Horeb, and forty years of sheep-tending on the untenanted slopes of the mountain was a needful part of his training to become the leader and lawgiver of Israel. And so the Lord’s call, Come apart and rest awhile, was no new element in the method of divine training; but the call is the more impressive, coming as it does, from the lips of the assiduous Servant of God whom Mark portrays. Let it be the more carefully to be remembered that it is in ’seclusion that the deep-lying principles of divine life are deepened, strengthened and developed for days of activity. Apart from these seasons of silent and secret growth such fruit as may appear is likely to be unripe and untimely.

Shepherdless Sheep The Lord accordingly went away with His apostles in the boat, which, apparently, was one allotted to their use (cp.Mark 3:9;Mark 6:45; Mark 6:51). Their destination was an uninhabited district on the shores of the Sea of Galilee where the required privacy might very well be found. It was, as Luke tells us, near the town of Bethsaida (Luke 9:10). This was not the Bethsaida near Chorazin upon which the Lord’s woes were pronounced (Matthew 11:21), but is generally believed to be a town some miles to the eastward known as Bethsaida Julias.

They did not depart unnoticed. The people were too much alert. They had received many benefits through the mercy of the Master, and some seem to have kept watch upon His movements. The embarkation of the little band was observed, and many "knew Him." They recognised the Benefactor, and with characteristic impetuosity, and with some labour and fatigue, they followed on land for some ten or twelve miles the progress of the boat, being joined by many others from the neighbouring villages. Mark, with his customary graphic detail, records that the people "ran "' — such was their earnestness; and, moreover, that they ran "afoot." And Jesus coming forth either from the boat on landing, or from the place of retirement having arrived first, saw this great multitude, and was filled with compassion. He knew their case, marked their eager and laborious pursuit of Him, appreciated their mute but eloquent prayer that He would do them some good, and as a consequence He was filled with compassion. W hat an heart of infinite capacity His was to be filled! How great the volume of pity whenHewasfilled! The multitude was a great one, but the Lord knew the burden and the need of each person present. God’s love was there below, and there is

"No creature, great or small,

Beyond His pity which embraceth all,

Nor any ocean rolls so vast that He

Forgets one wave of all that restless sea." But this occasion however was more than an illustration of His universal love. It exemplified Hisparticularconcern. In His general providence the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26). But this company was of more value in His eyes than they? They were not like the busily curious idlers in Capernaum from whose incessant coming and going the Lord had turned away. These persons had been seeking Him with some pains and inconvenience to themselves. They had travelled some miles to reach Him. They were now before Him, faint in body and weary in spirit. Had they not been as sheep going astray? Were they not now returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls? And He was filled with compassion for them. Who was there in all the earth to care for these poor ones of the flock of Israel? A Gentile emperor at Rome ruled them with a rod of iron. An Edomite sat on the throne of David. Were Annas and Caiaphas high priests such as the people needed — men who would bear gently with the ignorant and with them that were out of the way (Hebrews 5:2)? There was no compassion in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees who devoured widows’ houses a and loaded men’s shoulders with heavy burdens grievous to be borne. The grave had but just closed upon the mutilated corpse of the last of the line of the prophets of God. Truly Israel was without prophet, priest, or king. The people were as sheep not having a shepherd (Numbers 27:17;1 Kings 22:17;Ezekiel 34:5-6). All this the Lord saw very fully, and He was filled with compassion for them. Their own shepherds did not pity them (Zechariah 11:5), for they were but hirelings, and did not own the sheep, who were therefore afflicted because there was in point of fact no shepherd (Zechariah 10:2).

We may ask ourselves who was it there by the Galilean sea with these compassionate thoughts for Israel? Was not this Jehovah echoing what He spake of old through the prophet Isaiah? He was saying, Surely, these are my people; I will be their Saviour. He had come down to be afflicted in their affliction, to redeem them in His love and pity, to hear them and carry them as in the days of old (Isaiah 63:8-9). His arm was not shortened that it could not save; His ear was not heavy that it could not hear. The Lord’s heart of pent-up goodness needed but to find a channel, and it found

a suitable channel in this indigent friendless people; so He "began to teach them many things." They were to Him the ’poor of the flock,’ and He began accordingly to feed them. He was Himself their living food, come down from heaven. As He said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"Blessed Master, how lovely to have Thy character to rest on, to study, to feed on! Oh, may we feed so richly on it, that when we meet Thee, Thou mayest be to us a known Jesus, and the sympathies of Thy Spirit may be with what Thy Spirit has already matured in our hearts, and seeing Thee in glory as Thou art, all the inward springs and depths of Thy character may then be revealed to us."

05.34. The Servant of Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel

34. — The Servant of Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel

"And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent: send them away that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Goandsee. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves and he gave to the disciples to set before them and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men" (Mark 6:35-44, R.V.). The Lord, having been, so far as the spirit of the people was concerned, rejected in Galilee, revealed Himself to the company that sought Him out in the character of the promised Shepherd of Israel. He was there to feed both the hearts and the bodies of His hungry flock if they would but come to Him. They had come to Him, and, accordingly He led them into green pastures. This title of Jehovah's Sent One — the Shepherd — first appeared in the prophetic pronouncement of Jacob upon his sons. Israel upon his dying bed was inspired to declare what should befall the twelve tribes in the latter days. But, according to these predictions, it was in the offspring of Joseph that blessings for the seed of Jacob would culminate — blessings of the heaven above, and of the deep beneath, blessings unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Moreover, it was out of the loins of Joseph, who was "separate from his brethren," that the Shepherd should come, the Stone of Israel, to establish the tribes in these blessings (Genesis 49:24). Now that Shepherd, whom the departing patriarch dimly saw in vision, had appeared in the midst of His people to stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD and in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God (Micah 5:4). It is part of the good tidings promised to Zion that the LORD God shall come to her and "shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck" (Isaiah 40:11).

There seems to be some distinction between the Lord viewed as Shepherd and as King. The nature of the offices of the Shepherd, regarded as a. whole, are more peaceful than those of the King of Israel. It is true they each have a double character, so that the titles blend into one anpther in that harmony of perfection and glory which is inseparable from our Blessed Master. Thus, the Messianic King is both a man of war and a man of peace — a David and a Solomon. On the one hand, He will subdue the oppressor of His people, striking through kings in the day of His wrath, dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. On the other hand, He will come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth, introducing world-wide peace and prosperity. And as the King's energies are exercised in a twofold direction, so the Shepherd exercises a twofold care. In the first place, He protects His own from the predatory foes of the flock. The wolf cannot snatch the feeblest lamb out of the Shepherd's hand, and according to the prophecy of the

days to come He will "cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land." But He not only protects, He also preserves and provides food. The Shepherd brings His flock into the green pastures and beside the still waters. He comforts them with His rod and His staff, and is with them in the valley of the shadow of death. This beautiful figure of our Lord is used throughout both Old and New Testaments, and it will well repay the devout heart to pursue the study of it in he law, the prophets and the psalms; in the evangelists and the apostles. And, what is best of all, the Shepherd's compassions still abound towards His hungry, weary flock, and, as on the Galilean shore of old, His voice still teaches His flock "many things."

"There is no voice like Thine,

O Shepherd, kind and true,

Whose accents, human and divine,

Still call Thy sheep anew.

The stranger's voice is loud,

And confident his tone;

But, Lord, to Thee our hearts have bowed

To Thee whose love is known.

So when with siren song

That alien voice would lure,

Thy steadfast word shall keep us strong

And peaceful and secure."* {*Poems by Mr. R. Beacon (1910), p.114} The Suggestion of the Twelve As the Lord proceeded with His discourse to the assembled crowd the day began to wear away, and the apostles thereupon grew anxious in regard to the situation. They themselves had apparently planned to return in the boat to Capernaum. But what would the multitude there in the wilderness do for food and lodging? They therefore interposed with their difficulty. Going to the Lord, they pointed out that the place was a desert one, the day was far spent, and the people had nothing to eat. They suggested that the Lord should dismiss the audience at once, so that they might go to the neighbouring homesteads and villages and purchase food for themselves. The suggestion of the apostles was wise enough perhaps as a measure of purely human policy. Commonsense, that much vaunted factor in the affairs of life, could invent nothing better than self-help as a means of supplying the needed food under the exceptional circumstances. The proposed scheme relieved the disciples of any responsibility as to the welfare of the people, but it fell woefully short of the compassionate spirit inculcated in the law. "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt surely open thine hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. . . . Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command

thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land" (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

If the disciples were lacking in this spirit of compassion for their poor and needy brothers in Israel, it was not so with their Master.Hehad come into the midst of the nation to exemplify the tenets of the law in their fullest perfection. Only we cannot fail to note that the band of privileged followers of the Lord showed in this instance how utterly unable they were to apprehend the motives animating their Master. Indeed, how frequently they are shown in the Gospel running counter to Him. When little children were brought to Him for a blessing which He was ready to bestow, the disciples rebuked those who brought them. When they saw one casting out demons in the name of Jesus, they, contrary to the will of their Master, forbade him because he followed not with them. When a certain village of the Samaritans refused to receive the Lord, James and John desired the Saviour of men to destroy the villagers by fire from heaven. When the Lord spoke to His disciples of His journey to J erusalem to suffer, Peter took it upon him to rebuke his Master. Well might the Lord say to them, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. They continued in His company, but did not adequately learn of Him. Even at the last, on the night of His betrayal, He had to say to one, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? The Lord did not receive the suggestion of the twelve that the multitude should be dismissed, but said to them, Give ye them to eat. And He addressed Himself especially to this same Philip, saying, Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? He said this to prove him (John 6:6), knowing Himself what He would do. The twelve had been recently constituted apostles, preachers, miracle-workers. Here then was an occasion for them to test their resourcefulness. The Lord bade them feed the hungry people, but neither Philip nor any of the apostles were capable of grasping the true bearings of the situation, and counting upon help from the only possible source. The statistician of the company estimated that two hundred denarii spent in bread would only provide a little for each person. This would be equal to a pennyworth of bread for each twenty-five men in the company, and nothing for the women and children. Besides, where was such a great quantity of bread to be obtained in a country place but sparsely inhabited, as that was? Shall we go and buy? they ask, scornfully.* Yet did they not know the Scriptures? Had they forgotten what Jehovah had done in the days of Elisha? Then the loaves of a man from Baal-shalisha were multiplied so that a hundred men were satisfied (2 Kings 4:42-44). And a greater than Elisha NA, as there, even Jehovah Himself, who put to shame the unbelieving objections of His servant Moses in somewhat analogous circumstances (Numbers 11:1-35). Jesus also shamed the twelve; for out of His own love He cared for and fed these people.

{*John writing of another occasion, tells us that the disciples went into the town of Sychar to buy bread while Jesus sat by the well (John 4:8).} This miracle is remarkable as being one of the Lord’s few spontaneous ones. In contrast with the majority of recorded instances, He did not wait to be solicited to put forth His power, but acted straightway out of the fulness of His compassion. The sum of money named, ’two hundred pence,’ was a considerable one, and may have been in the common purse of the Lord’s company. It is estimated to have been equivalent to some seven pounds of our currency, but at the same time it must be remembered that the purchasing power of money was then greater. The ’penny’ was the Roman denarius, and the pay of a soldier was a denarius a day. This was also the liberal wages of a liberal master to the labourers in the vineyard, as we read in the parable (Matthew 20:1-34). A hundred denarii was a common currency multiple,

as we may speak in round numbers of so many hundred pounds. We read in the New Testament of

a) 100 denarii in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:28).

b) 200 denarii in the answer of Philip (John 6:7).

c) 300 denarii in the valuation of the ointment used upon the Lord (Mark 14:5;John 12:5).

d) 500 denarii in the parable of the two debtors (Luke 7:41).

What a Man Hath On the failure of the apostles to provide any scheme for the relief of the people, the Lord Himself took up the case. He would not allow them to go empty away. And as was His custom, He made use of what they possessed, though this in itself was totally inadequate. He inquired of them how many loaves there were. And having ascertained, they reported that a lad who was present had two barley loaves and two fishes. Barley bread on account of its coarseness was the food of the poorest peasants only, the dried fish being eaten with it as a relish. In Solomon’s day barley was the food of horses (1 Kings 4:28). And the Midianite’s dream of a cake of barley bread rolling into the camp was a vivid metaphor of the dire straits to which the famished poverty-stricken Israelites were reduced; nevertheless, by Jehovah’s aid the despised cake overturned the tent of the oppressor (Judges 7:13). Here also the Lord took up what were poor, weak and contemptible as things of the world, and used them in the plenitude of His power and of His grace to satisfy the hunger of the assembled multitude.

It is instructive to observe that the Lord did not feed the people with bread from heaven, as manna came down day by day to Israel in the desert, but He multiplied the few loaves which they found in store until the wants of all were supplied. In like manner He changed the contents of the waterpots into wine for the marriage-feast at Cana. By such events the Lord showed how the power of God can magnify human inefficiency and insufficiency to the praise of the glory of His grace and to the liberal satisfaction of human need. He could, of course, in His own inherent power make all things new in His kingdom, but the time of the new creation had not then come, nor would it come until He Himself, its Head, rose from the dead. The Lord therefore made use of the five barley loaves, sad testimony as they were of the poverty of Jehovah’s ancient people, and by means of them gave a demonstration of the future plenty of the promised land wherein they should eat bread without scarceness, and should not lack any good thing (Deuteronomy 8:9).

However, a great lesson lies here of perennial importance. In the matter of usefulness, God looks at what a man has, and not at what a man has not. And it is His way to use what a man has, if there be a willing mind. "What is that in thine hand?" Jehovah said to Moses, who was so full of excuses of his own unfitness to go to Egypt. Under Jehovah’s power and direction the rod became a serpent, to the confusion of Pharaoh and his magicians. Shamgar had but an ox-goad, but in the might of the Lord he smote six hundred Philistines with it, and saved Israel. David had but a sling in his hand, but a smooth stone from it slew Goliath the giant, and the enemies of Israel were discomfited. The Philadelphian church is said to have but little strength, but like the widow’s handful of meal and the drop of oil, it shall suffer no diminution. The Lord sets before this assembly with its modicum of power an open door which is impregnable, for no one can shut it (Revelation 3:8).

05.35. Marshalling Into Order

35. — Marshalling Into Order No spectacle, perhaps, exhibits greater disorder and confusion than a crowd of excited persons. Such a concourse is described most graphically in the reference to the mob assembled in the theatre at Ephesus, which cried for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." We read of them that, "Some cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together" (Acts 19:32). A multitude has no conscience to condemn the wrong, and no humane consideration for the weak. Many an outrage has been wrought by a hungry mob in a struggle for food. When the famished people of Samaria thronged out of the gates in quest of the food left in the deserted tents of the Syrians, they trod to death the supercilious captain who was set there to regulate the traffic. The Lord would not permit any such confusion. He was preparing a table in the wilderness for these Galilean folk, and He arranged the guests according to a definite plan. He would have no haste, no disorder. He Himself knew what He would do. He commanded the assembled thousands to be seated as at table, not where they would, but where and how He would. He was the Lord of the feast, and He would say to one, Sit here, and to another, Sit there, as it pleased Him. The mass of persons was divided systematically by Him according to a simple plan which all could understand and follow. The men were to sit in one place, and the women and children in another by themselves. They were disposed in companies and ranks; in fifties, counting in one direction, and in rows of hundreds, counting in another; fifty hundreds, making five thousand, so far as the men were concerned.

Such an arrangement obviated confusion, and enabled the distribution of the bread and the fish to be made with equal fairness to all, while the task of distribution was made less laborious for the disciples. Even under these circumstances, considerable physical exertion was involved in handling the amount of food required to satisfy the hunger of all the company. Assuming for the purpose of making a rough estimate, that each person present ate one pound of bread, more than two and a quarter tons would be necessary for the men, omitting all provision for the women and children, and making no allowance for the fish, nor for the fragments that remained at the close of the meal. These items would increase the total weight beyond three tons. There was therefore a considerable bulk of food for the twelve apostles to handle.*

{*May we not believe that the whole bulk of the food was handled by the Lord Himself? Though it is idle to speculate as to the exact point where the multiplication took place, whether in the hands of the Lord or in those of the apostles.} The pre-arranged system materially lightened the labour incurred, and moreover enabled the people to take their meal without distraction. Looking back to the occasion of the Lord leaving Capernaum to come to this spot, we see that the unjealous Lord protected His guests from such interruptions and disturbances as those which prevented Him and His apostles from eating their food in peace, and which led Him to seek seclusion in the wilderness. The Lord’s Fellow-helpers When they were all seated in orderly array upon the green grass (for it was the springtime, and the herbage of the hillside was shooting up in young and beautiful life), the Lord took up the five loaves and the two fishes, their size being such that He

could probably hold them all at once. In the presence of the assembled multitude He raised His eyes to heaven, as He did when He healed the deaf and dumb man (Mark 7:34), and when He came to the grave of Lazarus (John 11:41). This was an attitude of prayer and heavenly communion (John 17:1), and He had taught His disciples to pray, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . Give us this day our daily bread," assuring them at the same time that the heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air would not forget His more valuable creatures. By this act the Perfect Servant sets an example before all, acknowledging His dependence upon the One who sent Him, and in general effect taking up the language of the Psalmist: "Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes, O thou that sittest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of the maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the LORD our God until he have mercy upon us" (Psalms 123:1-2). The Lord also "blessed." InJohn 6:2we read that He gave thanks. Luke says that He blessed the loaves and fishes (Luke 9:16), while Matthew and Mark speak only of blessing without naming the object. In Scriptural usage, blessing and the giving of thanks are closely joined. Both terms are used in connection with the Lord’s Supper,e.g.,blessing (Mark 14:22;1 Corinthians 10:16); and giving thanks (Mark 14:23;Luke 22:19;1 Corinthians 11:24). To bless(eulogeo) seems to combine (1 Corinthians 14:16) the ascription of praise and thanks to God with the sanctification of food for healthful use (1 Timothy 4:4-5). The Host then broke the victuals, and the distribution began with Him. The multiplication and the extent of it were altogether in His hands. Under His superintendence the little did not become less. He opened His hand and supplied the need of every living person before Him.

"’Twas springtide when He blessed the bread;

’Twas harvest when He brake." But the disciples were made sharers in this benefaction, which they had not been able to anticipate. He gave of the loaves and the fishes to them to set before the people. It was the Lord’s part to bless the provision abundantly, and to satisfy these poor folks with bread (Psalms 132:15). But while the apostles could not multiply the five loaves into a bounty for five thousand men, they could transport the bounty as it accumulated to the hungry mouths of their brothers in Israel. This service they were called to perform under their Master’s eye, and it was analogous to their subse quent spiritual service as the "fellow-labourers of God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). The apostles, though forming the foundation of the church, were never originators. They acted in the name of the Lord. As with the physical, so with the spiritual food; what they received of the Lord, they delivered to others, either for their physical or their spiritual nutrition, just as the case was, the Spirit, in the latter case, dividing to each one severally according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Overflowing Bounty

James, writing of the Giver of wisdom, says "He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Another contemplating His great riches of goodness, says, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." A transcendent generousness is the divine habit. Hence we read that at this feast in the wilderness, "they did all eat and were filled." Not one was overlooked. The weak women and children were not crowded off by selfish men, but all were supplied with an ample sufficiency, of which they were able to partake with ease and comfort as they sat upon the green grass. Philip’s way would have been to provide enough bread for the meal, so that each might take "a little"; the Lord’s way was to provide a superabundance, so that every one might have "as much as he would." We may not regard the superfluity as the result of a too liberal estimate on the part of the Lord. He who increased the scanty store by His omnipotence, knew, in His omniscience, the exact

measure of the appetites of the multitude. But He did not stay the exercise of His multiplying power at that point. He gave them "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Was He not showing forth the Father, and the plenty of His house, where there is surely "bread enough and to spare"? He was, as it were, opening the windows of heaven and pouring out a blessing, and there was not room enough to receive it.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," says the proverb, and there was an exemplification of it that day. The abundance was such, that they were able at the close of the meal to gather together for future consumption twelve basketfuls of the portions which the Lord had broken off and divided. When Jehovah multiplied the widow’s oil in the days of Elisha there was sufficient, when sold, to pay her debts, and also something for her to go on with. The same Lord was here, and was spreading before these weary and hungry Galileans the largess of Heaven. The very profusion of the gifts marked that they came from above. And the same feature of amplitude is true of spiritual things as of temporal, for where sin abounded, grace did superabound. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" The Lesson of Frugality The Lord who exhibited such plentitude in the provisions He spread before the multitude gave special directions for the care of such overplus as would be found when all needs were met. It is from John only of the four Evangelists that we learn of Jesus saying to His disciples, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). That nothing be lost! The Lord would not have us lose His gifts by waste or neglect because we have more than sufficient for the moment. When God gave seven years of plenty in Egypt, it was the spirit of divine wisdom in Joseph that devised efficient measures to gather up the superabundance, and store it for the days of famine. Nothing was to be lost! When the people of Israel reached the land of Canaan, the Lord promised, in view of the rest of the sabbatic year, that He would command His blessing during the sixth year, so that the land might bring forth fruit sufficient for three years (Leviticus 25:21). But of what value would this abundance be to the nation, if the bounteous harvest was not carefully garnered? Again, we observe that in spite of profusion nothing was to be lost. In short, the lesson is one of general application. It is not pleasing to God that we should neglect or squander His bounties. To waste is to despise, to lose, His gifts. Economy is not contrary to, but consistent with true liberality, and thrift with benevolence and benefaction. That person who lays by in store as God has prospered him, is the person who is thereby prepared to bestow his gifts bountifully when occasion arises (1 Corinthians 16:2). The superabundant broken pieces were those which the Lord had broken off for distribution, and of these each apostle had a basketful over and above what was required by the people. The whole scene is eloquent of the rich goodness of God, provided by the Servant of Jehovah, and administered by the twelve apostles. It recalls the words of Paul written to the Corinthian believers: "God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having all sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work. . . being enriched in everything unto all liberality which worketh out through us thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:8-11).

05.36. The Pathway over the Stormy Sea

36. — The Pathway over the Stormy Sea

"And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat and to go before [him] unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And seeing them distressed1 in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them; but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition2, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer3: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed4 in themselves for they understood not concerning5 the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:45-52, R.V.).

{1 "tormented," McCl.; "toiling hard," T.S.G.; "labouring," J.N.D.

2 "phantom," T.S.G.: "ghost," McCl.

3 "take courage," T.S.G.; "Be of good courage," McC1:, J.N.D.

4 "beyond all measure amazed," T.S.G.; "exceedingly amazed," McCl.; "exceedingly beyond measure astonished," J.N.D.

5 "With the help of," McCl.; "through," J.N.D. See also note 65a, p. 256, W. Kelly'sExposition of the Gospel of Mark,1907.} The service of love to the famishing multitudes having been rendered, the Lord did what the disciples suggested He should do earlier in the day (Mark 6:36). He sent the people away. But, first of all, He constrained His disciples to embark in the boat and to precede Him in crossing to the other side of the lake near to Bethsaida.*

{*This Bethsaida was the city of Andrew and Peter, situated to the South of Capernaum, and therefore not Bethsaida Julias in the vicinity of which this miracle took place (Luke 9:10). There are some, however, who think otherwise, holding that Bethsaida Julias is the only town mentioned in the Gospels, and they translatepros, "over against," instead of "to Bethsaida" (Mark 6:45).} An unwillingness on the part of the disciples to obey seems implied in the terms of the narrative, such as "demanded a certain loving violence on His part to overcome." And from John (John 6:1-71) we learn what in all probability was the reason why the apostles needed to be "constrained," or forced to put to sea. The miracle of the loaves had awakened great popular excitement in the desert place, and the multitude were desirous to take Him by force and proclaim Him the Prophet and King of the Jews. The disciples had not sufficiently imbibed the spirit of their Master to judge rightly of this momentary impulse, and they would probably have taken sides with the mob to place Him on the throne of David. Jesus therefore sent them away, while He Himself calmed the turbulence of the people and dismissed them to their homes before night came on. The Lord valued this

ebullition of popular feeling aright. He would not receive honour from men, nor would He commit Himself to man, for He knew what was in man. A year later, a crowd, not then of Galilee but of Jerusalem, would, He knew, follow Him and cry "Hosanna, blessed is the kingdom of our father David that cometh," while a few days later the same crowd would cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Messiah's hour was not yet come. The Servant of Jehovah would not, therefore, consent to be hurried to the throne by popular clamour. God in due time would give His judgments to the King, and then the anointed of the Lord would judge the people in righteousness and the poor with judgment (Psalms 72). For the moment, the marvellous multiplication of the loaves and fishes seemed most attractive to the indigent peasantry of Galilee who were accustomed to earn their small morsel of bread by much sweat of the face. Jesus therefore seemed to them to be most desirable — a king after their own heart. But when they sought Him the next' day that they might exalt Him, the Lord unveiled to them the secrets of their inner selves, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

Because Jesus had so liberally fed the multitude they were prepared to come in their zeal, and by force to make Him a king. "But the Lord would not take the kingdom from zeal like this. This could not be the source of the kingdom of the Son of man. The beasts (Daniel 7:2-3) may take their kingdoms from the winds striving upon the great sea, but Jesus cannot (Daniel 7:13). This was not His mother crowning Him in the day of His espousals (Song of Solomon 3:1-11). This was not, in His ear, the shouting of the people bringing in the head-stone of the corner; nor the symptom of His people made willing in the day of His power. This would have been an appointment to the throne of Israel on scarcely better principles than those on which Saul had been appointed of old. His kingdom would have been the fruit of a heated desire of the people, as Saul's had been the fruit of their revolted heart. But this could not be."

Prayer in the Mountain Solitude The disciples having embarked and the crowds having been dismissed, Jesus departed into the mountain alone to pray. This reference is the second one made in this Gospel to the prayers of the Lord. On the first occasion we are told that "in the morning a great while before day he rose up and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). This was in Capernaum at the beginning of His public ministry, and was the sequel to a day of strenuous toil. The present occasion was after some two years of His public service had passed, during which the multitudes of Galilee had everywhere welcomed Him and His preaching of the kingdom. But a change was now imminent. The Evangelists unite to show us that at this juncture the spirit of envy and malice began to display itself more openly against Jesus. The opposition that had hitherto slumbered now awoke to a vigorous action which grew in intensity until it finally reached, a year later, the climax of the cross. In view of this definitive rejection by His beloved people, Jesus took up the burden of it upon His spirit before His Father. And may we not believe that as He most surely felt in the silent midnight the poignancy of a despised love, so the lonely mountain-altar smoked with the fragrant frankincense of a submissive will: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight? "

It seems the way of the Spirit of God in the Gospels to give us momentary glimpses of Jesus such as these in order that we may see the historical fulfilment of prophecies which were given long before concerning the Servant of Jehovah. These holy men of old were not silent concerning the

apparent failure of the Sent One of God when He should come to introduce Israel to the blessings of the new covenant. It was said that the Servant would labour for the name of Jehovah, but that His assiduity would be in vain so far as outward result would manifest. He would spend His strength without stint, but for nought in seeming effectiveness. The Messiah would come to gather Israel under His wings, but Israel would refuse to be gathered. Surely we see these things outlined in the praying Christ, and we see Him there upon the mountain-side learning obedience to the written will of Jehovah by the things He was suffering in His spirit. But after the long dark night comes the glad day. In those sacred solitudes the blessed Saviour was wrapped in secret communion until the morn approached. The night watches were passing, the day would break, the shadows would flee away. The same prophecy that foretold failure also foretold triumph. "But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity, yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:4-6). There was thus a joyful issue set before the face of the Lord; and in the morning watch He came to His disciples, walking on the sea. The Distress of the Disciples A storm was no unusual phenomenon on the Sea of Galilee. Indeed, this inland lake was noted for the prevalence of violent tempests which arose with great suddenness. The apostles were natives of the surrounding districts and were therefore familiar with this feature. And those of them who had been fishermen must often have experienced similar storms in the course of their regular occupation. On this occasion we are told that the sea arose because of the great wind that blew against them. The boatmen had intended to skirt the northern coast, but they appear to have been driven in the opposite direction towards the southern shore. Consequently, though they spent a great part of the night labouring at the oars they made but very little real progress towards their "desired haven," because they were pitting themselves against the forces of Nature. And though they struggled zealously to gain their destination, they were no match for the opposing elements.

There was undoubtedly a great tempest, but it is not to be gathered directly from the narrative that the apostles were in imminent personal danger. In the case of the storm recorded earlier in the Gospel the waves washed into the boat, and the apostles felt themselves perishing when they aroused their Master. Here it is not stated that the storm threatened to overwhelm the barque, though there must always be danger in an open boat with winds and waves running high. But we do read that the Lord saw the disciples distressed with rowing. Such was the particular difficulty of the moment. They had been pulling at the oars with all their might without making any headway. This was weary work, and dispiriting too. And yet had not the Lord constrained them to embark that evening? And they might have reflected that, in effect, it was He who had set them at this work of rowing in the teeth of a strong gale, and such a reflection would give rise to disparaging thoughts of Him. But was there not some ulterior purpose in the trying experiences of that night? Had not these fishers of men to learn thereby that there are times in Christian history when no fishing can be done, when no sail can be set to run easily before the breeze, when, in fact, every muscle must strain at the oar to keep the boat’s head in the right direction and to prevent drifting, while no real progress seems possible? What the Lord was facing in spirit on the mountain top, the

apostles were learning upon the stormy waters in a manner more suited to the measure of their understanding. The servants, like their Master, were labouring in vain and spending their strength for nought.

There was an essential difference, however, in the two cases. On the one hand, the Lord submittedto apparent failure in His service; on the other hand, the apostles lacked the needful strength to secure for themselves a victorious combat. The Lord forebore to exercise His power; His servants did not possess that degree of power which the occasion demanded. But before the morning broke, while they had proved their own insufficiency, they had also proved the almighty power of their Lord and Master to make them easy conquerors in spite of themselves.

05.36b. The Appearance of Jesus

36b. — The Appearance of Jesus

Jesus on the mountain-side was not in ignorance of the precarious position of His followers. From the place of prayer He saw them toiling hard in rowing. May we not believe, indeed, that they in the extremity of their trial were the subject of His intercession? At a later day we know He said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). So that we have reason for boldly thinking that the Lord was the Unseen Helper of these distressed ones throughout that night.

We believe, in short, that He who prayed that the faith of Simon might not fail prayed in like manner for the faith of the twelve. Their trial was permitted to extend through the long hours of darkness that the tribulation might work out patience, and patience experience, and experience hope — the hope that maketh not ashamed.

Such being the divine purpose, there was the occasion for much soul-discipline throughout the night-watches. The apostles must have often thought, and possibly often spoken of their absent Master. How they then desired the presence of Him who had formerly stood up in the boat during a similar storm, and rebuked the wind and the sea. Surely they must have had some expectation that He would come to their relief. Blessed servants would they be if when their Lord did come He found them watching, counting upon Him in faith that He would not utterly forsake them. But He came to them not in the second watch, nor in the third watch. Nor was it until the dark hour before the dawn that the bright and morning Star appeared. "But they when they saw him walking on the sea supposed that it was an apparition and cried out; for they all saw him, and were all troubled." The Lord’s method of approaching the disciples was altogether superhuman.* The manner, it is needless to say, was unexpected on their part. Among all the wonders related in the Old Testament there was no parallel to this one. At the national crisis which arose at the passage of the Red Sea, Jehovah, in the morning watch, looked forth upon the hosts of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and delivered the people of Israel from their foes. But the wonder on the Galilean Sea was of another order.

{*It is said that the Egyptian hieroglyph for an impossible thing is a figure of feet walking on the water. CompareJob 9:8.} The sight of the Master of the elements making His way to them across the heaving billows must have been overwhelming to these men. There was, in this instance, no forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord, to make His paths straight. Unannounced, He approached the little band, treading His way through the surge of the mighty waters. They were troubled on seeing Him thus, for as yet they had not understood Jesus who He was. They did not realise that the sea was His; He had made it. Truly, His way was in the sanctuary, but equally His way was in the sea and His paths in the great waters (Psalms 77:13; Psalms 77:19). They had yet to hear His promise, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you," though He anticipated the enunciation of it by His appearance to the storm-tossed mariners, as He had done in a former day to the three bound men in the furnace of fire (Daniel 3:1-30), coming, as we may say, alike through

fire and water to the relief of His own. But when the Lord came across the sea He sought a response from His disciples. He came within their ken, and He would have passed them by. He looked that His appearance should awaken some impulse of appeal to Him (cp.Luke 24:28), for theyallsaw Him, as Mark tells us. There was, however, no intelligent recognition of their Master on the part of the apostles. We read that they cried out in fear, for they supposed they saw a phantom. The vision on the waves, they thought, was not real — an apparition — the creation of their own imagination.

Such was the delusion of the little company, notwithstanding the power they had lately received and which they had exercised over evil spirits. The appearance of their Master filled them with more alarm than the fury of the storm seems to have done. That fear — the fear of the unknown — possessed them of which Eliphaz spoke when he said, "Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before my eyes" (Job 4:14-16). The Lord’s Word of Good Cheer But the Lord never failed in the supply of His gracious help in the needful measure and at the needful moment. The disciples uttered no direct prayer to Him for aid, but their cry of fear and distress arrested Him, and instantly He wrought for their relief, allaying their fears with His word. "He straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I: be not afraid." The Lord’s first word, on this occasion, was addressed to the apostles, while in the previous storm it was first addressed to the waves and the sea. The actual necessity, therefore, for the Lord’s interposition was distinct in the two cases. In the first instance, there was imminent peril to be averted. In the second, a tempest of fear was sweeping over the men’s hearts; their courage, nerve and assurance were apparently exhausted. Then, the Lord remarked upon their lack offaith.Nov His words show there was a lack ofpeacein their hearts. It would seem that in the one case the chief trouble was without and around, while in the other the more pressing need was within the troubled hearts of the disciples. At any rate, we have the historical fact that the Lord’s words, with their threefold message from the waves, were addressed to His distracted followers. He said to them: —

(1) Be of good cheer (courage)

(2) It is I;

(3) Be not afraid.

(1) The Servant of Jehovah was commissioned to bring "consolation" to Israel (Luke 2:25). This He did individually as well as nationally. There were many hearts stricken. with fear among those with whom the Lord came in contact during his ministry. And we find the exhortation "Be of good cheer" was one He loved to speak. "Cheer" is that comfort of heart which springs from implicit confidence in the love and power of God. And who could impart this sustaining virtue like our Lord? Besides the present occasion, Jesus used these words in the following four cases, two being cases of physical weakness and two of mental distress; two being in the midst of trouble, and two full of apprehension of what was imminent:

a) To the sick of the palsy whom the four men of faith laid at his feet (Matthew 9:2).

b) To the feeble and trembling woman who touched the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:22).

c) At the close of His valedictory address to His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

d) In the hour of great persecution at Jerusalem, the risen and ascended Lord stood by Paul and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).

(2) In the next place, the Lord, by His words "It is I," corrects the error of the apostles regarding Himself. Most probably they failed to recognise Him, because they were not expecting Him to come to them at that particular time or in that particular manner. Hence they imagined they saw a phantom until the Master said, "It is I." Similar cases of non-recognition occurred after the Lord's resurrection. When J esus appeared to Mary and spoke to her, she supposed Him to be the gardener until He called her by name (John 20:15). And again, when He subsequently presented Himself in the midst of His disciples and said, "Peace be unto you," they were terrified and affrighted and supposed they had seen a spirit (Luke 24:37). Speaking generally, we may say that it is the latent incredulity of man's heart which prevents him from accepting the operation of divine power and love in superhuman ways, and such sluggish comprehension was often displayed by the apostles. The Lord dispersed the unbelief of those in the boat by a word which awakened their dull memories to a recognition of Himself. He is One whom they knew. Hence His words were, "It is I." It was as if He said to them, "Your Master and Lord is before you." And it will be remembered that He used similar words to them after His resurrection, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Luke 24:39).

(3) The third exhortation to the agitated disciples was "Be not afraid." It is one of the many offices of perfect love to cast out fear (1 John 4:18). And the Lord during His ministry often used His assuring words of love and power to deliver trembling ones from the bondage of fear. The sense of His presence was and is all-sufficient to banish the dread of coming calamity. The Lord knew this when He gave the verbal promise of His abiding presence to those He was leaving in the world: "Lo, I am with you always." And the pious heart knows this from experience when he sings: —

"O Lord, Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill

Thy life — to calm the troubled soul,

Thy love — its fear dispel." The apostles realised the same blessed truth on that stormy night. For after He had spoken to them these words, He went up unto them into the boat and the wind ceased. The Lord's word of comfort was succeeded by His act of deliverance.

Callous Hearts At this miraculous display the apostles "were beyond all measure amazed, for they bethought nut on the loaves, for their heart was hardened" (T. S. Green's rendering). Thus they failed to exercise that degree of faith and confidence in their Master which might be expected from men who were privileged followers of Jesus and eye-witnesses from the beginning of His ministry of many phases of His divine power. The Lord exhibited before them His personal control of the unruly elements, and they were filled with wonderment such as the multitude often displayed in their unreflecting ignorance (Mark 2:12). Like Israel of old whose tendency was to forget Jehovah

and their deliverance from Egypt (Psalms 78:7; Psalms 78:1), the anxieties of the moment obliterated the marvellous mercies of the past from the minds of the disciples. Even the miracle of the previous afternoon, in which they had the honour of being distributors of the Lord’s bounty was forgotten by them. Such is the natural disposition of our hearts, for they were but men of like passions with ourselves. This failure of the apostles is said to be because (1) they understood not the loaves, and (2) their heart was hardened. The verb used in the text for "understanding" has been variously rendered, but it appears on the whole to imply the putting together of matters in the mind and heart in order to ascertain by spiritual reflection their true significance. Like other scriptural words it seems to be employed with great breadth and with various shades of meaning. It occurs, for example, in the address of Stephen. Speaking of Moses slaying the Egyptian, he says, "He supposed his brethrenunderstoodhow that God by his hand was giving them deliverance but theyunderstoodnot" (Acts 7:25). So also Joseph and Maryunderstoodnot a certain saying of Jesus (Luke 2:50). The Lord opened not the minds of the disciples that they mightunderstandthe scriptures (Luke 24:45). It became true of Israel nationally in the day of their visitation that "they hear not, neither do theyunderstand"(Matthew 13:13), and on account of their wilfulness judgment came upon them, and the heart of the people waxed gross lest they shouldunderstandwith their heart (Acts 28:26-27). In this passage of Mark we are instructed that the apostles failed to glorify the Lord in a great crisis because they had not sufficiently considered the miracle of the loaves. They saw in the miracle the work of His omnipotent hand, but they neglected to perceive in it the intense love of His heart for needy men. They had been witnesses of and participants in the labour of feeding the five thousand, and that deed of mercy was done not only to satisfy hungry mouths but also to awaken slothful hearts. It was another proof that Jehovah Himself was present in Israel giving His people bread. But the hearts of the disciples were so dull that they missed the significance of His presence, and consequently they lacked that source of comfort in the hour of their trial.

If their hearts were not hardened, if they had but considered the loaves, would they have set limitations to the love and power of the Servant of Jehovah? Would they have thought that He who had displayed omnipotence on the land, lacked omniscience on the sea? Would they have thought that He who had showed such solicitude could so change in a few hours as to forget in their peril the band of servants whom He had chosen to be His companions? The Lord came over the waves seeking a spirit of fidelity and confidence in the hearts of the disciples, but He found instead deadly dulness and spiritual insensibility. There was hardness or blindness of heart in them as well as in the Pharisees (Mark 3:5), in Israel (Romans 11:7; Romans 11:25;2 Corinthians 3:14), and in the Gentiles (Ephesians 4:18). Thus Jesus discovered no response in the apostles to the labours of His love, and when He delivered them from the fury of the storm, against which they were vainly battling, they were excessively astonished. If they expected deliverance at all, they did not expect it in that manner. However, their hard hearts were melted, and "they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). The Lesson for Today The lesson of unwavering faith and confidence in the Lord is one needing to be learned again and again and afresh by us. We readily enough recognise the greatness of our foes and the weakness of our might, but not so quickly the power and grace of our Friend and Deliverer. The apostle Paul "considered" the miracle of the loaves and of the waves, as it were, and has expressed the teaching of them in terms of the spiritual world for the comfort of us all. He wrote to the saints at Corinth, "we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which

befell [us] in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life yea, we ourselves have had the answer of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead: who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:8-10, R.V.).

Let us then exercise faith in face of the adverse forces of this world which we must needs encounter. He who has power to deliver has also sympathy for us in our infirmities, and can give us peace within before He gives peace around. And though we may not be immediately delivered, He will bear our infirmities and carry our sorrows. So that from our sea of tossing billows we may look upward to our Intercessor on high, and say:

"Thou who hast trod the thorny road

Wilt share each small distress:

The love, which bore the greater load,

Will not refuse the less,"

05.37. The Morning Without Clouds

37. — The Morning Without Clouds

"And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored1 to the shore.2 And when they were come out of the boat, straightway the people knew him, and ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds3 those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market-places, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border4 of his garment:5 and as many as touched him were made whole"6 (Mark 6:53-56, R.V.).

{1 "made," J.N.D.

2 "in the haven," McC.

3 "couches," J.N.D.; "pallet-beds," McC.

4 "hem," J.N.D.; "fringe," McC.

5 "outer garment," McC.; "mantle," T.S.G.

6 "healed," T.S.G.; "saved," McC.} The sequel to the narrative of the miracle on the lake, as recorded both in Matthew and Mark, is remarkable, though our interest and attention are apt to be so powerfully attracted by the display upon the waters of our Lord's power in the physical world that we overlook those beneficent effects that followed in profusion when He came to the shore and that equally proved Him to be the Lord from heaven. During the ministry of Jesus, the activities of His mercy were incessant, and were spread alike over land and sea, by night and by day. The Servant of Jehovah never wearied in His task of spreading out the lovingkindnesses of Heaven before the dull eyes of Israel, taking up in spirit the Psalmist's words, "Oh, that men would praise the LORD for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalms 107:31).

There was still among the people of Galilee an outward interest in the Lord and a widespread belief in Him as a wonder-worker. Before He set out from Capernaum on the boat-journey the people came flocking to Him (Mark 6:31), and during that journey on the previous day a multitude followed on the land (Mark 6:33) that they might hear Him again. Now when the boat was moored to the western shore after the night of tempest the Lord was recognised, and a crowd quickly gathered again that His healing power might be exercised upon them; and they did not seek Him in vain.

These two or three verses form a comprehensive summary of the Lord's service at this period. Judging from the narratives of Matthew and Mark, the miracles began directly after the crossing of the sea, and thus constitute the immediate sequel to the stilling of the storm. But it is not implied by either of the Evangelists that all the cases of healing contemplated in the summary took place on a

single day*. On the contrary, the interest is said to have been aroused throughout the whole region of Gennesaret, and wherever the Lord went, whether into a village, or town, or district, the sick ones were brought into the market-places that they might touch the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole.

{*Compare a similar but not identical summary inMatthew 4:23-25.} The Shadows Fleeing Away The dark watches of the tempestuous night were ended, the roaring of the mighty billows had ceased, the storm-tossed boat was at its desired haven, the rising sun chased every gloomy cloud away and beamed in peace and joy upon a smiling land. The Lord with His disciples came to the land of Gennesaret, as Matthew and Mark tell us. This was the name given to the strip of country lying along the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The district is described by Josephus, the historian of the Jews, as one of singular beauty and fertility. Its name, Gennesaret*, is said to signify the "king’s garden," and, if so, it is singularly appropriate in this connection, forming a pictorial allusion to the glad time when the Lord shall come, and the whole land shall be as the garden of the Lord (Isaiah 51:3).

{*The "land of Gennesaret" is only mentioned in the New Testament in this connection (Matthew 14:34; Mark 6:53). The "lake of Gennesaret" occurs once only (Luke 5:1). Dr. John Lightfoot regarded the term as meaning by derivation "the garden or gardens of the king or prince."}

However that may be, we may see here, without an undue exercise of imagination, some partial fulfilment of that long-promised day breaking and the shadows fleeing away. Certainly across this fertile Galilean country the shadows of death were lying, shadows sinless Eden never knew. Indeed, this district in the neighbourhood of Capernaum by the sea was described by Isaiah in one of his prophecies as the land of the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2), and the fulfilment of that particular prophecy so far as it related to the ministry of the Lord, is stated by Matthew. Speaking of the preaching of Jesus, he says, "the people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:12-16).

It is true that the sad phrase, "the shadow of death," is of frequent occurrence in Holy Writ, and is found no less than ten times in the Book of Job, where the terrible devastation wrought in a single household by the "king of terrors" is the main topic. But it is a matter of special interest to note that the phrase is definitely applied by the prophet and by the evangelist to this land on whose shores Jesus landed after the storm.

Here the stroke of death menaced men in every direction, whether in an exceptional degree we are not informed. But there were sick persons in every town and village and along the countryside. Dark shadows were in the streets, in the homes, and in the hearts of these Galileans everywhere. But when the people recognised Jesus, they carried the sick ones on their beds to the place where He was. They laid them in the market-places that they might touch if only the border of His garment, and as many as touched Him were made whole.

It was thus that the shadows were dispersed. The pain and infirmity of the sufferers, the fears and anxieties of the watchers were alike dispelled by the presence of the Lord of abounding mercy. Many a one that day proved that while weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. The good Shepherd who had fed the flock of Israel, literally and figuratively, the previous evening, now appeared again to His people, and walked with them, as it were, comforting them with His rod

and staff, more potent in mercy than those of Moses and Elisha. The Presence of the Lord

There is a striking outstanding feature in this short section of the Gospel. This feature is the beneficent effect produced directly by thepresenceof Jesus upon the dwellers upon that favoured shore. They brought the sick to the place where they heard He was. It was sufficient that the suffering ones should touch Him or the hem of His garment, and they were healed. We are not told that the Lord touched them or even spoke to them. But power went out from Him, drawn forth to relieve the circumstances of needy faith. This outgoing of His personality was also the manner of His service in the storm. There was then no recorded word or act, but on going into the boat where the disciples were, the wind ceased. Thus His presence was recognised. The unruly elements on the sea, pain and sickness on the land, alike confess Him in effect as Jehovah-Shammah, the true seat on earth of Jehovah’s power.

We have elsewhere in the Gospels another instance of the spontaneous effluence of remedial mercy from the Lord. This was on an earlier occasion when great crowds had gathered to Him. Then "all the multitude sought to touch him: for power came forth from him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19, R.V.). But with regard to the present instance we ask whether we may not learn something from the fact that the incident appears to be arranged, apart from its chronology, as an appendix to the stilling of the storm. For it cannot be denied that the work of the Servant of Jehovah on this occasion was in essence that which the prophecies declare He will yet do for the nation as a whole, and indeed for all the world. In the evening the Lord satisfied the hungry mouths of the people with good things; and in the morning He healed all their diseases. He thus fulfilled to some extent to Israel (those in Galilee being for the time representative of the nation) that ancient promise of Jehovah: "Ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exodus 23:25). But it is to be noted that the two clauses of this promise were separated, as regards their fulfilment, by the events of the intervening night. Before the morning of blessing dawned upon the people, the little band of Messiah’s followers had to pass through the terrors of the storm, and on each occasion the presence or absence of Christ gave its character to the event. The Lord was present in Bethsaida, and their bread was multiplied. He was present in Gennesaret, and their infirmities were banished. He was absent from the ship, and the adverse forces of winds and waves baffled their progress. He entered the boat, and immediately the storm ceased, and they were at the "king’s garden." The Allegorical Aspect From the point of view taken in these suggestions, we see that these happenings upon the lake and shore of Gennesaret, while they may not be considered to be exactly types, have their allegorical aspect as to future events in the history of the kingdom. And this aspect we may now briefly consider under two heads, viz.: —

(1) The violent storm which effectually opposed the progress of the followers of the Lord;

(2) The effect of the coming and presence of Jesus on sea and on land.

(1) In the first place, then, the disciples, in crossing the lake in obedience to the Lord towards the place to which He had directed them, were so fiercely opposed by winds and waves that they were unable to go forward. It has already been observed that in general principle these conditions are applicable, as an illustration, to the history of the church of Christ in the midst of its difficulties and in face of the antagonism of the world. But the general principle has, without doubt, a more direct application to the fortunes of the faithful and pious Jewish remnant in the troublous times which

immediately precede the establishment of millennial glory upon the earth.

There will be in that period zealous and courageous witnesses for Christ who will proclaim the gospel of the imminent kingdom in the face of persecution which will be unparalleled in its severity. This struggle in the teeth of the storm is plainly set forth by our Lord in His prophecy delivered on the mount of Olives. He at that time declared that His coming for the deliverance of Israel would be preceded by tribulation such as the world had never known. The various political organisations of that day would be thrown into a state of indescribable uproar and confusion and conflict, a condition of things of which the storm on the Sea of Galilee is a striking figure.*

{*Compare the phrase of our Lord inLuke 21:25 : "the sea and the waves roaring." The metaphor is descriptive of this period of "Jacob's trouble."} This widespread conflict of national forces must necessarily bring about general hardship and suffering. But the special feature for our present consideration is the effect of this upheaval upon the followers of the Lamb. And the Lord showed in His discourse on the mount of Olives what this effect would be. He warned the faithful that they would be persecuted and betrayed and killed, being hated of all the nations, and the trial would be so severe and exacting that many would not endure to the end. The Lord's words, as we have them in Matthew, who presents the prophecy in its amplest and furthest scope, were as follows: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail. Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:7-14, R.V.). The "end" will bring judgment upon the habitable world, and all the tribes of the land shall wail at the coming of the Son of man. But the faithful followers of Christ will be preserved throughout this great tribulation, and will be delivered at His coming from all their sorrows.

Speaking generally, tribulation has been the lot of every Christian since the days of Pentecost, even as the Master forewarned His disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). But in this prophecy of the Lord's we have what is exceptional and unequalled, and what will only be terminated by the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the words quoted above from Matthew describe the sort of opposition that those who go out to preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the nations will inevitably encounter.

Mark represents, in similar terms, the hard case of those faithful Jewish preachers struggling against the stormy billows of worldly hate and cruelty. We there read, "For those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be" (Mark 13:19). On the occasion of the tempest the apostles had but just returned from their first tour of gospel preaching in Galilee. It was needful for them to learn that before the kingdom which they were proclaiming would be set up in power, and during the absence of their Master, they would find themselves beset by the most powerful adversaries. May we not, therefore, regard, this storm on the lake as illustrative of the Satanic fury with which the authorities of this world will by-and-by make their onslaught upon the Jewish witnesses of the

coming kingdom? But at the same time it is shown that the onslaught will be in vain, for the little flock will find that there is an Intercessor on high and a Deliverer at hand.

(2) In the second place, we cannot but mark the special effect that was exercised by the appearance of Jesus. As soon as the apostles knew their Master, as soon as they, in effect, said, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," the tempest ceased, the danger was passed, the goal of their hopes and aims was realised. Such was the effect upon the turbulent sea; what was the effect of His appearance on shore? As soon as the inhabitants knew that Jesus was there, they proved Him to be their Deliverer from their sicknesses and from the sorrows that followed in their train. The tree of life was in the garden, and they found no flaming sword to terrify the weak and timid. All who would might eat of its fruit and live, and not die. Thus in Gennesaret a sample was given of the powers of the age to come, only in that future age the tree of life shall not be for Israel only, but its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations also (Revelation 22:1-2). The passage forms a striking illustration in miniature of the prophetic words of the sweet psalmist of Israel when he spoke of the coming of the Blessed One to usher in the great day of peace and joy: "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; a morning without clouds; when the tender grass springeth out of the earth through clear shining after rain" (2 Samuel 23:4, R.V.).

It is beautiful to observe how in this favoured land the mercy of the Lord was available for any and for all. They brought their sick for healing wherever they heard He was. It was truly a gospel to the needy people when one said, Lo, here is the Christ; or, Lo, He is there. They found they were free to touch Him and be blessed. And this liberty of access recalls, by force of contrast, Eve’s false report of God’s word concerning the tree in the garden, when she said, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:3). Here the dying touched and lived.

Touching and Seeing

"Touching" seems more applicable, as a figure, to the faith of a Jew than to the faith of a Christian It is concerning those who believe on Chris hidden in the heavens that Peter wrote: "whom not having seen, ye love: on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The faith of the future day of the Lord’s presence will be associated with an Object of sight and of touch, as it were. It will be of the sort signified by the action of the Jewish women who, when they saw the Lord after His resurrection, "took hold of his feet and worshipped him (Matthew 28:9). But Mary Magdalene on the same day was instructed by the risen Christ in the exercise of faith of a higher order — faith which requires nothing visible or tangible in its object, but penetrates even unto the Unseen Presence on high. To her the Lord said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). She was surely to learn from this utterance that earthly relationships with the Messiah were suspended, and heavenly ones about to be established between the ascended Saviour and His own. This faith which introduces us to present heavenly realities is declared to be more blessed than that of Thomas Didymus, who insisted on seeing and touching before he would believe. Thomas would not accept the testimony of the apostolic body that they had seen the Lord. "Except," he said, "I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." This disciple was therefore a representative of the unbelieving class who will not believe on the testimony of others, but who require to see for themselves. Jesus said to him, distinguishing for all time the two orders or degrees of faith, "Because thou hast seen me thou hast

believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:24-29). The latter order or character is that of today, for we "walk by faith, and not by sight." The former order is that of the future — the day of the coming of the Lord, when every eye shallseeHim, and the Jews particularly shalllookon Him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10;Revelation 1:7). Both classes are happy and privileged, but the Lord, by His words to Thomas, has placed a special mark of approbation and favour upon those who believe on Him in the period of His absence.

Peter Walking upon the Waters The incident of Peter leaving the boat and walking in that strange pathway upon the waters along with his Master is not recorded in any of the Gospels except that of Matthew, although the account of the Lord's doing so is to be found in all the four. Strictly, it does not fall within the scope of our present consideration, which is confined to the Second Gospel, but in view of its close historical connection with this section, it may not be unprofitable to seek some enlightenment upon the moral significance of this miracle. The account of the episode as given in Matthew is as follows: — "Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were gone up into the boat, the. wind ceased" (Matthew 14:27-32, R.V.).

It must now suffice to draw attention to the main features of this record, and these are twofold. (1) Peter walking on the waters is a triumph of faith over insuperable obstacles of nature; and (2) Peter sinking in the waters is the collapse of nature so soon as faith was replaced by doubt. So far as Peter was concerned, faith was the essential quality which enabled him to occupy this position in humble imitation of his Master.

It will at once be seen that the bold and impulsive apostle by his enterprise stands out in remarkable contrast with his fellows. In the boat they remained in the place of usual security under such circumstances. On the waters Peter had abandoned all earthly means of safety, and was relying exclusively upon the superhuman power of the Lord to sustain him. The apostle, however, did not take up this position of his own accord, but sought and obtained permission to do so. Jesus had said to them all, "It is I." Peter answered, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." That passionate love was burning within him which caused him on a later occasion to leap from the boat at the sight of his beloved Master upon the shore, and make his way, strong swimmer as he was, to be the first to greet Him (John 21:7). And now Peter, having recognised the voice of the Good Shepherd, desired to demonstrate before the eyes of all that it was no phantom form which they saw upon the waves, but the One who was all-powerful to sustain and to deliver. At an early day he left his nets at the call of Jesus to follow Him upon the land (Mark 1:18); now he was prepared to leave the boat at his Master's call, and follow Him upon the sea also. The Lord gave the single and sufficient word, "Come"; and the apostle obeyed. In thus abandoning the boat and walking upon the waters to come to Jesus, the apostle did. but carry into effect the principles of faithful service laid down by the Lord Himself in another place: "If any man serve me let him follow me: and where I am, there shall also my servant be if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

It is, therefore, true of Peter that he went forth to the Lord in response to His "Come"; and

He is thus an apt illustration, to that extent, of the believer today. This character is also figuratively expressed by the Lord in the parable of the ten virgins, to whom the cry was, "Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him" (Matthew 25:6, R.V.). In distinction from the other disciples, Peter left the boat while the storm was still raging, and walked upon the waters to Jesus, and returnedwithHimto the boat; and then the storm ceased — a vivid figure of the return of Christ with His, church to bring peace to the troubled earth. Matthew only of the four Evangelists makes specific reference to the church. This we find in his record of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Son of the living God. "Upon this rock," Christ says, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). It is therefore in keeping with this character of the First Gospel that it is only in it we have the figure of the church supplied by the same apostle walking on the waters.

It was a great wonder to see Jesus walking in this manner, but it was even a greater wonder to see Peter "follow His steps." In the Master there was inherent power to do so; but in Peter there was only imparted power; and that power was imparted to him because he trusted in the Lord, who afterwards said to His disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (John 14:12).

Apart from faith, Peter was as another man upon the waters. And when he considered the fury of the winds and the waves he began to sink, as any man would do. But even when he had lowered himself to the level of those who lack faith, he was not abandoned when he cried out in his extremity, "Lord, save me." On the contrary, Jesus immediately stretched forth His hand, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The Lord remained faithful to the one who had followed him in obedience to His word, and who had honoured Him in this manner by his confidence. This deliverance by the Lord is in accordance with the words of the apostle Paul, who wrote, "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). The Lord was the same both in Peter's triumph and in Peter's failure; the only change was in the disciple into whose heart doubt had crept. The following extract gives an admirable summary of the wider significance of this incident.

Jesus "sent away the Jewish people, who had surrounded Him during the period of His presence here below. The departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter, individually, in coming out of the ship, goes in figure beyond the position of this remnant. He represents that faith which, forsaking the earthly accommodation of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus, who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea — a bold undertaking, but based on the word of Jesus, 'Come.'

"Yet remark here that this walk has no other foundation than 'If it be Thou'; that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends upon Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water. Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which therefore imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character.

"Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure. He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover, the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm — that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail and the Lord is forgotten.

"For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him who is above them all. Nevertheless, blessed be God! He who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple: and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him.

"Peter’s fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with it) instead of looking at Jesus, who was unchanged, and who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed. Still, the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done: only it was now to His shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion, and walking like the Lord.

"Jesus having entered the ship, the wind ceases. Even so it will be when Jesus returns to the remnant of His people in this world. Then also will He be worshipped as the Son of God by all that are in the ship with the remnant of Israel. In Gennesaret Jesus again exercises the power which shall hereafter drive out from the earth all the evil that Satan has brought in. For when He returns, the world will recognise Him. It is a fine picture of the result of Christ’s rejection, which this Gospel has already made known to us as taking place in the midst of the Jewish nation."* {*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby; Matthew’s Gospelin loco(Vol. 3, pp. 118-120.)}

05.38. Vain Ablutions

38. — Vain Ablutions

"And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market place, except they wash themselves, they eat not: and many other things there be, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, hypocrites, as it is written,

This people honoureth me with their lips,

But their heart is far from me.

But in vain do they worship me,

Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men" (Mark 7:1-8, R.V.),

Attention has already been directed in previous papers to the manner in which a general opposition to the progress of the gospel of the kingdom was foreshadowed by the wind-storm which swept down upon the apostolic band of its preachers during their voyage across the Lake of Galilee. The adverse forces depicted by this sign-miracle possess the distinguishing feature of being external to the kingdom itself. The winds and the waves therefore would be figurative of violent powers of evil which would assail the "little flock" of disciples from without.

We now come to a section in this Gospel which still deals with threatening dangers, but points in this case to that form of evil which would arise from within, that is, to an insidious and corrupting foe to the truth of God which in its attacks would be masked under the guise of piety. Hypocrisy, garbed in exceptional religious zeal and austere devotion, had even then corrupted the Jewish nation beyond remedy, and the record forewarns that a similar dead formalism would not fail to envelop Christendom — that form of the kingdom of God which would immediately succeed the earthly people in its responsibility to maintain the light of testimony for God among men. Man’s natural heart, the ever-present and ever-active fountain of evil, would then, as it had done in the generation of that day when Christ was present, elevate to the seat of supreme authority its own deceitful imaginations, displacing the commandments of God by the traditions of men.

It is not to be imagined that evil is any the less effectual in destroying the accredited witness for God because its attacks are subtle and not openly violent. The great enemy of the truth adopts tactics of both kinds, seeking either to affright the followers of Christ as a "roaring lion," or to insinuate his deadly errors among them in the guise of an "angel of light." And we may remark for

our personal profit how the Lord on this occasion showed that a punctilious formalism expressed in the form of an inordinate piety was, even then, nullifying the authority of God in the house of Israel. The Accusations of the Pharisees The disciples were accused of eating bread with unwashed hands. This criticism of their behaviour was made by certain Pharisees and scribes who had come up to Galilee from Jerusalem. Among the simple and unlettered peasantry (John 7:48-49), they assumed the professional role of authoritative exponents of the law of Moses, and of the whole body of precepts contained in the Old Testament scriptures. In the exercise of this judicial capacity they condemned the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God as being contrary to the first principles of Jewish knowledge. Confronted with the undeniable fact that multitudes of the Galilean folk were flocking to hear the Prophet of Nazareth, they had come down from the centre of religious learning and zeal formally to investigate the claims and teaching of Jesus, and to denounce the preacher and the doctrine as being contrary to the approved standards of the Sanhedrin.

Such official inquiries with regard to the ministry of our Lord seem to have occurred at intervals throughout the term of His ministry in Galilee. It is recorded that on previous occasions He had been charged by the Pharisees and the scribes as follows: —

(1) With blasphemy, for pronouncing the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:7).

(2) With keeping evil company, because He ate with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16).

(3) With neglecting the customary fasts (Matthew 9:14; Mark 3:18).

(4) With desecration of the sabbath day (Mark 2:24).

(5) With being possessed by Beelzebub, and casting out demons by him (Mark 3:22).

These charges were to all appearance serious, and involved questions of godliness, such as, (1) blasphemy, (2) "sitting in the seat of the scornful," (3) avoidance of the self-discipline of the fast, (4) disregard of Jehovah’s holy day, and (5) direct service to the prince of the demons. Every one of these false and wicked accusations the patient Servant of God refuted with gentle and holy wisdom. The indictment now made against Him was founded on a trivial point in itself, and seems to have been intended to show how Jesus came short of the standard of devoted sanctity practised by the Pharisees and scribes. These pietists would not permit themselves to eat bread with unwashed hands. They found that some of the disciples of the Lord did so, and in this particular they therefore fell below the conventional standards of religious practice established among the Jews by their religious chiefs. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." The charge made against the Lord on this occasion appears to have arisen mainly out of His practice of mingling with the crowds in the exercise of His ministry of teaching and healing, accompanied by His disciples. At the close of the previous chapter, these activities of divine mercy are summarised and described. Wheresoever the Servant of Jehovah was to be found in country, or village, or town the people brought their sick into themarketplaces,that they might touch the border of His garment and be healed. (Mark 6:56). In this service of healing the disciples may well have borne an active part. And it was after this promiscuous intercourse with many classes of sick and needy folk that the Pharisees, having seen that some of the disciples ate bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, found fault. Such an omission, they asserted, was in direct contrast with the tradition of the

elders and with their own practice, for when they came from themarketplacewhere people congregated most, they would not eat until they had washed themselves (Mark 7:3-4;cf.Mark 6:56, R.V.). The pious Jews were careful to observe this ceremony whether they were conscious of having contracted defilement or not. But the followers of the Lord deliberately came into contact with all sorts of persons in the exercise of their office, in the marketplaces and elsewhere, and yet failed to purify themselves according to the recognised ritual. The Pharisees therefore embraced the opportunity, and sought by means of this charge to depreciate the value of the services of the apostles, since the latter openly disregarded the tradition of the elders, and therein fell short of the recognised Jewish canons of piety. On another occasion a similar charge from the same source was made against the Lord Himself (Luke 11:37). The Jews The evangelist explains that the custom of washing was not peculiar to the sect of the Pharisees, but was common among all the Jews. He says, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not," In this sentence we have an instance of the use of the term, "Jews," which is rare in the Synoptic Gospels, while of frequent occurrence in the Gospel of John. In the latter, this term is found about seventy times, but in the first three Gospels only seventeen times; some of these being parallel passages, All four evangelists, however, record Pilate’s question to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" and also that this title formed part of the superscription placed on the cross. Of the seventeen occurrences of the word "Jews" in the first three Gospels, twelve of them consist of the title, "King of the Jews," applied to our Lord

(a) By the wise men of the East (Matthew 2:2).

(b) By Pilate, in the course of the trial (Matthew 27:2;Mark 15:2; Mark 15:9; Mark 15:12;Luke 23:3).

(c) By the soldiers (Matthew 27:29;Mark 15:18;Luke 23:37).

(d) By Pilate in the superscription (Matthew 27:37;Mark 15:26;Luke 23:38). The other occasions in the narratives are of its ordinary historical usage, such as, "among the Jews," "all the Jews," "elders of the Jews," "a city of the Jews," etc. The passages are the following:Matthew 28:15;Mark 1:5(Judea)Mark 7:3;Luke 7:3;Luke 23:51. The term "Jews" does not arise in the divine history until after the deportation of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. It is then applied to those of the seed of Abraham who continued in the southern part of the land of the promise, under the rule of the descendants of David, and consisted mainly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (2 Kings 16:6;2 Kings 25:25;2 Chronicles 32:18). The use of the name is specially characteristic of the writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament, as it is of the Gospel of John in the New Testament.

Israel is the name connoting the divine promises to the earthly people, and the futUre day of their national blessing during Messiah’s reign is associated with this name. It is to the Israelites that pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises (Romans 9:4). And before the millennial day, Jehovah will bring the children of Israel from among the nations, and Joseph and Judah shall be one nation, and the sure mercies of David shall be their portion for ever (Ezekiel 37:1-28). So shall all Israel be saved, and not the Jews only. The Washing of Hands

{It should be borne in mind that the reference in this section is not to habits of physical cleanliness, but to the added rites of purification, alleged to have a religious import and value.} The Jews had

fallen into the prevalent and perilous snare of performing their acts of divine service for the sight and approbation of their fellows. They were attracted by the instant recompense which is "awarded to a man by his friends and neighbours for deeds of a religious nature" done under their notice. For men readily and unstintedly avow their appreciation of acts of almsgiving to which their attention is directed by a flourish of trumpets, of prayers performed at the street-corners in public view, and of tithes of goods voluntarily extended in scope to include even the lesser herbs of the garden. The synagogue and the street alike observe and generously appraise such deeds. And the Pharisee of every age seeks with much pains to obtain this praise of man rather than the praise of God. Mostly he is successful in his pursuit, and secures the adulation of his fellows, according to the words of the Psalmist, "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself" (Psalms 49:18). Herein, as the Lord said, the Pharisee receives his reward,i.e.the glory that comes from men, but misses that glory which comes from above, which the Father who sees in secret will bestow upon those who serve Him in spirit and in truth. In His reply to the Pharisees the Lord did not pronounce any decision as to the legitimacy of their practices, but showed that they had invested the rite of washing with a spiritual significance and value which were unwarrantable. For the alleged principle involved was one not of physical cleanliness on sanitary grounds, but of ceremonial pollution. "They shrank not from dirt, but from defilement." They considered it possible that they might have come into contact with a Gentile or a tax-gatherer in the public footways. They might have handled something ritually unclean. Their cups might have been touched by the lips of strangers. Their couches might have been used by those who, according to the tradition of the elders, were defiled. These and many other things they had "received to hold," their elaborate ritual for maintaining "purity" being enforced by them with the inflexibility of a divine mandate.

Writers on Jewish customs tell us how elaborate the traditional rite became.

"It was laid down that the hands were first to be washed clean. The tips of the ten fingers were then joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, then turned so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was poured on them as they were lifted up, and twice again as they hung down. The washing itself was to be done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. When the hands were washed before eating they must be held upwards, when after it, downwards, but so that the water should not run beyond the knuckles. The vessel must be held first in the right, then in the left hand; the water was to be poured first on the right and then on the left hand; and at every third time the words repeated: ’Blessed art Thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands.’ It was keenly disputed whether the cup of blessing or the handwashing should come first; whether the towel should be laid on the table or on the couch; and whether the table was to be cleared before the final washing or after it." The answer of the Lord to the question of the Pharisees stamped this rite with its true character. In essence, it was a commandment of men, not of God. And their ablutions had an external effect only, not an internal. The six stone water-pots, each holding about twenty gallons, standing empty during the marriage banquet at Cana of Galilee, illustrate what ample provision it was customary to make for the sacramental purification of the guests (John 2:6). Yet to the Omniscient eye, this ritual so scrupulously enforced by the Jewish elders contemplated nothing further than the purity of the hands and of domestic utensils, the outside of the cup and the platter (Matthew 23:25), while it ignored the condition of the heart, that ever-flowing, and over-flowing spring of pollution.

Divers Washings under the Law In the Mosaic ritual various ablutionary rites were definitely prescribed, and the brazen laver, which was a prominent feature of the court of the tabernacle, was an abiding witness to the necessity of cleansing by water before there could be approach to God in sacrificial worship. The holocaust or whole burnt-offering, particularly, was to be purified thoroughly by water before it could become upon the altar a fire-offering of a sweet savour unto Jehovah. And by other similar ceremonies, including the washing of garments (Leviticus 13:6;Leviticus 14:8), the nation was taught symbolically that the removal of defilement was an essential preparation for intercourse with God. See alsoExodus 30:17-21; and comparePsalms 26:6. But these ritualistic performances, while they were based on divine authority transmitted through the mediator, Moses, were imposed for a limited period only. Types and shadows of deep moral and spiritual realities, they con stituted as a system "a parable for the present time," looking forward in their typical scope and application unto the time when the promised Christ should come. As ceremonies of divine origin, they were insufficient to perfect the conscience of the worshipper, the entire scheme, with its "meats and drinks and divers washings" being but ordinances of the flesh, imposed until the time of rectification (Hebrews 9:9-10). And even the Psalms and the Prophets united to teach how inefficient were the ceremonies apart from the inward change of the worshipper (Psalms 51:16-17).

There had arisen, however, at the time of our Lord, a foreign accretion upon this body of Mosaic rites. It was now enjoined (but not through angels, by the hand of an appointed mediator, as the law at Sinai was) that men must wash before eating after visiting the marketplaces, and that cups and pots, and brazen vessels must be ceremonially cleansed.

These injunctions were founded upon the opinions of the elders of Israel, and, by a spiritual authority unwarrantably assumed by the rulers, were made binding upon the people equally with the commandments of God. Sitting in Moses’ seat, the scribes and Pharisees invented these heavy burdens "grievous to be borne" which, without mercy, they bound upon the people’s shoulders. This punctilious but mis-directed zeal was founded upon hollow pretence, which the Lord of truth and grace unsparingly exposed (Matthew 23:1-39). Those who outwardly appeared so righteous unto men were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity. To the pure and fiery eyes of heavenly holiness, they were neglecting the weightier matters of the law of God — judgment, mercy and faith, while insisting upon trivialities of conduct which were but human in their origin. The spirit of the divine commandments was ignored, while their authority was supplemented and therein usurped by the tradition of man. The Pharisees had forgotten the solemn warning through Moses of old: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2;Deuteronomy 12:32). Into this snare of meddling with God’s word, man of every age is liable to fall; hence we find in the conclusion of the Apocalypse, similar warnings addressed to any who should add to, or take away from, the words of the prophecy of that book (Revelation 22:18-19). The particular sin of the Jews condemned in our chapter was that of adding to God’s word. Legal ablutions were definitely prescribed in the Pentateuch, and had their temporary use as well as their pictorial significance. The error of the Pharisees and of all the Jews consisted of the extension of those rites beyond the provisions of the law, and also of the merciless condemnation by them of every breach of their man-made rules with reference to purification by water.

Hypocrisy in Divine Things The Lord did not reply to the Pharisees in His own authority, but condemned the cavillers by a citation from the prophecy of Isaiah. He did not discuss with them the legality of this particular tradition, but brought the written word of God to bear upon their spiritual state. They were manifesting an undeniable zeal, but it was not according to God. With much earnestness they were going about to establish their own righteousness by works which were outside the Mosaic ritual. They were deceiving both themselves and others. And the Lord said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." This prophecy of Isaiah was delivered at a time when religious formalism pervaded the life of the people. Their land was menaced, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, threatened the destruction of Jerusalem. Jehovah for His name’s sake promised to frustrate this purpose of the enemy (Isaiah 29:7-8), but the prophet did not conceal from the people their terrible moral condition in His sight. There had been an outward cleansing from the abominations of idolatry. During the reign of Hezekiah there had been a considerable reformation. There was a suppression of open idol-worship (2 Chronicles 31:1), and a revival of the passover, and of the sacrifices, and of the temple services.

Ths there was a general outward conformity to the provisions of their ancient law, but, alas, to the eye of Jehovah this was but a form of piety without the power. The prophet declared that a spirit of deep sleep was upon them and their rulers and their prophets, and the vision of Jehovah was a sealed book to the learned and to the unlearned alike. And the Lord said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:13-14).

Thus in Isaiah’s day there was an outward, regard among the people of Judah for the law of Moses, and for the worship of God, but no inward reverence for Jehovah Himself. In the Lord’s day it was so again with the people. Their house was swept of idols and garnished with "pious" deeds, but it was an empty shrine. Though God was on their tongues, He was not in their thoughts. Hence the Lord delivered this solemn warning to, those who were walking in a vain show. How could the lip-service of the Pharisees, and the eye-service of the men-pleasers be acceptable with Him who looks not on the outward appearance, but judges the heart?

It will be seen that two evils are indicated for condemnation in this citation —

(1) Insincerity before God, — honouring Him with the lip, but not regarding Him in the heart.

(2) Substitution of human authority for divine, seeking to worship Him after the commandments of men rather than according to His own will.

Into one or both of these pitfalls man in his religious service is liable to fall. For the person who forgets the Omniscience of the God to whom he comes is also likely to forget the supreme authority which belongs to Him. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). When the Pharisee, praying in the temple, said, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are," his lips betrayed the fact that his heart

was far from Him who desires truth in the inward parts. But the man who had learned by bitter experience to have high thoughts of God and low thoughts of self, said in the presence of the Lord, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" John 21:17). And Simon Peter's heart and lips having been brought into unison as a worshipping servant of the Lord, he was in a fit spiritual condition, recognising the authority of His Master, to receive after such a confession His command to feed His sheep and His lambs.

We may be sure that the poor and contrite spirit trembling at the divine word will not mistake the commandments of men for the commandments of God. And we may guard ourselves from the twofold danger specified in the citation from Isaiah (1) by that self-discipline which tends to keep the soul in a true sense of God's greatness and of man's unworthiness, and (2) by unqualified subjection to the scripture, which is our sole guide to the revealed will of God for man.

Pilate's Hand-washing

Before leaving this section we may briefly refer to the striking public act of the Roman governor before he pronounced sentence that Jesus should be crucified. This took place after the proposal of the procurator to release Jesus instead of Barabbas had been refused by the priests and the people. "So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it. And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children. Then released he unto them Barabbas: but Jesus he scourged and delivered to be crucified" (Matthew 27:24, Matthew 27:26, R.V.).

Scripture is silent with regard to the inmost motives of the unjust judge in performing this futile ceremony. Since, however, Pilate was the accredited representative of the responsible Gentile authority in the tragedy of that day, we may seek whatever light is thrown upon his conduct by the narrated events. It is unquestionable that he sought by this means to transfer from himself the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus. This much is implied in his language: "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man," and this significance is confirmed by the united rejoinder of the Jewish multitude, "His blood be on us and on our children." But amongst other inquiries we may ask why he sought to emphasise his words in this particular manner — taking water and washing his hands very assiduously (apenipsato)in the presence of the assembled people? Did he adopt a symbolical practice prevalent in his own Gentile lands? or did he imitate the rite of purification so widely practised in the land of the Jews?

Moreover, what prompted Pilate to this action? Was he full of forebodings that this was no ordinary magisterial inquiry? and was his conscience uneasy with regard to his own share in the matter? Twice in his judicial capacity he had definitely declared of Jesus, "I find no crime in him" (John 19:4; John 19:6). Now, sensible of his own weak inconsistency, he may have sought by this public avowal to silence the accusations of his own conscience, awakened by the injustice of condemning to death a man in whom he could find "no cause of death."

Again, the warning of his wife increased the apprehensions of Pilate, and he may have hoped by an open disclaimer of responsibility to satisfy the scruples raised in the minds of them both. She had "suffered many things" that day in a dream because of Jesus, and her message to the governor was, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man." We cannot but note the echo of

her warning in Pilate’s official declaration. The wife testified that the prisoner was a "righteous man," and Pilate re-affirmed this verdict when he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man." Further, it has been suggested that Pilate adopted this public device with the intention of making a final and effectual appeal to the eyes as well as to the ears of the infuriated Jews. He had made previous efforts to release Jesus, expostulating with them upon the baseless nature of the charges they were bringing against the prisoner, and their final reply to these efforts was, "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend." Pilate, seeing a tumult arising, yielded to their clamour, but sought by this public sign to impress upon them that the entire responsibility of the crucifixion would be upon them. In case the imperial government of Rome should institute judicial inquiries regarding this criminal deed, it was to be understood thereby that the Jews, not Pilate, must bear the political penalty. Before the eyes of all assembled, the governor washed his hands of all complicity. But if Pilate hoped to influence the people by this dramatic appeal to their fears of the pitiless power of their conquerors, he was mistaken. The people were in no sense deterred by the prospect of any civil punishment to which they might be subjected by their cruel rulers, for they answered him unanimously, recklessly defying all consequences, saying, "His blood be on us and our children."

Still remembering that we can do little more than suggest what were Pilate’s real motives, we recall that he had displayed the characteristic Roman contempt for Jewish customs, and that he loved nothing better than to outrage where he might the susceptibilities of the people whom he governed. It was he who mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1), thus adding sacrilege to massacre. And on this very morning he did not conceal his scorn for this vassal people. After his examination of Jesus in the Praetorium he brought Him forth to the people assembled without the hall, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe (John 19:5). It was as if he had said,Thisis your Prophet,Thisis your King. And by this parade of the Teacher who had become so popular in Judea and Galilee Pilate mocked at the people whom he knew were eager above all things to throw off the yoke of the Romans, and to be governed by one of their own nation. In the same spirit of cynical disdain, he wrote the superscription for the cross, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," refusing to modify the terms of the taunt, which in their very protest the Pharisees had to confess they admitted to be such. The governor detested the people with all the strength of his Roman pride, and the attitude of the Jews at this inquiry brought Pilate in to renewed contact with the irritating exclusiveness of their religious practices. They had led Jesus to him from Caiaphas, but they would not enter his palace lest they should be defiled, and be thereby prevented from observing the great festival of the passover. It became necessary, therefore, for the Roman governor to go out to them to hear their charges. Such a concession would be galling to the Roman soldier accustomed to compel unqualified homage to the Imperial eagle whose representative he was. Who were these Jews who affected to become polluted by entering the halls of imperial justice? Moreover he well knew that this was no isolated instance of their fanaticism. He was not ignorant that every time they returned home from the marketplace they were in the habit of washing themselves that they might be freed from any possible defilement contracted by contact with the Gentile. This domestic rite of the nation was therefore a daily witness by the Jews to the "uncleanness" of the uncircumcised Gentile. The governor saw an opportunity for retaliation. In solemn irony he washed his hands before this multitude too prudish to enter his palace lest they should be defiled. If the Jew claimed to cleanse himself by water from the taint of uncircumcision, could not the Gentile in like manner rid himself by water of the guilt of

the blood of a righteous man condemned by him under protest? This may be the explanation, but whatever the Jews thought of Pilate’s act, they accepted full responsibility. Whether it reminded them of the provision of the law in the case of an uncertain homicide (Deuteronomy 21:6) or not, they cried out, in reckless hardihood, "His blood be on us and on our children." Theirs therefore was the greater guilt, though the Gentiles were not exonerated, as the Lord said to Pilate, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." In conclusion, let us observe that whatever else is not fully established, it is certain that material water could never remove the defilement of the Jew, nor the blood-guiltiness of the Gentile (Job 9:30-31). And the appeal of God still goes forth, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee?"Jeremiah 4:14). "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes" (Isaiah 1:16). "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). But there can be no real national response until they look to Him whom they pierced. Then will they mourn for Him. And "in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Then Jehovah Himself will undertake their purification, as He promised long ago to do, saying, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25).

05.39. The Word of God and the Tradition of Men

39. — The Word of God and the Tradition of Men

"And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Givento God,ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do" (Mark 7:9-13, R.V.). On the ground of its purely human origin, the Lord declared the true relative value of the rite of purification by water, of which the Pharisees were making such improper use in their doctrines. Moreover, He went further than the condemnation of this particular item of their religious practice, which was not authorised by the law, and showed that the whole system of Judaism was corrupt and hypocritical before God. Using the written word for their convictions, the Lord adduced the testimony of Isaiah the prophet to show that they, the favoured people, outwardly nigh by national election, were far off from God in heart and spirit, as much so as the Gentiles, who were without law, being both Jews and Gentiles, equally under sin, as the Holy Spirit subsequently demonstrated to all men by means of the pen of the apostle Paul (Romans 3:9). In the words cited at the head of this article, the Lord of light and truth pronounced solemn judgment upon the profession made by the Jews that they were the accepted worshippers of God. In the divine estimation they were but dead formalists, and, worse even than this, they were active rebels against the truth of God. For, under an assumption of excessive zeal for the commandment of God, they destroyed its real value by the adoption of human tradition, which was in effect an evil and destructive substitute for the holy law. On consideration of the Lord’s words, it will be perceived that His charge here, as elsewhere in the Gospels, was that in the matter of the possession of the law, which was their proud boast, the Jews has corrupted themselves. The Pharisees are accused, not of a riot of their carnal passions, but of religious hypocrisy. The law was in their mouths, but not in their hearts.

It is strikingly true that in the general decadence of their national history the custody of the living oracles of God, retained in their original purity by the Jews, constituted their chief remaining glory. What other institution for their boasting remained to them at that time? The temple of Solomon had long been desolated, and the building then standing on Mount Zion was erected by that foul Edomite tyrant, Herod the Great. The Aaronic office was occupied by two high-priests of evil fame, Annas and Caiaphas. The sacred character of the Levitical services and of the round of feasts and sacrifices was obliterated by the violent contentions of those powerful fanatics — the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The land of promise itself groaned beneath the iron yoke of a heathen empire, and many of the seed of Abraham were scattered as strangers in strange lands. But while it might be truly said that Ichabod was written upon the people and upon their ancient institutions, they, in spite of all their vicissitudes and of their spiritual declension, had faithfully preserved the manuscripts of the law, the prophets and the psalms. And the apostle was careful to note the fact of this sacred trust when summing up the respective responsibilities of the Jew and the Gentile

and their failures therein, at the tribunal of divine inquiry. Paul made no reference to Mosaic ritual or sacrifice; but, having asked, "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?" replied "Much every way; first of all that they were intrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). There were, undoubtedly, other privileges, some of which are enumerated later in the same Epistle (Romans 9:4-5). But while much had been debilitated or lost, the Jew had some ground for his boast that the law had been maintained intact in spite of its oft-threatened destruction. If there was no Shekinah of glory in the Holy of holies, the voices of the prophets were still read in the synagogue every sabbath day.

It is sad to reflect therefore that the Jews, highly-favoured as the custodians of the word of God and jealous to conserve its every jot and tittle, should stultify this priceless benefit by human glosses so that its inward power and sweetness were no longer known and enjoyed. The Terms of Condemnation used by our Lord

Collating the words of Matthew with those of Mark, we find that this sin of the Jews is described by our Lord in a fourfold manner. By the undue prominence given to their tradition(a)concerning the rite of purification, and(b)concerning the manner of release from filial obligations, He declared that they had:

(1) laid aside the commandment of God (Mark 7:8);

(2) rejected the commandment of God (Mark 7:9);

(3) transgressed the commandment of God (Matthew 15:3);

(4) made void the word of God (Matthew 15:6;Mark 7:13). And by these four terms employed with reference to this particular transgression, there appears to be indicated an ascending scale of error. At the point of departure, as it were, the commandment is (1) left on one side or ignored; it is then (2) rejected and its claims refused; next, the commandment is (3) traversed and violated; while, lastly, it is (4) rendered ineffective and void by the substitution of a human ordinance.

Let us briefly consider each of these terms.

(1) The Lord said to the Pharisees, "Ye leave [or, lay aside] the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men." In these words is to be traced the primary cause of the failure of the nation as a faithful exponent of the divine ordinances of old. Theirs was not a sudden and violent rebellion against the authority of God, but a quiet and gradual declension from their fidelity. Turning aside, almost imperceptibly at first, they had wandered out of the way of God’s commandments. Their regard and reverence for the expressed will of God was allowed to weaken, and they strayed from the green pastures and the still waters, forgetting His precepts. Forsaking the voice of Jehovah their Shepherd, they followed the voice of strangers. Slipping away from the commandments of God and leaving undone the weighty matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith, they clung with the greater tenacity to the tradi tion of men (Matthew 23:23). A similar departure is a continual menace to the people of God. Silent deterioration and decay creep upon the Church as they stole upon Israel. The assembly at Ephesus did not make a formal and deliberate renunciation of her profession, but she did, nevertheless leave her first love (Revelation 2:4), as the Jews "left" the authority of God’s command. Individually, we are still exposed to the same danger, and we should take to ourselves the warning of the apostle to the Hebrews:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Hebrews 2:1. R.V.).

(2) Further, these boastful zealots had rejected the commandment of God. The sense of the verb used in the original appears to be that of slighting or disregarding the claims the law had upon them, as if they were unworthy of recognition (cp. Hebrews 10:28, Gk.). The Lord also used the same word in His address to the Seventy with reference to their preaching, saying to them, "He that despiseth [rejecteth] you despiseth [rejecteth] me, and he that despiseth [rejecteth] me, despiseth [rejecteth] him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). On another occasion Jesus spoke of one who rejected Him and received not His sayings (John 12:48).

These were the words of Him who was Himself the despised and:rejected of men, by whom He was regarded as "a root out of a dry ground." There was thus on the part of the nation no recognition of the claims either of Himself or of His words. The rulers formally refused to accept His teaching as the "counsel of God." Luke says of the Pharisees and the lawyers, in contrast with the people that they "rejected" for themselves the counsel of God (Luke 7:29-30).

We see therefore, that those of New Testament days who ignored the word of Jehovah through Moses of old, also ignored the word of Jehovah spoken by the Son of God. Lifted up with pride of heart, they despised the commandment of the living God. Such is also the spirit of those condemned by the apostle for setting aside their "first faith" (1 Timothy 5:12), as well as of those who set at nought dominion and rail at dignities (Jude 1:8), the same Greek word occurring in these passages, all of which show how prevalent is this tendency of the human heart.

Clearly then, to despise the commandments of God is an indication of greater intensity of opposition to His will than to lay them aside. And those who despised Moses' law died without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses (Hebrews 10:28).

(3) We now come to the third stage of departure from God, viz. — that of positive transgression. In this charge the Lord made use of their own term addressed by them to Him. The scribes had said, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" The Lord answered by asking them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition? "Transgression is that form of sin which involves the wilful disregard of known instructions; for where no law is [i.e.,no prescribed rule] there is no transgression (Romans 4:15). The Pharisees were guilty of transgression, for while they raised the question of the violation of a human tradition, the Lord brought home to them the startling indictment that in and by means of that very tradition they who boasted in the law had become trangressors of the law (Romans 2:23, R.V.). In their inordinate zeal for the human innovation they has dishonoured the law of God, given through angels, every transgression and disobedience of which would receive "a just recompence of reward" (Hebrews 2:2).

Transgression then, is the fruit of passing by, and then of despising the explicit commandment of God. It is in fact the wilful infraction of a known rule of conduct. Such was the form of the sin of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:14). Our first parents violated the single restriction laid upon them in the garden of Eden, Adam not being deceived, but partaking of the forbidden fruit with his eyes open to the fact of the disobedience involved in the act.

Transgression, therefore, constitutes a grave and serious offence. It is the sin of the servant who, knowing his master’s will, nevertheless disobeys, and on that account must be punished with many stripes (Luke 12:47). The sin of Israel was transgression in distinction from the sin of the Gentiles, which is lawlessness. The sin of those who gloried in divers washings and in votive offerings to their temple, but who in these very things contravened God’s holy law, was also transgression. And by that transgression they not only dishonoured their parents but God also (Romans 2:23).

(4) Fourthly, these formalists among the Jews had disannulled the word of God by their tradition. The Lord had made three previous references to the "commandment," viz. — to God’s precise and definite injunctions, These He declared they had (1) neglected, (2) rejected, and (3) transgressed. He further referred to the divine oracles as "the word of God" (see also John 10:35; Romans 9:6), and charged them with cancelling it or making it void by their tradition. This change of designation for the law is significant. We are carried back to the Author of the Scriptures, which are the communication of His mind and will concerning men. The "word of God" expresses the spiritual intent of the "ten words," for instance. It points not so much to the letter of the law, as to its inmost interpretation — its spirit. Thus, by this expression the Lord showed that, in addition to the transgression of God’s commandment, their tradition rendered void or disannulled the essential mind and meaning of His communications to them.

It was possible, we learn, for the letter of the law to be exceeded, while its spirit was maintained. This the Lord enunciated in connection with His own acts of healing on the sabbath day. But the scribes were guilty of the infraction of both the word and the commandment of God. The two terms applied to the divine communications are distinguished elsewhere in the New Testament, And the greater depth and fulness of the former may be observed in a passage of the Gospel of John (John 14:21-23). Herein we are instructed that to keep the word of Christ is evidence of greater fidelity than to keep His commandments, and the more faithful correspondence to the Master’s will implied in the former case will receive the greater reward. Of one case the Lord said,"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." This is commendation, but not of such a high degree as that awarded in the second case. In this instance the Lord promised the signal honour and felicity that the Father and the Son would dwell with the one keeping His word: "If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Keeping the commandments is a proof of obedience; but keeping His word is a proof of devotion. On reflection upon our Lord’s words to the Pharisees, it is startling to learn that it is possible for puny man to render ineffective the word of the living God. We know that word is eternal, immutable, "settled in the heavens," its stability exceeding that of the heavens and the earth. Its inward power is illustrated by the figure of the living and incorruptible seed. This is its true and unique character; and yet, such is the seeming paradox of the truth, as expressed in a notable parable of our Lord’s, birds of the air can carry it away, the sun can wither it, and thorns, springing up, can choke it. The Tradition of Men The word "tradition" occurs in scripture both in a good sense and in a bad sense. Broadly, the usage Of the term is with reference to religious instruction passed from one to another. The root idea is of somethingdeliveredto men. If the instruction is derived from God, the tradition is obviously of supreme and undeniable authority; but if derived from a purely human source, its authority is questionable, and its truth requires to be substantiated, before it can claim our acceptance.

Before the canon of holy Scripture was completed and became accessible in a written form, much of the apostolic teaching was circulated in the early church in the form of tradition either by word or letter. Hence we read of Paul exhorting the Thessalonian saints to "hold the traditions wherein ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15) similarly also in2 Thessalonians 3:6. Again, the same apostle, writing to the Corinthians, praises them that "ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2). Whatever truth wasdeliveredto the saints through the medium of the apostles was necessarily a tradition, whether written or oral, and being inspired, had a paramount claim over them (1 Corinthians 11:23;2 Peter 2:21;Jude 1:3). But our Lord here spoke of Jewish tradition which emanated, not from holy men speaking by the Holy Ghost, but from fallible Rabbis who foisted upon their fellows their own views and interpretations. And on account of their human origin, the teaching and ceremonies of the Pharisees are described by Him as "the tradition of men," "the tradition of the elders," and as "your own tradition."

These traditions were held with great tenacity by the scribes and others, and, so far as reputation. among men was concerned, a Jew became distinguished in proportion to his zeal for their propagation and development. Saul of Tarsus before his conversion acquired distinction in Jerusalem by reason of his devotion to the tradition of his fathers. Alluding to this feature of his early days, he wrote, "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my country-men, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14, R.V.). Tradition, therefore, acquires its evil sense when it is formed by an addition to, or a subtraction from the word of God, and, when fully developed, it becomes a pernicious substitute for the word of God. The scriptures, however, constitute a permanent standard of reference, and are always available for the correction of the vagaries of tradition, if we will but use them for this purpose.

We have in the New Testament an instance of the origin and spread of an unwarranted tradition. At the Sea of Gennesareth, Sim on Peter, having received from the Lord some particulars relating to his own future life and service, made inquiry concerning John, saying to Jesus, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." Such was the word of the Lord to Peter. But from it the erroneous tradition arose that John should not die. For we read in the Gospel, "This saying therefore went forth among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:21-23). For our warning this instance, occurring in the earliest days of Christianity, is recorded of a false gloss put upon our Lord's words gaining currency among the saints either in an oral or in a written form. We are, moreover, shown by the same incident that the correct version of our Lord's words formed a criterion for the false tradition which said what Jesus said not. The report that the Lord would return in the lifetime of the apostle John was an incorrect deduction from the Lord's words to Peter. The effect of this unauthorised tradition upon the hearts of the disciples would be to deaden the hope of the Lord's return as an ever imminent event. Human tradition is in essence an enemy to divine truth, and it invariably comes about in practice that man's inclination is to side with the former rather than the latter. Hence the apostle, writing to the saints at Colosse, exhorts them against the evil influence which man's tradition would exert upon their allegiance to Christ: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man,

after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). In Colosse therefore, as well as formerly in Judea, there were many who were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In pursuance of this subject, it is instructive to observe that a particular and uncommon Greek word is used in the New Testament for commandments when derived from man. The usual word so translated isentole,butentalmaoccurs three times only, viz., inMark 7:7; in the parallel passage,Matthew 15:9; and inColossians 2:22, in each case forming part of the phrase rendered "the commandments of men." This word also occurs three times in the LXX. One of the passages (Isaiah 29:13) was quoted by our Lord on this occasion (Mark 7:6-7;Matthew 15:7-9). In all these passages the word appears to be used with special reference to those ethical maxims and formularies of conduct which men sought to lay as heavy burdens upon the shoulders of their fellows, but which the Lord showed to be lacking in authority.

Filial Respect The ablutionary rites introduced by the elders and maintained so rigorously by the Pharisees were of the nature of pure ceremony, but the Lord also charged them with a serious abrogation of the moral law. Not that they sinned under this head in one respect only, for there were "many other such like things" of which they were guilty (Mark 7:13), but the destruction of the filial bond which their tradition permitted, if not enjoined, was the one selected by the Lord for their condemnation at this juncture. The conclusion of the incident shows that, in result, the religious leaders who came to the Lord to convict Him as a Teacher of the people were themselves convicted by Him. It affords an instance, in accordance with the special purpose of Mark’s narrative, of the absolute perfection of the Servant of Jehovah, in that He used the written word of God as the instrument of conviction, rather than His own personal authority. Matthew, setting out the King of the Jews come to adminster the kingdom of the heavens according to the law and the prophets, records the same instance (Matthew 15:1-39). When, therefore, the Lord spoke as the Prophet like unto Moses, and brought out of His treasure-house "things new," His utterances were in His own authority, and not like those of the scribes of the day. On such occasions He taught after this manner: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." At such times He was depositing with the people the word of Him who sent Him — a word which in the course of the progress of Divine revelation was given to supplement and to amplify the communications of old. But when the Lord opposed the false teachers of Israel His appeal was to the Scriptures. To their confusion He confronted them with what was on record and what was read by them on sabbath days in their synagogues. The proud Pharisees then found themselves in the presence of the One out of whose mouth went a sharp sword, and for their condemnation, as it were, the books were opened, and they were judged out of the things written in the books.

Accordingly, the Lord then referred the Pharisees and scribes to the law which they professed to teach. What was found in the book of Moses? How did they read therein?

(1) The specific command was, "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). This was one of the "ten words," and is called the "first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 5:2), for this injunction was specially distinguished by the assurance of Jehovah, that prosperity and longevity should be the portion of those obedient to it. See the special reward granted to the house of Rechab for filial obedience (Jeremiah 35:18-19).

(2) Further, the Lord quoted to the Pharisees the severe sentence pronounced by the same law against the one who did despite to his parents: "Whoso curseth (or, revileth) father or mother, let

him die the death" (Exodus 21:17).

Thus, as not one of His hearers could deny, had Jehovah encouraged and warned every son in Israel to keep the commandment of his father, and not to depart from the law of his mother (Proverbs 6:20). The word of God declared there should be prolonged and prosperous days in the land for the obedient, but a criminal's death for the disobedient (cp.Leviticus 20:9;Deuteronomy 27:16;Proverbs 20:20;Proverbs 30:11). And the solemn charge uttered from Mount Ebal was, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother" (Deuteronomy 27:16). But what said the elders? They contradicted both the letter and the spirit of the law of God.* They devised, in the name of piety, a wicked scheme whereby a man might release himself from every obligation towards his parents. Whatever benefits were due from him to his father and mother, let him consecrate those benefits to the service of the temple, and the Jewish council would thereupon absolve him from all filial responsibilities. "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother,

It is Corban (that is to say, a gift) by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me. . . . And ye no longer suffer him to do anything for his father or his mother."

{*For the divine recognition of this family tie throughout the Old Testament, see Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 27:16; Ezekiel 22:7; Micah 7:6; Malachi 1:6, and compare the honours paid by the exalted Joseph in Egypt to his father Jacob.}

Having thus contrasted their practice with the original precepts of the law, the Lord summed up the effect of their conduct in one of His pregnant sayings, charging His accusers with making the word of God of none effect through their tradition. They virtually repealed the law from heaven, and at the same time outraged the instincts of nature. It was not meet that they should take the parents' bread and devote it to the altar. In the Proverbs it was written, "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer" (Proverbs 28:24).

We learn, therefore, from this portion of the Gospel that the Lord condemned this innovation, so inimical to the reciprocal duties of family life, on the ground that it contravened the tenor of the law given by Moses, which was their boast. But, reading the Gospels as a whole, we also know that the tradition of the Jews was contrary to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. The Lord did not come to bear witness of Himself, and He did not in this instance refer the Pharisees to His own example in the home of Joseph and Mary. But human history knows no instance of filial perfection to set alongside that seen by men and angels through long years in the carpenter's house at Nazareth. Scripture says little of the youth of Jesus, but that little means much. We read that He went with His "parents" to Jerusalem, and that He returned to Nazareth, and was "subject to them," thus "rendering honour to whom honour was due" (Luke 2:39-52). The Evangelist who records that Jesus said to Mary at Cana in Galilee, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" also records His words to her at Golgotha, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 2:4; John 19:26). "Corban" applied to the service of our Lord in the fullest sense of the term, for He devoted Himself in sacrifice upon the altar, yet the committal of His mother to the care of the beloved disciple proves that, even upon the cross, He did not neglect to make provision for her future; magnifying the law in this respect and making it honourable (Isaiah 42:21).

We may note in passing that the obligations of Christian children to their parents are stated to be equally binding with those of the Jews (Ephesians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:20; 1 Timothy 5:4; 1 Timothy 5:8).

It has sometimes been alleged that there is inconsistency between the Lord’s defence of filial ties on this occasion, and His call made elsewhere to His disciples to forsake father and mother for His sake. This inconsistency is, however, only an apparent one. The Lord said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37) and again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). In these words the Lord declared the condition of discipleship. This condition was based upon the acknowledgment of His authority as paramount and absolute. No human tie should have a superior claim to that of the Lord Jesus. And in the utterances quoted, He contemplated a case where family authority sought to override His word as Master. Even in national government parental claims or filial responsibilities are not allowed to absolve a subject from allegiance to the Crown, or to screen a criminal from retributive justice. Must the Lord of all ask less than this from the subjects of His kingdom? If patriotism demands that a man shall leave all to serve his country, who should complain when the Master calls His disciples to leave all to serve Him?

There is, therefore, no inconsistency in our Lord’s teaching. In the one case, He set the divine call above the claims of filial duties, while in the other, He condemned the Pharisees who set human tradition above filial duty, an inversion for which there was no adequate warrant. The question of mutual obligation in the family is one which can only be finally settled by divine authority. God alone, who established the responsibility of children to their parents, can abrogate that responsibility, and from the beginning He recorded His permission that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife (Genesis 2:24). The parental home might be quitted to form a new relationship of a natural order. In the New Testament we have a relationship of a spiritual order entered by a similar renunciation. At the call of Jesus, James and John left their father Zebedee in the ship with their hired servants and went after Him. It was so with others, as Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee." But we read that the Lord said to another, "Follow me," and he was ready with an excuse. He took refuge in his filial responsibilities, and desired that he might be allowed to wait until his father was dead and buried. Clearly this man, judged by his own confession, was not prepared to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And accordingly the Lord said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59; Luke 9:60). He had yet to learn the absolute supremacy of the One who said to him, "Follow me."

Corban

"Corban" is a Hebrew, or rather an Aramaic, word whose equivalent in Greek is doron, which means a gift. In the Old Testament the word is used in connection with the service of the law, and is translated "offering" and "oblation"

(Leviticus 2:1; Leviticus 2:5; Leviticus 2:13; Leviticus 3:1; Numbers 7:35). "Corban was applied to the offering especially in the aspect of its dedication to Jehovah. In this sense the word was applied at a later day to the sacred treasure of the temple; and to that consecrated store the chief priests decided that Judas’ pieces of silver might not be added (Matthew 27:6). Compare the

distinction made by the Pharisees between the temple, and the gold of the temple, and between the altar and the gift on the altar (Matthew 23:16-22).

Apparently the Jews were urged to contribute dedicatory offerings to the temple service, and out of an inordinate zeal on the part of the teachers which was not according to truth, the traditional custom arose. If a man said to his father or mother, "That wherein thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban," that is Given to God, his goods were regarded as consecrated by this formula to the service of God, and, according to the tradition of the elders, might not be thenceforth diverted to the relief of his parents. It is said that the scribes held that if this word was pronounced over any of a man's possessions he was exempt from the performance of any natural duty, even though he withheld the goods temporarily from the service of the temple. This accords with our Lord's word, "Ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother." A writer commenting on this practice of the Jewish leaders remarks, "A more striking instance of the subversion of a command of God by the tradition of men can hardly be conceived." But the Lord's warning to the hypocrites of that day has its application equally to the conditions of the present day. "May we all bear in mind how deeply we need to watch against the spirit of tradition. Wherever we impose with absolute authority a thing that does not proceed from God Himself, it is a tradition. It is all very well to take counsel of one another, and it is not a happy feature to oppose others needlessly; but it is of all consequence that we should strengthen each other in this, that nothing but the word of God is entitled or ought to govern the conscience. It will be found that when we let go this principle, and allow a rule to come in and become binding, so that what is not done according to that rule is regarded as a sin, we are gone from the authority of the word of God to that of tradition, perhaps without knowing it ourselves.

"The Lord here shows convincingly where these Pharisees and scribes were. They had never considered that their principles of Corban made void the word of God. But let us, too, bear in mind that after we have had any Divine truth pressed upon us we are never the same as before. We may have been simply and honestly ignorant then, but we are thenceforth under the increased yoke of God's known mind, which we either receive in faith or reject, and harden ourselves by rejecting in unbelief. Therefore, let us look to the Lord, that we may cherish a good conscience. This supposes that we have nothing before us which we cleave to, or allow inconsistent with God's will. Let us desire and value nothing but what is according to His word, lest peradventure any of us be left where Christ leaves these Pharisees, under the terrible censure that they made void the word of God through their tradition. If but one example was taken up it was a sufficient example of the things they were doing continually." The Word of Moses In a day of declining regard for the great law-giver of Israel, it is instructive to recognise the manner in which our Lord paid honour on this occasion to Moses, as the accredited representative of God in his time. Even in quoting from the decalogue itself, written as it was by the finger of God upon the tables of stone, Moses is named as the honoured medium through whom the law received in the holy mount was promulgated. The Lord declared to the Pharisees, "Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother."

We are not to suppose that the Lord in any sense detracted from the purely divine origin of the law. On the contrary it is clear that Moses was at the same time presented as the mediator between God and His people. This we may see by comparing this passage with its parallel in Matthew. The report of the words of Jesus there given is, "God said, Honour thy father and mother" (Matthew 15:4. R.V.). Both records are, of course, true, the full statement of our Lord being that (1) God

spake and (2) He spake by the mouth of His servant Moses. Each evangelist embodied that portion of the Lord’s utterance which was most consonant with the purpose of the particular narrative. Matthew shows that the tradition of the elders was in conflict with the words of God, while Mark lays stress upon its discordance with the sayings of the law-giver of the nation.

Remembering that the Second Evangelist is used by the inspiring Spirit to portray the humble servitude of Jesus, we discern a beautiful touch of His perfections in this part of the narrative. The Prophet’s championship of the truth of God was undertaken in meek unassertiveness of His own personal glory and authority. As the Servant of Jehovah He did not strive nor cry, but paid, if we may so express it, a dignified deference to Moses that former servant of God (Revelation 15:3), whom He was to resemble according to the prophecy of Moses himself (Deuteronomy 18:15;Acts 3:22). God had honoured Moses, as the scriptures testified, and the Son of man honoured him too, teaching us also by a quiet example, to render honour to whom honour is due. The Lord maintained that honour must be paid to the word of Moses, while He condemned utterly the word of the elders. The word of Moses was the word of God (cp. Mark 7:10 with Mark 7:13), while the tradition of the elders was but the word of man, and more unreliable than that, — of misguided man. The Lord approved of whatever was true and commendable in the belief and conduct of those who came within the scope of His ministry, and He fully recognized their professed regard for Moses. He said to the people, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat" (Matthew 23:2), and they said. of themselves, "We are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses" (John 9:28-29). But on account of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, the word of God became, as in this instance, the instrument of their condemnation. They misused their boasted privileges to the destruction of their souls. Having Moses and the prophets, they had in them sufficient witness of the eternal verities to compass their salvation if they would but hear them (Luke 16:29-31). In the holy oracles were also written the "things concerning" the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah, as Jesus Himself showed both before and after His resurrection (Luke 18:31;Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44). But in this very thing their blindness was made manifest. Professing to believe Moses, they failed to perceive Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote. Moses accordingly became, not their saviour, but their judge, as the Lord said to them, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"John 5:45-47, R.V.).

05.40. The True Source of Man's Defilement

40. — The True Source of Man’s Defilement

"And he called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. And when he was entered into the house from the multitude, his disciples asked of him the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him: because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? This he said, making all meats clean.* And he said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:14-23, R.V.).

{*The Revisers replaced the words of the A.V. "purging all meats" by the clause, "This he said,making all meats clean." The critical questions involved in the determination of the correct reading are debatable, and the change made is not accepted by all scholars. But the unforced interpretation of the passage in its context is that the reference by our Lord was not to cleanness in its spiritual significance, as inActs 10:13, but to the physical processes of the human organism, the result of their operations being for purification and not pollution.} The Lord on this occasion unsparingly condemned the traditions of the Jews which, though totally unauthorised by divine authority, were rigorously imposed by the religious chiefs upon the people of the day. But He established truth as well as exposed error. In His doctrine the Great Servant-Prophet of Jehovah was destructive of all evil forms and corrupt tendencies, but was also constructive of what was good and of God, preaching continually the gospel of the kingdom of God. He swept away the delusion of a cleansing from spiritual defilement by material means, and proclaimed the deep-seated cause of man’s moral uncleanness. There was, He taught, an overflowing spring of pollution within, and men were self-deceived by the habit of attending solely to external means of purification. Even if all avenues of contamination from without were closed, man would still possess the inward disposition and desire and impulses to sin which spread corruption through his being. In this manner of teaching we find no pandering to the notions of the times; and herein we see one notable difference between the false teachers and the True. The false prophet prophesies smooth things and deceitful things which conceal the ugly facts of sin and judgment. But the Servant of Jehovah unveiled the whole truth before the eyes of priests and people alike, and this plainness of speech incurred the bitter hatred of that evil generation. "Now ye seek to kill me," said Jesus to the Jews, "a. man that hath told you the truth" (John 8:40). The Saying Addressed to the Crowd

Both in word and deed, the Lord displayed a special loving interest in the welfare of the masses, oppressed as they were by the Pharisees and scribes who shut up the kingdom of heaven against

them, neither entering themselves nor suffering the people to enter (Matthew 23:13). It was foretold that a characteristic feature of the ministry of the Messiah would be that the poor should have the gospel preached to them (Luke 4:18;Luke 7:22). The humble in heart often have a poor purse, and Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The Lord, then, had been speaking to the teachers of Israel and reproving them for foisting an empty tradition upon the people to the displacement of the law and prophets of God. They were not true men but evil shepherds of the sheep — thieves and robbers indeed (John 10:8-13), since they had taken away from the people the word of God which was their heritage and their salvation. But the Lord was the Good Shepherd of Israel. It was His delight "to stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD." He had come out of heaven to give His people the true bread of life — the word which proceeded out of the mouth of God.

Accordingly, the Lord called the crowds together again and communicated to them the truth on this subject in simple and concise language such as they might "hear and understand." He spoke to the multitudes direct without an intermediary, so that these simple peasants of Galilee were able to drink from the well-spring of truth itself. Everyone was called to give heed to Him, and to seek to lay hold upon His words. Hearken unto me every one of you, He said, and understand: "there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." The Lord’s subject in this saying is not the means of cleansing, but the cause of defilement. He does not here speak of the futility of ceremonial purification, and of the use of water to remove immoral stains (Job 9:30-31). Of this He had already spoken to the Pharisees, but He now instructs those uninstructed in the law* with regard to the true source of defilement. Cleansing pre-supposes defilement. How then does man become unclean? Is it by the polluting influences of external things entering his physical organization? The Lord declared that the inner motives from which man’s words and actions spring are the cause of his uncleanness, none being able to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

{*The Pharisees said, "This multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed" (John 7:49).} The soul was distinct from and superior to man’s body, and what went into a man was for the nourishment and maintenance of his body — the tenement of the soul and spirit. The things which mattered most were those which proceeded from a man. His schemes, his motives, his desires, his character, his moral colour — these made a man a centre of power, radiating influences either for good or for evil. In speaking to the multitude the Lord did not enter into any details of the controversy recently held with their teachers, but placed the truth of the subject before them in a simple, antithetical way after the manner of many of the Proverbs of Solomon so that by this means its wisdom and truth might be retained with comparative ease in their memories.

Moreover, the style of His speech was not after the manner of the scribes but with authority: "there is nothing from without the man which going into him can defile him." He did not, as in His discussion with the scribes, cite scripture to support His statement, but delivered the truth as one who taught of His own inner fulness: "We speak that we know, and bear witness of that we have seen" (John 3:2). The Master knew so well the source of corruption which was "in man" (John 2:25). He saw not as man sees, for He looked not at the outward appearance, but on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). His words, accordingly were words of truth, and, by reason of this testimony from Him, His hearers were left without excuse. As He said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for sin" (John 15:22).

Further Instruction in the House A fuller explanation of this teaching was made to the apostles at their own request. They came to Jesus privately in the house, saying that the Pharisees were stumbled at His saying with regard to washing (Matthew 15:12). With all the technical knowledge of scripture which the religious leaders possessed they failed to comprehend the Lord's utterance. This failure proved their incompetence and indeed their added guiltiness, since they were the appointed custodians and expositors of the oracles of God. The Lord pronounced their coming doom. Every plant, He said, not of His heavenly Father's planting (cp.Isaiah 61:3) should be rooted up. The axe was laid at the root of the trees. The fig tree should wither away and become a dry tree. They had not profited by Moses, neither would they by the Messiah. They were to be let alone. They were blind leaders of the blind who said, We see, but their sin remained, and both teachers and taught would fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14;John 9:41.)

Peter said to the Lord, "Declare unto us the parable"* (Matthew 15:15; cp. Matthew 13:36). It was the same apostle who afterwards at Joppa and Antioch failed to put into practice this teaching of the Lord (Acts 10:14; Galatians 2:12). He was now the spokesman for the rest, all the disciples making inquiry through him, as Mark informs us (Mark 7:17). None of them had grasped the significance of the Lord's saying, but they differed in spirit from the Pharisees, inasmuch as not knowing they yet desired to know. They came questioning therefore, believing the Lord would make the matter plain to them, and that they would then see a beauty and value in the Master's teaching which at the moment was not clear to them. Like multitudes since they had much to unlearn before they could learn. Their habits of mind and trend of thought induced by their instructions from childhood in the law of Moses and in the rites and ceremonies of that law blocked the way for the entrance of the Lord's words into their hearts, giving them the needed light and deliverance.

{*"Parable" is here used in the sense of a popular, sententious saying: compare Luke 4:28 : "Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself" (R.V.).}

We find the Lord said to the disciples who thus came to Him, seeking further instruction, "Are ye so without understanding also?" There seems some reproach in this question. The Pharisees had not understood; the populace did not understand (Isaiah 6:9;Mark 4:12); but how was it the Lord's own company did not understand Him? He said to the people, Hearken and understand (Mark 7:14), but the apostles also failed to understand. And the Lord by His question to them implies that it was blameworthy on their part to confess such ignorance. Why was this? The explanation appears to be that in New Testament usage lack of understanding(asynetos)*may arise (1) from a lack of capacity to receive divine truths, and (2) from the non-employment of this capacity by those who possess it. Thus, in the first sense (1) this lack is true of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, for "there is none that understandeth" (Romans 3:11). The same sense is also attributed to the word in the Lord's parable of the Sower and the seeds: the wayside hearer receives the word of the kingdom, but understandeth it not, and the wicked one catches it away (Matthew 13:19). But the term is used in the second sense of those who were brought into the kingdom, but yet failed to receive its wisdom. For example, the stilling of the night-storm on the Sea of Galilee followed immediately upon the feeding of the five thousand, and vet the disciples failed to reflect upon this marvellous exhibition of the power and goodness of the Son of God in their midst. "They considered [understood] not the miracle of the loaves for their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52).

{*This is the adjectival form, the noun not occurring in the New Testament. The sense of its usage seems to include moral defect, as well as mental inability.}

Now in the sequence of his narrative the Evangelist proceeds to show that, having failed to un derstand His works of mercy and power, the apostles had also failed to understand His words about purification. There were hindrances, such as infirmities of nature, carnal prepossessions and selfish interests; these clouded the spiritual vision. But the Patient Teacher was ready to repeat His words and to amplify His teaching, so that hearing yet again they might understand. The things of the Lord were hidden from the wise and prudent (the understanding ones of this world, Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 1:19), and revealed unto babes. Simplicity of heart was the character suited to the kingdom of God. The disciples though they had entered the kingdom were not maintaining the childlikeness of those to whom it was given to know the mysteries of that kingdom. Moreover, all knowledge would be partial until the Spirit came at Pentecost, when the truth would be declared in parables no longer. "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [parables]: the hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall tell you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25; cp. also Matthew 15:15; Matthew 13:36).

God’s Kingdom not Eating and Drinking The Lord stated afresh to the inquiring disciples the law of that kingdom of God which He had come to establish. Its essence was spiritual not carnal. It was founded not on temporal matters such as food and drink, but upon spiritual truths which affected the inner life and relationship of man to God, in whose sight the state of the heart is of greater importance relatively than the state of the body. Apart from the question of artificial restrictions which the Lord had already condemned in their hearing, He would have them know that "whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him." A man would not become morally unclean by the consumption of certain meats, as the Jews held. From the bondage of this tradition, the truth which came by Jesus Christ set them free. This deliverance is an important doctrine for the followers of the Lord to maintain today as ever. The Son has made us free, and we are exhorted to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). The ordinances to handle not, nor taste, nor touch, are after the precepts and commandments of men, from which we have been delivered by the Beat h of Christ (Colossians 2:20-23). So far as partaking of food is concerned the Christian is enjoined to discharge this as well as every other physical function in a manner becoming to one whose body is a possession of the Lord, a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19). The glory of God should be our ultimate object in the maintenance of physical vitality; "whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). On the other hand, the absence of self-control and the abuses of the appetites are positive sins, and the glutton and the drunkard alike are the subjects of the stern reprobation of God (Deuteronomy 21:20;Proverbs 23:21;Php 3:16). W.J.H.

1917 309 The kingdom of God therefore concerns itself with matters above the range of eating and drinking. Its domain, as the apostle Paul says, is characterized by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). The moral and spiritual traits of the sons of the kingdom abide for ever, but foods of whatever nature perish in the using; "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall bring to nought both it and them" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The Fountain of Uncleanness

We have in the verses which follow (Mark 7:20-23), a second statement of our Lord introduced in the narrative by the words, "And he said," the preceding statement being prefaced by the slightly different phrase, "And he saith unto them" (Mark 7:18). The first deals with the truth that man does not contract spiritual defilement by means of his material food and drink. In the second saying the complementary truth is presented that spiritual defilement is contracted by the evil thoughts, words, and deeds which emanate from the heart within: "That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed . . . .

Therefore, whatever ethical teachers may say, the heart of man is the seat of his uncleanness. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). This was so from the beginning, for before the flood God declared of man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21). In consequence of his overt acts of wickedness men of that epoch became so perniciously corrupt that the direct judgment of God swept the antediluvian world away.

Always and everywhere scripture testifies to this inward taint. Man is said to be shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and estranged from the womb (Psalms 51:5; Psalms 58:5). It is in the heart that man erred from the ways of God (Hebrews 3:10), for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9-10), being filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:29). "Ye are they," the Lord said to the Pharisees, "which justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts" (Luke 16:15).

Unquestionably therefore, man’s heart is regarded by God as the source of evil, and because a man’s sinfulness arises primarily from within himself he is held personally responsible to bear his own burden of guilt before the Judge of all the earth.

Mouth, Tongue and Lips

"Proceeding out of" is a simple but expressive term occurring three times in this short section (Mark 7:20-23), and is used in connection with both thoughts and acts. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is frequently used with reference to the spoken utterance, and in a good as well as in an evil sense. Thus, we learn that the scriptures form the spiritual food of man who lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4;Luke 4:4). The Lord’s solemn pronouncements of righteous judgments upon human sin are likened to a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth (Revelation 1:16;Revelation 19:15; Revelation 19:21), But the term is also used with sinister associations, as for instance, when the believer is warned to be careful lest any corrupt communication should proceed out of his mouth (Ephesians 4:29). And in the lurid visions of the Apocalypse John saw the destructive powers of judgment proceeding out of the mouths of the appointed agents in the emblematic forms of fire and smoke and brimstone (Revelation 9:17-18;Revelation 11:5), John further saw unclean spirits proceeding out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, that trinity of evil power which may soon appear (Revelation 16:13). The tongue therefore is regarded in scripture as a mighty instrument which a man may wield for good or ill among his fellows. Speech is the great means for the publication of the thought which arises in the heart and of the dissemination of its purifying or defiling influences among others. The mouth is the medium whereby man may worship God or blaspheme His holy name. So James says, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men who are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and

cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (James 3:9-10). Hence, he that ruleth his spirit is mightier than he who taketh a city, and "whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 16:32;Proverbs 21:23). But who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? The seriousness of this problem James teaches when he says, "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly member," and, further, "So is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body" (James 3:6; James 3:8). In the sense of this guilty contagiousness, Isaiah confessed that he was a man of unclean lips, and accordingly it was upon his mouth that the coal of cleansing was laid (Isaiah 6:7).

Clearly, it is in agreement with the whole tenor of the word of God, that in the matter of guilty uncleanness, the functions of the mouth in speaking are of greater moral importance than those for eating, for "meat will not commend us to God: neither if we eat [things offered to idols] are we the better: neither, if we eat not are we the worse" (1 Corinthians 8:8), but for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). The Issues of Life In reply to the questions put to Him in the house, the Lord declared to his disciples (1) what was the root, and (2) what were the fruits of evil in men. The root was the evil thought of the heart, and the fruits were the specific acts of wickednesses some of which He named. In the evil thought therefore the evil deed is contained in embryo. Jesus said to them, "From within out of the heart of men evil thoughts proceed. . . .;" then He enumerated a list of some of the vile deeds which spring from man’s inner motives, adding, "all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."

Evil thoughts. These are the inward reasonings and debates of man’s mind. Within himself he deliberates, he calculates, he plans his schemes of sinful indulgence or wilful rebellion. "Things come into his mind, and he devises an evil device" (Ezekiel 38:10; Micah 2:1-2). Thus, in describing the appalling moral degradation of the human race, the apostle traces it to this inward source: "knowing God they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings [thoughts] and their senseless heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Hidden within the heart, it is one of man’s strange delusions that his thoughts are thereby concealed from Omniscience, yet it is written, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain" (1 Corinthians 3:20; Ps. 94:51). The incarnate Son possessed and displayed this omniscience; indeed, according to the word of Simeon to Mary, one of the purposes of His mission was that "the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Luke 2:35).

There are several recorded instances wherein our Lord showed an intimate acquaintance with the secret workings and motives of men’s minds — that is, their inward thoughts and lusts whereby they are drawn away and subdued (James 1:13). Jesus perceived those of:

(1) the disciples when He bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:7-8;Mark 8:16-17);

(2) the scribes when He forgave the sins of the palsied man (Mark 2:6-8;Luke 5:22);

(3) the scribes when He was in the synagogue where was a man with a withered hand (Luke 6:8);

(4) the disciples when they had been discussing who should be the greatest (Luke 9:45;Mark 9:33). The use of the word "thoughts" (dialogismoi) to express inward cogitations is illustrated in the following passages, in which the same Greek word occurs, though it is not always translated "thoughts." (1) Mary "cast in her mind" what manner of salutation that made by the angel was

(Luke 1:29). (2) The people "mused" in their hearts whether John the Baptist was the Messiah or not (Luke 3:15). (3) Jesus said to the disciples when He appeared in their midst, Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? (Luke 24:38). (4) When the chief priests asked Jesus concerning the baptism of John, they "reasoned" with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe on him? But if ye shall say, Of men; we fear the people, for all hold Jesus as a prophet (Matthew 21:25-26). (5) The rich man whose crops were plentiful elaborated his plans for future ease after he had "thought within himself" (Luke 12:17). (6) The wicked husbandmen, when they saw the heir of the vineyard, "reasoned" among themselves, saying, This is the heir: let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours (Luke 20:14). (7) Caiaphas advised the council to "consider" how expedient it was that one man should die for the people (John 11:50). In these instances the inward tendencies of the thoughts of men's hearts are plainly indicated. They are opposed to God, and also to His Son. In this latter respect the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled which said, "All their thoughts are against me for evil"; "their thoughts are thoughts of evil"; "all their imaginations are against me" (Psalms 56:5;Isaiah 59:7;Lamentations 3:61).

Evil deeds. There now follows after the mention of "evil thoughts" a brief catalogue of sins, springing out of the evil heart of man, enumerated by the Lord to His disciples on this occasion. Comparing the first two Gospels, seven evils are named by Matthew (Matthew 15:19) and twelve by Mark. The agreements and differences in the two lists are as follows:-

(1) Six are mentioned by both Evangelists, viz., adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, wickednesses, blasphemy*.

{*Matthew records this sin in the plural, viz.: "blasphemies," translated "railings" in the R.V.}

(2) One by Matthew only, viz., false witness.

(3) Six by Mark only, viz., covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness.

(1) The six sins recorded by both Matthew and Mark are the grosser forms of man's evil doings, and, with the exception of blasphemy, which is Godward as well as manward, they relate to the ways in which man does hurt to his neighbour.* In the variety of action here specified man shows his habitual breach of the second table of the law, the provisions of which are mainly manward (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). Love is the fulfilling of the law; it thinketh no evil, and no harm. Love of one's neighbour therefore secures the observance of the several prohibitions against trespassing upon his rights. The apostle Paul sums up obedience to these particular commandments in this one act. He writes thus to the church at Rome: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Romans 13:9). This is the "royal law," which if we fulfil, we shall do well (James 2:8).

{*These six sins are in the plural form, the other seven being in the singular. For the case of blasphemy" see previous note.} This commandment is "good" (Romans 7:12), but the will of man is opposed to obeying it. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7). The inward impulse is to infringe its precepts, and this unruly disposition results in a succession of overt acts of a gravely criminal nature, such as are here specified for condemnation. This disobedient nature is characteristic of all the sons of Adam, who in consequence are in absolute contrast with God's Righteous One of whom it was

prophetically written, "The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide" (Psalms 37:31).

(2) False witness. — This form of sin is named by Matthew only, and while it is at all times prevalent among all men, it is specially characteristic of the Jews as a nation. A man or a nation may become false as to witness (1) for God, or (2) in the mutual responsibilities among men. Thus (1) Israel was as a nation selected to become the depositary of the truth of Jehovah's Godhead and of Jehovah's law, and to testify to these great truths among other nations who were idolaters. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God" (Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 43:12; Isaiah 44:8). In this trust however, they notoriously proved themselves false witnesses, for they openly worshipped idols in imitation of neighbouring nations, and dishonoured the law. In the points of Israel's failure as a witness for the truth, because of their evil heart of unbelief, their Messiah was perfect throughout; and when the righteous government of an evil world is to be undertaken, He is introduced for the purpose, and one of His titles which express His competency is that of the Faithful and True Witness (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 3:14).

Untrue testimony by one man against another (2) is also pernicious. The law of Sinai expressly forbade the Israelite to bear false witness against his neighbour (Exodus 20:16), and it was written that a false witness should not go unpunished (Proverbs 19:5; Proverbs 19:9), but should perish (Proverbs 21:28). He was a menace to the nation, and is figuratively described as "a maul and a sword and a sharp arrow" (Proverbs 25:18), for lying testimony bore down its victim by sheer force, and cut asunder the very vitals, and wounded even from afar.

Moreover, as a nation, Israel was specially guilty of false witness against the Messiah. This sin was foreshadowed by the Spirit of Christ in the prophets: "False witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty" "they laid to my charge things that I knew not" (Psalms 27:12;Psalms 35:11). And so it came about when in the fulness of time the Anointed One presented Himself to the chosen people, not the rabble, but the religious chiefs of the Jews sought to find false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, themselves breaking in this respect the law they were set to administer (Exodus 23:1); as we read, "Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put him to death: and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. But afterwards came two and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days" (Matthew 26:59-61;Mark 14:56). On this false evidence, the Lord was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin. Taken next to Pilate, the chief priests themselves bore equally lying witness against Jesus before the Roman governor in order to secure His crucifixion (Luke 23:2). This sin against judicial equity lies even now upon the nation, and upon them will yet come the just retribution of God. Under the law it was enacted that if a man "be a false witness and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother" (Deuteronomy 19:15-19). And if false witness against a man's neighbour was regarded with such gravity, of how much greater guilt was it to deny the Holy and the Just One? As Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, so Israel is trodden down of the nations until their times be fulfilled.

(3) Sins named by Mark only. These six offences covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness are intimately associated with the inward workings of man's heart. If the others previously named may be described as the lusts of the flesh, these are the desires of the

mind (Ephesians 2:3); if they illustrated the filthiness of the flesh, these show the filthiness of the spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). These inward propensities are the dead bones, the uncleanness of the hypocrisy and iniquity within the whited sepulchres, of which the Lord spoke in another place (Matthew 23:27-28).

Covetousness. — This is the selfish greed within a man's heart which desires to appropriate other things than those God has given him and are therefore his legitimate possession. The Gentiles fell into this snare no less than the Jews (Romans 1:29). The covetous man is called an idolater (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5), for he sets up another god within himself whom he serves with his whole heart. Hence the apostle John exhorted the followers of Christ, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21)

Deceit. — This word is often translated "guile" in the New Testament, and is expressive of cunning, of craftiness, of plotting to deceive, while it is usually associated with a person's words. There was no guile found in the mouth of Christ (1 Peter 2:22), nor will guile be in the mouth of the future Jewish remnant who follow the Lamb (Revelation 14:5), of whom Nathanael was a figure (John 1:47). But it was by guile that the Jewish council sought to arrest Jesus and put Him to death (Matthew 26:4; Mark 14:1). Elymas the sorcerer was full of it, for it was part of his nefarious stock-in-trade (Acts 13:10). While it is declared of Jew and Gentile alike that "with their tongues they have used deceit [guile]" (Romans 3:13), the apostle Peter quotes the Psalmist who says, "He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (Psalms 34:13; 1 Peter 3:10).

Lasciviousness.The indulgence of impure subjects in the imagination promotes the performance of corresponding acts of impurity. An evil eve.The eye is the principal organ whereby impressions from without are received by us. And an "evil eye" would seem to be one habituated to seek out and dwell upon unworthy and noxious objects. The epithet, "evil" is poneros (malignant), and not merely kakos (defiled, corrupt). The same term is applied to Satan as the principal agent in the infliction of harm upon man. He is called the Evil one (Matthew 6:13;Matthew 13:19; 1 John 2:13-14). The eye, therefore, is a main thoroughfare to and from the heart. Through the eye sinful lusts are awakened and put into exercise, so that as the Lord taught on another occasion, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:23). In the Scriptures, the evil eye is frequently regarded as a close companion of covetousness and selfishness and envious jealousy. The sufferings of others are disregarded by the evil eye if personal gain is thereby secured. Jehovah warned the people of Israel against having an evil eye towards a poor brother in need and withholding due succour from him (Deuteronomy 15:7-9;Deuteronomy 28:54-55). Men were counselled to avoid stinginess of spirit and to cultivate the bountiful eye which gives liberally to the needy (Proverbs 22:9). The eye is never satisfied with riches, and the man, pasting to be rich and having an evil eye, is warned that poverty shall come upon him (Proverbs 28:22;Ecclesiastes 4:8).

King Saul is a personal example, for he was filled with jealous hatred against David because the daughters of Israel praised the slayer of Goliath more than they praised himself, and he "eyed David from that day forward (1 Samuel 18:9). A similar spirit of envy against others who appear to have been better favoured than themselves was displayed by the labourers who murmured against their fellow-workers who having been hired only at the eleventh hour received as much as

those who entered the vineyard at the beginning of the day. "Is thine eye evil," said the householder to one of the grumblers, "because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15).

Another and somewhat different example of the evil use of the eye is recorded in the history of the crucifixion of our Lord. This is an instance, not so much of envy and jealousy, as of a morbid interest, if not a pleasurable satisfaction in viewing the sufferings of another. We read that while the rulers derided and the soldiers mocked the Saviour on the cross, the "people stood beholding" (Luke 23:35). To the multitude the occasion was as a public show. They had come to Golgotha for a holiday spectacle.

Many eyes saw the Holy Sufferer on the cross, as many will see Him on the clouds of glory. By-and-by they will see Him with guilty fear and trembling, as of old they beheld Him in callous indifference. Then their vulgar gaze gave an added pain to the sensitive spirit of the Christ, as we learn from the plaint of the prophetic Spirit of the Messiah recorded in the Psalm: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn"; "They look and stare upon me" (Psalms 22:7).

Pride.There are several words so translated in the Greek Testament. The one used here(hyperephania)conveys the sense of a spirit of self-exaltation in a man coupled with the disparagement of others. The Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others (Luke 18:9) are flagrant examples, but the Gentiles are not free from guilt in this respect any more than the Jews (Romans 1:30). This arrogance displays itself in boastful words and vain-glorious deeds, but its origin is within the heart, as is shown by that sentence from the Magnificat: "He scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart" (Luke 1:51). This particular form of haughtiness is obnoxious to God and amenable to His summary judgment, for both James and Peter write that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6;1 Peter 5:5). The root idea of the word is that of lifting up oneself to show oneself off above one’s fellows, a personal puffing up which brings into the condemnation of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6). The full development of this sin of unmitigated arrogance in man was not seen in the Pharisee, but will be fully displayed in the coming "man of sin," the son of perdition, who "opposeth and exalteth himself" exceedingly against everyone that is called god, or object of veneration: so that he sitteth down in the temple Of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). That great personage having exalted himself to heaven in the folly of pride, will be brought down to hell in swift abasement by the epiphany of the coming in glory of Him who humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Foolishness. — Folly or lack of sense closes the catalogue here given of the foul emanations of man’s evil heart. It does not follow, as some have thought, from its position on the list that foolishness is the most serious sin of all, as if the list was arranged to express degrees of gravity. Neither, on the other hand, is foolishness negligible in importance, so that it maybe passed over without concern.

Foolishness seems to be that gross form of stupidity which excludes God from the regulation of the life. In the words of the Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God" (Psalms 14:1). Though the natural heart is the seat of uncontrollable passions which impel the whole man into courses of vile action, the senseless refuse that divine help and guidance which alone can enable them to live lives of purity and obedience. Can there be greater folly than this? Foolishness is placed last in the list, says one writer, because it renders all the others incurable. This foolishness

arising from man’s own nature is defiled and defiling, in contrast with that wisdom that comes down from above and is "first pure" (James 3:17). Counsel and instruction are to be had of God for the seeking, but the natural man wilfully disregards them. This is his foolishness. He allows himself to be carried away by the violence of his sinful desires, and ignores the mercy and grace of God which would lift him above himself into the plane of light, life and holiness. Such is his foolishness.

Pure in Heart

"All these things proceed from within and defile the man," were the Lord’s concluding words to the disciples here. How futile therefore was it for the Pharisees to contend for the ceremonial washing of the hands and the person, forgetful of that inward defilement which is moral and from the heart, and cannot be cleansed by the washing of water. The Lord’s teaching with regard to the kingdom of the heavens was opposed to this, for He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). And the Jews should have known how this essential purification of heart could be effected. Ezekiel had declared that the cleansing of the nation was Jehovah’s work and promise: "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:25-26). The water is a figure of the word of God, as the Lord Himself shows, referring to the effect of His own word upon the disciples who received it by faith. He said, "Already ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"John 15:3). But the ritualistic practices of the Pharisees in this respect were vain and delusive as the Lord taught, yet in spite of that teaching, and heedless of His warning, some in the early church fell into the snare of relying upon human ordinances for purification. Against such Titus was warned: "Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:14-15). According to the "proverb of the ancients," quoted by David to Saul, "Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness" (1 Samuel 24:13).

Religious lustrations are highly esteemed among men, but not seldom they are an abomination to God in their vanity and hypocrisy. James writes "Pure religion and undefiled before God and our Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

05.41. Crumbs of Grace for Gentile Dogs

41. — Crumbs of Grace for Gentile Dogs

"And from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it: and he could not be hid. But straightway a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race. And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. And he said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs. But she answered and saith unto him, Yea, Lord; even the dogs under the table eat of the children’s* crumbs. And he saith unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out" (Mark 7:24-30, R.V.).

{*The woman uses a different word for children. The Lord said, It is not meet to take of the bread of theteknon,that is, the natural-born children of the family. She replied that the dogs might receive crumbs from thepaidion,that is from the little ones of the household, which would include the servants.} The time was now approaching when the Servant of the Lord would complete His ministry of grace in Galilee, and would go up to Jerusalem to deliver His final testimony to the "daughter of Zion." And we find from the Gospel records that in the later journeyings of Jesus in Galilee, there were some notable occasions when the grace and truth of which He was "full" overflowed to those of Gentile blood. These examples, amongst which that of the Syro-phoenician woman is not the least striking, were foreshadowings of the (then) coming time of unrestricted grace when it would be proclaimed to all men that the Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Romans 10:10). At Capernaum the Pharisees in their religious pride stumbled at the saying of the Lord (Matthew 15:12) that the heart of man is the true seat of his spiritual defilement, sin spreading outwards from this inward source like a leprous disease. These Jewish teachers refused to believe in Jesus and in His word, condemning their tradition as it did: hence they were "confounded," and missed receiving that purification of heart which comes alike to Jews and Gentiles who believe (Acts 15:9). But it was made clear in the days of the Lord that if they of the favoured nation stumbled at the Stumbling-stone through unbelief, heathen strangers, humbly confessing the extremity of their needs, would stretch out arms of entreaty and faith to the mercy of Jehovah that was then visiting the people of His covenant. And in His zeal to help the needy He showed that no plaint for pity should be addressed in vain to the just and lowly King of Israel, not even the voice of a Canaanite. In accordance with this purpose we here read that "from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon."

Tyre and Sidon The geographical limits of our Lord’s ministry were much circumscribed in comparison with those assigned by Him to His followers at His departure. His own service was confined to the "cities of Israel," that of the apostles in His absence was extended to the ends of the earth. When Paul and Barnabas were preaching the word of God to the Jews in Antioch, and the audience refused their testimony, the apostle said to them, "Seeing ye thrust it from you, and

judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). But though our Lord’s words and deeds were rejected in Capernaum and elsewhere in Galilee and Judea, the Lord did not Himself preach the gospel of the kingdom to Gentiles, nor did He enter Gentile territory. He, however, on this occasion approached the borders of His own country. The branches of the fruitful bough ran over the wall of partition (Genesis 49:22), though the millennial day was, in fact, far distant, when the leaves of the tree of life would be for the healing of the nations everywhere (Revelation 22:3). Nevertheless, those of Tyre and Sidon, who even then cared to seek help and healing from God’s Minister of grace, would not be denied, as the record of the Evangelist proves.

Tyre and Sidon, or Zidon, were cities of great antiquity, the latter being the elder; for Zidon, first-born of Canaan, founded the city, and called it by his own name (Genesis 10:15; Genesis 10:19). Hence, in Matthew the woman of Tyre and Sidon is called a Canaanitess (Matthew 15:22). In the time of Joshua, it had grown to be a place of considerable size and importance, and was known as "great Zidon" (Joshua 11:8; Joshua 19:28). Zidon was included in the inheritance apportioned to the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:24-31), but the Asherites failed to take full possession of their inheritance. They did not drive out the inhabitants of Zidon, but dwelt among the Canaanites (Judges 1:31-32).

Tyre, twenty miles distant, though the younger city, excelled its neighbour in commercial prosperity and influence, and its worldly grandeur is described in vivid terms by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 27:1-36), and Hiram its king was a useful ally of David and Solomon, and provided workmen and materials for the building of the royal palace and the temple at Jerusalem. But Tyre broke away from the "brotherly covenant," and incurred the divine displeasure (Amos 1:9). Because of their sinful pride God’s judgments came upon these two cities, according to the prophecies of Isaiah (Isaiah 23:1-18) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 26:1-21, Ezekiel 27:1-36, Ezekiel 28:1-26, Ezekiel 29:1-21), by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and subsequently by Alexander the Great of Greece. This punishment came to pass in the words of another prophet: "Tyre did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire" (Zechariah 9:3-4). Their wickedness was so great that they are classed by our Lord with Sodom as monumental examples of the world’s iniquity and departure from God (Matthew 11:22-23). And yet the Lord also declared that if the mighty works done by Him in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, even as Nineveh did at the preaching of Jonah. The House of Mercy

"And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid." At the dedication of the magnificent temple on Mount Zion, Solomon, contrasting its significance with the infinite and essential glories of Jehovah, exclaimed, "Will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house that I have builded" (2 Kings 8:27). Neither could the house on the borders of Tyre and Sidon contain nor confine the glory of Jehovah’s Servant. "He could not be hid," though in His humility and the lowliness of His heart, He retired from the populous districts bordering the Sea of Galilee, where He was unwanted, and sought some privacy in a house (as Mark alone tells us) near the land of the Gentile.*

{*Compare the words of the prophet, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaiah 45:15).} This voluntary seclusion illustrates to us the amazing perfection of this Servant of God who accepted so meekly the rebuffs to His service. Though arising directly from the men of Israel, the hand of His God was seen by Him to be above all. He bowed to them therefore, as to the will of Him that sent Him. Finding Jerusalem and Galilee leagued against Him, He sought a secret place away from the face of His enemies, where He might spread out the disappointment of His heart of love before the face of His Father. There was a further display of the same spirit later, when the crucifixion became still more imminent, and we read that as the Lord and His disciples "passed through Galilee, he would have no man know it" (Mark 9:30; Mark 9:32). This self-abnegation was of great moral beauty. The act of self-effacement, but most of all the spirit of the act, was rare and choice among men. It was not yet the effulgence of the glorified Son of man shining upon the willing and unwilling, like the lightning from the east unto the west, nevertheless, the glow of this heavenly gem in its earthly setting "could not be hid." It was not yet the appointed time when all flesh should see the glory of Jehovah, but One here and another there, like this Canaanite, discerned and owned in Jesus the Hope of Israel, and the Blesser also of all men.

Lingering still, for a moment, over this phase of moral glory, it will appear to us to be a special feature of Mark’s Gospel to record occasions when our Lord withdrew Himself from men because of their opposition and persecution, and when the very act of retiring before the power of His enemies was accompanied by further witness to His glory from needy suppliants who pursued Him unto His solitude. Thus, when Jesus withdrew from the synagogue of Capernaum to the sea, great multitudes followed Him (Mark 3:6-8). When he crossed the Sea of Galilee to the wilds of Gadara, a man with an unclean spirit met Him for healing and conversion (Mark 7:1-2). When the Lord with His apostles went apart into the desert place after the execution of John the Baptist, great multitudes followed Him (Mark 6:30-33). And in this instance, when Jesus retired to a house after encountering the wilful obduracy and blindness of the guides of Israel, as well as the ignorance of His own disciples, the Syro-phoenician stranger sought Him out, and by her earnest solicitations obtained mercy and found grace to help in time of need. This unnamed house on the borders of Israel became by reason of the Illustrious Presence tarrying there, a tenement of heavenly mercy — a Bethsaida indeed. The house itself, honoured as it was, has passed into oblivion, but the fame of its Heavenly Visitant abides. To this house the woman of Canaan came, lifting up her hands in dim but true faith, not to the temple on Mount Zion where no Shekinah then dwelled, but to the Word of God made flesh and tabernacling among men. In the millennium the house of God "shall be called of all nations the house of prayer." And in these requests made by Gentile strangers direct to Jesus we have individual instances of Jehovah’s comprehensive reply to the petitions of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, when he besought the LORD, saying: "Concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake (for they shall hear of thy great name and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm), when he shall come and pray towards this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for" (1 Kings 10:41-43). When this "stranger" woman "heard of Him" she, who was forbidden to enter the temple at Jerusalem, came to Jesus as to the true Temple of God upon the earth, and He answered her according to all that she sought of Him. The Mother’s Prayer

It was a mother who sought the presence of Jesus on the borders of the land of Israel. As a parent, she was torn with anxiety and distress for the sufferings of her little daughter, who was "grievously vexed" with a demon. "A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syro-phoenician by race. And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter."

We cannot but observe in the Gospels what respect the Lord paid to parental concern for their families. In dispensing His blessings, He had special regard for the institutions of family life. Among the comparatively few specific cases of the Lord’s miracles of healing which are recorded, we find that the Lord hearkened to the prayer of

(1) a mother for her daughter (Matthew 15:21-28);

(2) a father for his daughter (Matthew 9:18-26);

(3) a father for his son (Matthew 17:14-18);

(4) a courtier for his son (John 4:46-53);

(5) the mothers for their infants (Luke 18:15-16)

(6) a centurion for his servant (Luke 7:2-10). In the home life the influences of natural affection are mightily powerful upon the young for good or for ill. In the same circle the terrible effects of the presence and operation of sin are perhaps more visible than anywhere else. There, too frequently, alas, cases are found where example and counsel are unavailing to deliver from corrupting and destroying evil. But mothers, fathers, masters, the responsible ones of the household, are encouraged by the cases given in the Gospels to make believing appeals for their charges to Jesus who is able to control and heal the evils of the soul, even as He did the diseases of the body. The woman of Canaan had heard of Jesus; we read that for some while before this date His "fame had spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee" (Mark 1:28), and when the multitudes flocked to Capernaum because "they had heard what great things He did" those about Tyre and Sidon were among them (Mark 3:7-8;Luke 6:17). It was a wealthy queen among the Gentiles who heard of the wisdom of Solomon and came to him with her choice gifts from the ends of the earth that she might see and hear for herself. A greater than Solomon was now lodged in an obscure corner of Galilee, but it was only one of the descendants of Canaan, weighted from the days of Noah with a curse (Genesis 9:25), who came to do homage at His feet and to present her petition. The Psalmist prophesied that when Jehovah’s King came to Zion the daughter of Tyre would be there with a gift (Psalms 45:12), but this poor woman had nothing to bring to Jesus save the fruit of her body, possessed, alas, by an evil demon. Baffled by the power and subtlety of the wicked spirit, she, in her womanly weakness, and in her mother’s love, cried out to Him who had blessed so many of the afflicted daughters of Israel, Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25). The Children and the Dogs The case of the poor mother was a pathetic one, and would naturally awaken the sympathies of the tender-hearted. But the Great Prophet of the kingdom of God could not be swayed by sentiment or emotion merely, and thrown from His just balance in the administration of the mercy of Jehovah. In Him mercy was perfectly tempered with truth and righteousness, as was the case with none other of the servants of God. Jonah, that former prophet of Galilee, knew neither mercy nor grace, and repined in his bigotry, at the forbearance of God shown to the Ninevites who repented at his preaching. Though he had himself experienced how Jehovah’s

power and mercy miraculously delivered a disobedient servant from a just retribution, Jonah could not endure that the ignorant Gentiles unable to "discern between their right hand and their left hand" should be spared from the threatened judgment. But Jesus, while full of compassion for the stranger, was equally full of truth as of grace. His mercy, "the sure mercies of David," was exercised according to the inflexible truth of God. Bounds were set to the flow of the living waters. Jehovah had for many centuries drawn broad and deep distinctions among the families of mankind, based upon His promise and His oath.* In Abraham the olive tree of promise was established, and successive prophets had declared that his seed were the appointed participants in its "root and fatness."

{*At the beginning it was said of Canaan, "a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Genesis 9:25), and many were made bondservants in the land in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 9:20-21).}

According to the oracles of truth, therefore, the seed of Abraham were the chosen people of God, and nationally were brought into filial relationship with Him. "Out of Egypt I have called my son," said Jehovah, carrying the nation out of the house of bondage into the land of plenty, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Because of their gross idolatry and moral depravity, the aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan were driven out to make place for those known in prophetic language as "sons of the living God."

Dispensationally, therefore, as the whole scheme of Old Testament promise and prophecy showed, the descendants of Israel were nearer God than the Gentiles. And the Lord Jesus in His ministry of the abundant grace of God recognised the divine restrictions imposed in former days. He had not come to destroy the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17); and what God had established He would not permit man to waive or ignore. Even in this case of dire extremity, the woman was not entitled by reason ofher necessityto set aside the ruling and ways of God for centuries. The Messiah was sent to Israel, and salvation was of the Jews. She must learn that her only hope lay in the sovereign mercy of God. The question involved in the woman’s plea, therefore, was one of proper decorum in approaching the Majesty of heavenly grace. Seemliness in the eyes of heaven is the due recognition of the dignity and authority of what is of God. Distinctions must not be set aside save by the One who made those distinctions. Soon it would be declared of human depravity that "there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and further, of divine sovereignty, "there is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 3:23;Romans 10:12). But in the days of our Lord’s ministry, there were still those who nationally were of the family of God and those who were not. In relative dispensational position, therefore, the two classes were as far removed from one another in the household as children and dogs. Hence the Lord said to the woman, "Let the children first be filled; it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs." In this reply, the Lord, as it were, appealed to what was in harmony with divine appointment in the matter of government among men. When the order of the coming heavenly kingdom is fully established upon the earth, there will then be a class who have a right to eat of the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city: there will at the same time be "dogs," but these are said to be "without" (Revelation 22:15). The words of our Lord challenged the woman whether she would accept these limitations imposed by God in the course of His sovereign dealings with men. The divine decree to Joshua was that the Canaanite should be exterminated from the land, and now the anointed King in that

land had used to her a term of reproach which seemed to be harsh and humiliating. What would she do? In her self-abasement, she accepted the term in its full religious import. She could not claim to be a child, and she did not refuse to acknowledge herself before the Lord and His disciples to be an unclean dog. The word of truth had truly entered her soul, and cast out all Gentile pride, convincing her that by race she was an outcast from Israel, and therefore without any prescriptive claim upon the Messiah of that nation. The Woman’s Saying of Faith The woman’s reply to our Lord indicated what was in her heart. She did not dispute His word that the children had a prior claim and should first be filled, nor that it would be unseemly to cast the children’s bread to the dogs. Outward appearances at that time seemed to suggest that the relative position of the two races was the reverse, for the Jew was under the yoke of the Gentile. Nevertheless, the suppliant owned that Israel was the people of God, as Rahab, another Gentile woman, by a similar faith, had done at an earlier day (Hebrews 11:31). But the faith of this stranger went a step farther. She believed the prophet’s word that the seed of Abraham were "children" in the sense ofExodus 4:22;Hosea 1:10;Hosea 11:1; but she also trusted God and His messenger to whom she had come that somehow there would be help for her and her daughter, in spite of her Gentile extraction. From whence did her faith arise? It is written that she had "heard of him;" and "faith cometh by hearing." The news she heard of the Lord brought her to His feet in supplication. Then His word to her, moulding and correcting the terms of her request, further developed the faith of her heart which, like Jacob of old (Genesis 32:26), would not part with Him without His blessing. The Lord described the woman’s faith as great" (Matthew 15:25), and there is but one other instance besides recorded in the Gospels, which He similarly characterised that of the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:10;Luke 7:9). And it is noteworthy that the same Discerner of hearts who pronounced the faith of these two Gentiles to be "great" declared that of the disciples and that of Peter to be "little" (Matthew 8:26;Matthew 14:31).

"Great" faith appears to have grown out of a sense which these two believers had of the illimitable (1) power and (2) grace of Jesus. The two Gentile claimants freely acknowledged their personal unworthiness, but their "great" faith did not consist of their humility. Each presented to the Lord with much fervour a case of great urgency, but their faith did not become great in proportion to the importunity of their petitions. In addition, however, to lowliness of spirit and earnest appeal, they both placed themselves unreservedly in the hands of the Great Benefactor. In other words, they showed unrestricted confidence in His will, acting in His love, to help and heal. Such faith the Lord had not found in Israel, for they said to Him, "What doest thou for a sign that we may see and believe thee?" (John 6:30)!

There appear at the same time to be differences between the cases. The centurion trusted the power of Jesus, especially in His capacity as the administrator of the Kingdom of God. He did not at all expect the Lord to come beneath the roof of a Gentile; indeed he did not consider that His bodily presence was essential. The Master needed only, as he said, to utter the word of command, and his servant would be healed (cp.Psalms 107:20). These expressions of the Roman officer showed his absolute confidence in the supreme power wielded by the Nazarene; and the Lord recognized this when He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." In the second instance, the woman of Canaan expressed her confidence, not so much in the fulness of the authority as in the over-flowing goodness and bounty of Jesus. The Master who had prepared a table for the children of the kingdom did so, she believed, with a lavishness worthy of the God of

heaven. The Messiah had come to fill the hungry with good things. At His feast there was ample provision for all. And while it was not meet that bread should be withdrawn from the children and thrown to the dogs, there were fragments from the feast that remained, crumbs that fell from the table loaded with the Master's benefits, portions of the plenty unneeded, neglected, despised by the rightful guests. Of these fragments, the dogs of the household under the table might surely, she pleaded, be permitted to eat with freedom, though indeed Lazarus desired in vain those that fell from the table of Dives (Luke 16:21). As a Gentile stranger, she could not claim a chief seat at the feast, nor indeed could she claim a seat as guest at all. Nor, to anticipate the apostolic figure, had she, as of the wild olive, any desire to "boast herself against the branches" (Romans 11:18), but in singular and appropriate humility she abased herself to a dog's place beneath the table that there she might be authorised by the Master to partake of the crumbs of heavenly mercy. Thus, humbling herself to the lowest, but clinging ever to the All-highest, she became to the Lord's eyes "great in faith," giving glory to God. Her Perseverance in Prayer The pertinacity of the woman in presenting her requests is marked in the narratives of both Matthew and Mark, and she affords a striking example of that continuance in prayer to which the apostle of the Gentiles exhorts the church at Colosse (Colossians 4:2). The persevering suit of the woman was based, as indeed all real believing prayer must be, upon a sense of the love and grace of God revealed in His Son. This active cause is brought out in the following quotation (slightly abridged).

"Need and faith in the goodness and power of the Lord give perseverance, as in the case of those who carried the paralytic man when the crowd pressed around Jesus (Mark 2:3-5). But there is something in the woman's heart beside confidence, which grace had produced there. She recognises the rights of the Jews as God's people; she owns that she is but a dog with regard to them: but she insists upon her demand, because she feels that, even though she be but a dog, the grace of God is sufficient for those who had no rights. 'Even the dogs,' she says, 'eat of the children's crumbs.'

"She believes in God's love towards those who have neither rights nor promises; and in the manifestation of God in Jesus outside of, and above, all dispensations. God is good, and the fact of a person being in misery is a claim with Him. Could Christ say to her, 'No, God is not good as thou dost suppose'? He could not say this: it would not have been the truth.

"This is great faith, faith which recognises our own wretchedness, and that we have a right to nothing, but which believes in the love of God clearly revealed in Jesus. We have no right to expect the exercise of this love towards us, but we can be sure that coming to Christ, impelled by our wants, we shall find perfect goodness, love that heals us, and the healing itself.

"Let us remember that true need perseveres because it cannot do without the aid of the power which was manifested in Christ, nor without the salvation which He brought; nor is there salvation without the help which is to be found in Him for our weakness. And that which is in God is the source of our hope and of our faith; and if asked how we know what is in God's heart, we can answer, It is perfectly revealed in Christ.' Who put it into God's heart to send His own Son to save us? Who put it into the Son's heart to come and suffer everything for us? Not man. God's heart is its source. We believe in this love.

"The grace of God was fully shown forth towards the poor woman, who had no right to any blessing, nor to any promise; she was a daughter of the accursed Canaan; but faith reaches even

to the heart of God manifested in Jesus, and in like manner the eye of God reaches to the bottom of man's heart. Thus God's heart and man's heart meet, in the consciousness that man is altogether bad, that he has not a single right; indeed he owns truly this state, and gives himself up to the perfect goodness of God. But the Jewish people, who pretended to possess righteousness and right to the promises is set on one side; and, as to the old covenant, is shut out from God's favour."* {*Collected Writings of J. N. D., vol. 24, pp. 398-400.} Features Peculiar to Matthew A comparison of the terms in which this incident is recounted by Matthew and Mark respectively, affords illustration of the distinct purposes of the two Evangelists in their histories.

Mark, who presents Jesus as the Great Servant-Prophet of Jehovah, executing earthly commission with unexampled perfection and grace of manner, shows Him in the outskirts of Immanuel's land, feeding the Syro-phoenician woman with the "bread of heaven." Mark's account is briefer than the companion one, but sufficient to excite our adoring wonder at the readiness of the Lord to take up His active service even when the Gentile stranger sought His presence in the house where He "would have no man know it." This prophet's kindness to the woman who came out of the borders of Tyre and Sidon recalls the mission of Elijah to the widow of Zarephath, a city of Zidon. In the days of famine she was preserved from starvation by the power and mercy of Jehovah through the prophet, though she was a Gentile and not a widow in Israel (1 Kings 17:8-16;Luke 4:26). The principal points which appear only in the account by Matthew, and which illustrate His regal demeanour, are as follows:

(1) The woman addressed the Lord as Son of David.

(2) The Lord remained silent at first.

(3) The disciples in the Jewish spirit of exclusiveness desired that she might be sent away.

(4) The Lord made reference to His mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

(5) The Lord commended the greatness of the woman's faith. The first Gospel presents Jesus especially as of the Royal House of David, and its first verse reads: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." As the Old Testament records those who confessed the fugitive David to be the anointed king of Israel (2 Samuel 23:1-39,et alia),so Matthew most fully of the four Evangelists records those who owned Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of David. There are six such instances: —

(1) two blind men in Galilee (Matthew 9:27);

(2) the multitude in Galilee (Matthew 12:23);

(3) the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:22);

(4) two blind men near Jericho (Matthew 20:30-31);

(5) the multitude at the entrance to Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9);

(6) the children in the temple (Matthew 21:15). But the Pharisees will not own Him either as David's Son or David's Lord (Matthew 22:41-46). There are three Gentile women named in the genealogy of the Royal Child, viz., Tamar, Rahab and Ruth (Matthew 1:3-5), and one other is honourably mentioned, though not by name (Matthew 15:22), among the few who hailed the

Nazarene as the Son of David.*

{*Study the contrast with others of her country, who sought the goodwill of that Edomite tyrant who in his arrogancy was blasted by the open judgment of God (Acts 12:20-23).}

Though the Lord remained silent, was not this confession sweet to Him, though coming from the mouth of a Gentile? He was in the territory of the tribe of Asher, of whom Jacob prophesied, "He shall yield royal dainties" (Genesis 49:20). So although there was no table in Zion for David’s Son, there was one spread in the wilderness of Asher, where He had royal dainties to eat that Israel knew not of, and where there were crumbs of grace for hungry Gentiles too.

05.42. The Deaf Stammerer Healed

42. — The Deaf Stammerer Healed

"And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man; but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He path done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark 7:31-37, R.V.). From the neighbourhood of the districts of Tyre and Sidon, the Lord journeyed in the way of His ministry towards the northern shores of the sea of Galilee, leaving behind Him the grateful woman and her delivered daughter as witnesses of His mercy to the stranger who had sought refuge "within the gates" of Immanuel’s land. This tour in its circuit brought Him through Decapolis, where His fame as the Prophet of Nazareth had been previously spread abroad. For it was in this locality that the healed demoniac of Gadara proclaimed the love and power of Jesus his Deliverer. In the fulness of his gratitude the restored man had sought to follow the Lord when He crossed the sea, but was not permitted, but bidden to go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him, and what mercy He had shown him. And we are expressly told that this disciple thereupon published in Decapolis his account of what the Lord was doing, with the result that "all men did marvel (Mark 5:19-20).

Decapolis seems to have been a place where the word of the Sower fell into "good ground," and brought forth fruit abundantly. The name occurs in the comprehensive summary of the labours of the Lord given by Matthew in the early part of his Gospel. Of five districts there mentioned, Decapolis is one of those where multitudes were gathered by His ministry; the others being Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and "beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:23-25). For this territory was the Galilee of the Gentiles, concerning whose inhabitants Isaiah prophesied: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isaiah 9:2). This benighted neighbourhood was at that time a very populous one. Modern explorers of Galilee find evidence of crowded cities and villages spread over wide areas in the northern territory, so that the extent Of the population in the days of the Lord must have been far greater than is usually conceived. And the "large crowds," mentioned by the first Evangelist may therefore be understood from this point of view. Referring to this visit of the Lord to Decapolis mentioned by Mark, Matthew records that thesegreat multitudescame unto Him, bringing with them the dumb, and many others, and He healed them all (Matthew 15:29-31); while Mark specifies one case only. We must not fail, in comparing the two narratives, to note the wide and lavish display of Messianic grace characteristically set forth in Matthew’s account. The people of the Decapolitan district were no doubt much debased by heathen influence, but nevertheless,

the Lord, seated on the mountain, received and, in the regal affluence of His power and mercy, blessed all those who thronged to Him. Matthew’s record (to which we may again refer) is that great multitudes came unto Him, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and laid them down at the feet of Jesus, and He healed them all; while this gracious and abundant exercise of the prerogative of mercy by the King of the Jews so moved the populace that they glorified the "God of Israel" (Matthew 15:29-31).

Mark, however, does not summarise the manifold activities of the Lord in this locality as Matthew does, but selects a single typical instance, which he narrates in much detail, portraying the Patient and Faithful Servant of Jehovah in His unutterable love, concerned intimately in the individual case before Him, and displaying the utmost interest and pains in the exercise of His healing grace.

It is noteworthy that this miracle and that of the opening of the eyes of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) are two which are mentioned in the Gospel of Mark only. Both miracles were wrought privately, and do not appear to have a special sign-character to the nation like those which were given a more public display. The Deaf Stammerer

Here then we learn that some unnamed friends brought to Jesus a man who was deaf, and who also had an impediment in his speech. The afflicted person was without a sense of hearing, and if he was not absolutely mute, he was unable to speak intelligibly because of some defect in the organs of articulation. Previously to this occasion the Lord had cured many deaf persons (Matthew 11:5;Luke 7:22), and subsequently He cast a dumb and deaf spirit out of a lad at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:25). The friends implored Jesus to lay His hands upon the sufferer, as Jairus also, on behalf of his little daughter, besought the Lord to do; though the latter, in his paternal distress was the more importunate, for he besought Jesus "greatly," saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; I pray thee that thou come and lay thy hands on her that she may be made whole and live" (Mark 5:23).

It was a way of the Lord to adopt this gracious attitude in the bestowal of blessing. In the early days of His ministry, when the crowds came to Him at Capernaum for succour, He laid hands upon all who were needing relief: "And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him: and he laid his hands upon:every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40). On another occasion He "laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them" (Mark 6:5). Similarly, He laid His hands upon the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23; Mark 8:26), and upon the bowed woman (Luke 13:13).

Love and sympathy were conveyed by this act, but not necessarily the power of cure, for this went with His word and will, as we see from those instances in which He sent forth His word and healed, even at a distance. This distinction is of importance to note always, for there are still many who erroneously attach a primary value to the formal act of this nature on the part of those who unwarrantably claim to be the Lord’s delegates for the purpose. The Way of the Lord in this Healing

1918 88 The Lord displayed a special, personal interest in this case of the deaf stammerer, and the record shows very fully how the Lord performed this cure, and how deeply He was affected by the sad condition of the sufferer. It is interesting to note in the next chapter that a similar fulness of detail is found in the narrative of the other miracle peculiar to this Gospel. There is also a general

correspondence in the Lord’s procedure in the two cases, as may be seen from the following comparison of the sevenfold descriptions of the recorded actions and words, though it also reveals peculiarities in each of the cases.

Placing the clauses of the two accounts side by side, we find that the Lord —

1. took the deaf man aside, 1. took the blind man by the hand,

2. put His fingers into his ears, 2. led him out of the town,

3. spat, 3. spat on his eyes,

4. touched his tongue, 4. put His hands on him,

5. looked up to heaven, 5. inquired whether he saw,

6. sighed, 6. put His hands again on his eyes,

7. said, Ephphatha (Mark 7:33-34). 7. made him look up (Mark 8:23-25).

Taking the features which are analogous, the Lord in both instances,

(a) healed privately,

(b) touched the afflicted members,

(c) spat,

(d) spake.

But, distinctively, the Lord, in the first instance, looked up, sighed, and said, "Ephphatha"; and in the latter case He took the man by the hand, inquired whether he saw after He put hands on him, and made him look up. Thus, there is general agreement in four of the clauses, and differences in three. A few remarks upon these various points are offered by way of suggestion.

(1)Privacy.The Lord took the deaf man aside(kat idian)This Greek phrase is used in several instances in the Gospels, and is variously translated "apart," "privately," "when alone," as well as "aside." On seven occasions the Lord sought privacy for Himself alone, or in company with a few of His disciples, separately from the multitudes. They were as follows: —

(1) when He went into the mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23);

(2) when He called His disciples into a desert place to rest awhile (Matthew 14:13;Mark 6:31-32;Luke 9:10);

(3) when He took Peter, James and John into the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1;Mark 9:2);

(4) when He expounded the parables to the disciples (Mark 4:34);

(5) when He impressed upon the disciples their exceptional privileges (Luke 10:23);

(6) when He instructed His disciples concerning His coming death (Matthew 20:17);

(7) when He took the deaf man aside for healing (Mark 7:34). In addition to these, there are two instances of the use of the same phrase, when the disciples sought the Lord in private, viz. —

(1) when they failed to cast out a demon (Matthew 17:19;Mark 9:28);

(2) when they inquired concerning the future (Matthew 24:3;Mark 13:3). From these references, as well as from other instances where the exact Greek phrase under consideration is not used, though the occasion was similar, it appears that retirement was sought by the Lord (1) at specially solemn epochs in His ministry in order that they might be spent in communion with His Father, and (2) for the communication of such instruction as was of particular interest and special importance to the disciples as distinct from the crowds. It was on such occasions that the apostles were prepared for their future service in the world as the Lord's witnesses, when He Himself should be absent. In the present case it would certainly be for the man's own moral and spiritual benefit that he should be alone with the Divine Healer, while the Lord, with delicate regard for the acute sensibilities common to most persons so afflicted, spared him in this way from the coarse and curious gaze of the gaping mob. With a similar observance of due propriety in circumstances of solemnity and sorrow, He removed the hired mourners from the death-chamber of the daughter of Jairus. While in a matter of moral wrong and personal offence, the Lord taught His disciples the value of a private interview, enunciating His golden rule for the adjustment of differences between man and man: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone" (Matthew 18:15).

If privacy has its value in an interview between man and man, how much more was this so when the interview was between the man and His Saviour? There were spiritual impressions of the rarest character to be received as well as a physical benefit. The Messiah of Israel was present; was it not important that the man should experience for himself the loving regard which He showed in the case of every individual sufferer? Such an experience would be ineffaceable. Hence the deaf man was taken apart from the curious crowd and from his excited friends, so that his attention might not be distracted from the Master, and that His demeanour, His words and His doings, in their full sweetness and power, might ever live in his memory.

(2) The touch. The kindly friends besought the Lord to lay hands upon the man. Accordingly, when He had gone aside privately with him, He put His fingers into the deaf ears, and touched the fettered tongue. Without pretending to assign specific motives to the Master for these actions, we may surely, without presumption, learn from the incident how thoroughly the Lord in His exquisite sympathy placed Himself in contact with the infirmities of those whom He blessed. If in Him there had been power alone, He might have exhibited it from afar, but there was love also, and this in its exercise must be near at hand.

Hence the Saviour in His compassion came near enough to touch the ear and the tongue, that in an undisturbed privacy the deaf and the dumb might learn the marvellous ways of the God of love present to restore His sin-blighted creation. For the divine love for the sinner was even more wonderful than the divine power to heal. Had He not, by that same power, first fashioned the organs of hearing and speech? Should He not therefore well understand how to recover them when their functions were deranged? The Lord therefore touched, communicating healing and strength, but contracting no defilement. It was as the touch of the sunlight upon the noisome places of the earth, which vivifies and purifies, but is never soiled. In the service of His healing

mercy, Messiah fulfilled what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17).

(3) The upward look and the sigh. With His hands upon the five loaves and two fishes, the Lord had looked up to heaven and blessed, and thereupon the tiny store of food was multiplied to satisfy the famished multitude (Mark 6:41). Here with His hands, as it were, upon the ears of the deaf and the tongue of the dumb, He looked up to heaven and sighed. As food and gladness are associated gifts of God (Acts 14:17), awakening thanksgiving, so sickness is accompanied by sadness and sorrow, which are audibly expressed by sighing.* The perfect adaptability of Christ is seen in each of the two instances. Looking up to heaven was His habit, whether the occasion called for joy or grief. We also see that while He rejoiced to dispense divine bounties to the hungry and the weary, He mourned to see before Him the mutilated image of God without a tongue to bless His Maker’s name,or ears to hear the voice of His Sent One.

{*Sighing is an involuntary emotion, usually arising from internal causes.}

Heaven, as we learn from the Lord’s attitude is the only resource for the sin-stricken earth. There the Father is, and thence His kingdom will in due course come. Meanwhile, the presence of sin abides below, and sighing over its grievous fruits is the lot of all, wittingly or unwittingly. The prevalence of this under-current of sadness the apostle expressed when he declared that "the whole creation groaneth [lit., is sighing] and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only so, but ourselves also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan [lit., are sighing] within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-23). In another Epistle, Paul wrote, referring to the body and its infirmities, "In this we groan [sigh] . . . for we that are in this tabernacle do groan [are sighing], being burdened" (2 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:4) * It is to be observed that in each of these instances the Spirit, in conformity with the action of our Lord in the presence of the deaf man, directs the eye of hope upwards for that release from bodily imperfection to be granted when the Father’s kingdom shall come.

{*The same word is used in connection with the affliction of the people of Israel in Egypt, for Jehovah said, "I have heard their groaning [sighing], and I am come down to deliver them" (Acts 7:34).} For in the day of God’s glory in the earth, this constant burden of the spiritual heart will certainly be removed, and the sigh or groan of the needy and of the imprisoned (Psalms 12:5; Psalms 79:2) will no longer be known. Then will be the fulfilment of that prophecy of which this Galilean miracle was the earnest: "Behold your God . . . will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped . . . and the tongue of the dumb shall sing . . . and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion . . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:4-10).

(4)The word of authority.Following His touch of sympathy, the Lord uttered His word of command, Ephphatha. The Servant of Jehovah, in the plenitude of His rights as the Son of God, spoke, and it was accordingly done, for His word was equally potent to control and to correct as it was to create. Had He not "planted the ear" (Psalms 94:9)? If He made the hearing ear (Proverbs 20:12), should He not cause the deaf ear to hear His voice? Addressing therefore the impotent member rather than the man himself, the Lord said, Be opened, and accordingly the ears of the deaf man were unstopped, and the bond of his tongue loosed, so that he spoke aright. The miracle was wrought in secret, and not as a public sign. Hence the Lord, having opened the ears and mouth of the man

brought to Him, gave direction that no one should be told. But this command fell upon the deaf ears of disobedience, for the more He charged this upon them, so much the more a great deal they published it. . . . Being beyond measure astonished they said, "He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Ears and Tongue in Divine Service

It may be of some help and interest to bring together a few remarks by way of suggestion on the subject of the connection between dumbness and deafness, and of the general analogy in spiritual things presented by them. The subject of service, too, has a direct bearing upon the special feature of the Second Gospel.

Deafness and dumbness are frequently associated as disorders in the same person, and, except in cases where there is malformation in the organs of speech, inability to speak is the direct result of an inability to hear. So that, generally speaking, the deaf man is also dumb. And, in consulting the various occurrences in the New Testament of the word kophos, usually in the A.V. rendered "deaf," we find that in some instances it is translated "dumb."

Thus, in the case of a certain demoniac brought to Jesus for healing, we read, "They brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out the dumb spake" (Matthew 9:32-33; Luke 11:14). Literally, in these instances the word "dumb" might be translated "deaf," the fact being that the man was both deaf and dumb.

Take the case of another demoniac. A father came to Jesus with his lad, saying to Him, "I have brought unto thee my son which path a dumb (alalon) spirit." But the boy appears to have been deaf as well as dumb, and presumably he was dumb because he was deaf: At any rate, the Lord, in ejecting the demon, addressed him as, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit (to alalon kai kophon) (Mark 9:17; Mark 9:25). It will be noticed that in the narrative of this incident a distinct Greek word (alalos) is translated "dumb."

Further, the dumb persons in the Decapolitan region who were made to speak by the Lord’s power were, according to the literal translation of the description, deaf (Matthew 15:30-31). Also, Zacharias became speechless(kophos),but it is clear from Luke’s account that he was deaf at the same time (cp.Luke 1:22with Luke 1:62). In connection with these foregoing examples of Scriptural usage, it may be useful to quote from modern encyclopaedias the following extracts, which present the intimate relation of deafness and dumbness from a physiological standpoint. One authority states: "It is not an uncommon supposition that deaf mutes are dumb on account of some vocal or organic defect, whereas the dumbness arises, with very rare exception, from the deprivation of hearing caused by some natural or accidental disease." Another says: "Dumbness is the consequence of deafness. Children ordinarily hear sounds, and then learn to imitate them,i.e.,they learn to repeat what they hear other persons say. It is thus that every one of us has learned to speak. But the deaf child hears nothing; it cannot therefore imitate, and remains dumb. . . . The ear is the guide and directress of the tongue; and when the ear is doomed to perpetual silence, the tongue is included in the ban: though if we could by any means give to the ear the faculty of hearing, the tongue would soon learn for itself to fulfil its proper office. To correct the error involved in this apparent misnomer, some authorities use the termdeafsimply, others speak of thedeaf-dumbanddeaf-mute.The latter term is common in America, as in France is its

equivalentSounds-muets.In the Holy Scriptures the same original word is translated ’deaf’ in some places (as inMark 7:32) and ’dumb’ or ’speechless’ in others (seeMatthew 9:33andLuke 1:22)."

It is therefore well-established that the function of speech is dependent upon the function of hearing, and in order to communicate rightly to others it is necessary to hear well. The two faculties are indispensable to a person who acts as a medium between one and another.* {*Written communications are in a different category, and are obviously not in question here.}

Applying this principle in the spiritual plane, the faithful and useful servant would be the one whose ear and voice are so accurately attuned that he transmits without failure the exact message he receives. Accordingly, Jehovah, in commissioning Jeremiah to be His prophet, said to him, "Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jeremiah 1:7). Also, the Lord, when sending forth the twelve Apostles, said to them, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27;Luke 12:3). The Apostle Paul writes in one of his epistles, "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). And again, John writes similarly, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard . . . of the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). In the Apocalypse the Lord’s "servant John" (as he terms himself in the first verse) on about thirty different occasions states his record to be what he "heard." The Son as Hearer and Speaker The Incarnate Son of God in the exercise of His office of Mediator between God and man was pleased to exhibit an absolute dependence upon God in the presentation of the grace and truth that came by Him. His ear and His tongue were ever in perfect accord with the’ divine will with respect to His service. This obedient attitude was fore-determined in the eternal counsels when the Son voluntarily elected to take the place of the coming Servant to do the will of God with great delight. The Holy Spirit revealed this secret planning in one of the Psalms: "Mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psalms 40:6-8). This great purpose, originating in eternity, was fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son and by His sacrifice, as the apostle expressly declared (Hebrews 10:5-10). The marvellous spirit of meek submission assumed by the Creator Son is also the subject of one of the prophecies of Isaiah. Looking forward in the power of the inspiring Spirit, he saw that the ear of the Servant of Jehovah would be opened continually to receive directions from the Lord God, and His tongue guided from on high to speak the words of divine comfort. The beautiful passage runs thus: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Isaiah 50:4-5). The New Testament records the fulfilment of these predictions, for in the Gospels the acts of the Lord Jesus all testify how He "emptied Himself," and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And in the Fourth Gospel especially, where the Son of God stands most revealed of the four, there are writ ten many of His own verbal testimonies to this subjection of His own will to that of the Father.

Thus, surveying at its close the execution of His earthly mission, the Son, in the outpouring of His heart to the Father, declared, "The sayings which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:8). Similarly, the Lord instructed His disciples concerning the true source of that stream of heavenly wisdom which had come down to them: "All things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you": "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me" (John 15:5;

John 14:24). To the Jews the Lord testified that God was then speaking to them in a manner different from the days of old, for they were, in His teaching, listening to the Son (Hebrews 1:1), who had assumed a relation of obedience for this purpose. On one occasion He said to them, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). Again, "the things which I have heard of him [the Father], these speak I unto the world": "For I speak not from myself; but the Father which sent me he hath given me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (John 8:26;John 12:49).

These passages all combine to show that the Servant-Prophet in His work as Jehovah's Spokesman to the nation was Himself first of all the Hearer of God, illustrating thereby for all time the essential nature of true and approved service. So absolutely was this attribute true of the Lord, that even when speaking of the exercise of the divine prerogative of judging which the Father had committed to Him as Son of man, He said, "As I hear, I judge." The whole passage reads, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me" (John 5:30).

Israel a Deaf Servant The term "servant" is frequently used in Scripture with reference to persons commissioned by God for the performance of some special duties for Him. Amongst others it is applied to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Job, and even to the first great head of Gentile dominion, Nebuchadnezzar (Genesis 26:24;Numbers 12:7;Judges 2:8;2 Samuel 7:8;Job 1:8;Jeremiah 25:9;Jeremiah 43:10). Each of these men was called of God to serve Him in some particular capacity. The same term is employed in a national sense with reference to the chosen people of God. As Adam was set in the world to be the representative of his Creator, and to rule for Him over the works of His hands, so Israel was elected from' among all other nations to be the accredited representative of Jehovah in the earth. They were formally appointed as a people to execute certain important functions of direct service to the Lord. This high purpose with regard to the seed of Abraham was clearly enunciated by Jehovah to Moses in mount Sinai, when He said, "For unto me the children of Israel are servants: they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 25:42; Leviticus 25:55). This national relationship was recalled by Isaiah in words which Jehovah spoke to the people through him: "But thou Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend; thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the corners thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant" (Isaiah 41:8-9; cp. alsoIsaiah 44:1-2). Accordingly, this favoured people, in their capacity as God's agents, were made the recipients and custodians of His holy oracles, the exponents of the worship of the One and Only Deity, and the seat of Jehovah's earthly government among the nations of mankind. In consequence of the service due from them in these and in other respects, it was necessary that Israel should be faithful to this trust and obedient to all the precepts of Him who dwelled between the cherubim in their Holy of holies. The people, however, did not possess a circumcised ear for the messages which came to them from on high. Their attention was continually claimed by Jehovah, and the great declarations by Him when they became the repository of the divine law were prefaced by that significant formula which they vainly made their boast: "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 5:1;Deuteronomy 6:3-4;Deuteronomy 9:1;Deuteronomy 20:3). But Israel was deaf to all the revelations made. Their condition of irresponsiveness to the divine communications is the charge brought against them by the prophet Isaiah, who said to the Servant-nation, "Thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from of old thine ear was not

opened" (Isaiah 48:8). Again, deploring their spiritual deadness, the same prophetic messenger said, "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? his ears are open, but he heareth not" (Isaiah 42:18-20). They had a separate and favoured position given them as a nation, and they are accordingly described as the "blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears" (Isaiah 43:8), inasmuch as they utterly failed to utilize the privileges and opportunities afforded them.

Clearly then, the Jews were spirituallyincapableof hearing the voice of God, even as the Lord said to them, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (John 8:43). Still mere inability to hear was not a condition without remedy. There was a Great Physician for those who were not obdurate. He had come to make such as were not wilfully deaf "hear joy and gladness." Did not the prophetic Spirit of Christ invite the nation to listen to the voice of mercy? saying "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 4:3). And when Messiah was present in Jerusalem, He said, "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). But in addition to those who were so incapable of hearing that they are even described as "dead," there were those whowouldnot hear. They were deaf also, but wilfully so. Like the deaf adder, they deliberately stopped their ears (Psalms 58:4;Isaiah 33:15;Zechariah 7:11), lest they should hear the words of wisdom and truth and life spoken unto them by the Great Prophet of God. They were the rebellious people who had ears to hear but heard not (Jeremiah 17:23;Ezekiel 12:2). This obstinate refusal on the part of the Jews to hear their Messiah aggravated their guilt to the utmost, as the Lord declared, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). The stage of wilful deafness is followed by serious results. For Scripture speaks of a third category which consists of those who, having refused to hear the word of God, become subject to the terrible infliction of a judicial deafness. Having exceeded the limits of the divine forbearance by closing their ears in the day of their visitation, they are no longer permitted to hear.

Isaiah warned the people of Israel that such a judgment would come upon them if they failed to receive the messages of Jehovah. The sentence pronounced upon them would be, "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy . . . lest they hear with their ears . . . and be healed" (Isaiah 6:10). This solemn prophecy is cited by each of the four Evangelists in connection with the stubborn unbelief of the Jews in the face of the Lord’s teaching and miraculous signs (Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:37-40).*

{*See further remarks on this topic made in connection withMark 4:9-12(B. T.vol. 8, N.S., pp. 371-373).} A comparison of these passages shows that the quotations from this prophecy made in the Synoptic Gospels, as well as that by the apostle Paul in his address to the Jews at Rome, refer to the wilful closing of the ears on the part of the nation. "Their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes have they closed" (Acts 28:27); this wording being taken from the Greek version of the Old Testament which gives this turn to the passage. Their sin therefore was due to their own deliberate action, for which the nation is accordingly held responsible.

John, however, views their conduct in a stage subsequent, as it were, to their wilfulness. Having hardened their own hearts, their hearts are there-upon hardened penally. They would not believe, therefore they could not believe. John’s words are emphatic that a judicial infliction from God had

fallen upon the people. He says, "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40). This quotation is made from the Hebrew text of Isaiah, where the ultimate result of unbelief upon the nation is the prominent theme.

It will be observed that only a part of the original prophecy is quoted in the Fourth Gospel, and that the clause relating to their hearing is not included. From the context we see that the Evangelist is speaking of the signs of Jesus rather than of His teaching (Mark 7:37), and His miracles were for the eyes of the people while His doctrine was for their ears. John brings forward therefore only the clauses referring to their eyes and heart, which God had blinded and hardened because of their stubborn opposition to the gospel of the kingdom. But the principle of judicial penalty is equally applicable to the ear, as the actual form of the prophecy of Isaiah shows. The Sea of Galilee. As this occasion is the last one in which the Sea of Galilee is mentioned in this Gospel, it may be of interest and help for further study to bring together the various passages where the name occurs. They serve at any rate to show how large a portion of the recorded ministry of Jesus was exercised in the northern province.

Mark 1:16, walking on its shores, Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John;

Mark 2:13, Jesus taught the crowds gathered by the seaside;

Mark 3:7, Jesus withdrew to the sea from the plottings of the Pharisees and Herodians;

Mark 4:1, from a boat Jesus taught the people who were assembled on the shore;

Mark 4:39, Jesus stilled the storm upon the sea;

Mark 5:1, Jesus crossed the sea to the country of the Gerasenes;

Mark 5:13, the herd of swine under the impulse of the demons stampeded into the sea;

Mark 5:21, Jesus re-crossed the sea;

Mark 6:47, Jesus walked upon the sea to His disciples during a storm, and stilled it;

Mark 7:31, Jesus returned to the sea of Galilee after His journey to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. This beautiful lake, which is a striking natural feature of the North of Palestine, is only mentioned three timesinthe Old Testament, where it is referred to as the Sea of Chinnereth in connection with the division of the land of Israel among the several tribes (Numbers 34:11;Joshua 12:3;Joshua 13:27).

05.43. Another Miraculous Meal

43. — Another Miraculous Meal

"In those days, when there was again a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; and some of them are come from far. And his disciples answered him, Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commandeth the multitude to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he brake, and gave to his disciples, to set before them. And they set them before the multitude. And they had a few small fishes, and having blessed them, he commanded to set these also before them. And they did eat, and were filled; and they took up, of broken pieces that remained over, seven baskets. And they were about four thousand and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into the boat with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha" (Mark 8:1-10, R.V.). The first two only of the Evangelists record that on a second occasion our Lord multiplied a few loaves, and therewith fed a great concourse of Galileans. Taught the gospel of the kingdom and fed by the King, these people may, in a sense, be said to have tasted "the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." For the two miracles constitute a double testimony to the coming blessing for the chosen nation under the direct rule of their Messiah that time of relief from weary toil of which the great year of jubilee was a type. The terms of the institution of this feast provided that while the people of Israel were not to sow nor to reap, yet they should "eat their fill," and the children of the strangers sojourning in their land should likewise participate in the special bounties of the year (Leviticus 25:8-55). The blissful era of the anti-typical jubilee is always in Old Testament prophecy associated with the reign of the Seed of David. The ancient men of God lived in joyous anticipation of the day when David’s Son and David’s Lord shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and when the blessings of sinless Eden shall be restored to mankind in a multiplied fulness. As we read of the Lord taking in His hands the few loaves which were to satisfy the multitude before Him, do we not hear again these picturesque words of the millennial psalm: "there shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Psalms 72:16)? For in the regeneration the primal penalty upon Adam and his race" In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19) — shall be displaced, and the tree of life, yielding month by month her twelve manner of fruits, shall be constant evidence that the curse has gone from the ground for ever (Revelation 22:2-3). Of that day of abundance the Lord gave a pledge to the few Galileans before Him when, without waiting with long patience for the precious fruits of the earth, their hunger was satisfied by the bounty multiplied a thousandfold before their very eyes. The Weary and Hungry Crowd The miracle was performed in the Decapolitan district which lies to the northward of the Sea of Galilee. The population of this neighbourhood was numerous, and their race of a mixed character, giving rise to the term, "Galilee of the Gentiles." There the Lord healed the deaf-mute who was one of a great

company of persons, diversely afflicted, also brought to Him and restored to health. There, also, it would seem, the Lord "taught" those assembled, instructing them in the new kingdom-doctrines. Attracted by the sweetness of those lips of heavenly knowledge, they tarried and tarried around Him for three days, nor was He loth to continue His ministry. The great multitude had assembled from far and near to see the works and hear the words of Jesus. These sheep of Israel and also other sheep not of that fold were "consumed with hunger in the land." For the Pharisees and scribes were hireling shepherds, and their days were like those of which the prophet Amos wrote, saying, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a f amine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12). Is it any wonder, then, that the crowds listened with untiring eagerness to the words of life from Jehovah's diligent Servant who spoke with authority and love, not as the scribes, nor indeed as any other man? How many of them, listening to the divine utterances, felt, though they could not express it as the Psalmist had already expressed it for them in the fulness and beauty of that stanza: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:10). At any rate, they thought not of departure from Him, but waited for Him to conclude His discourses and His healings, and to dismiss them to their homes. This attentiveness on the part of the simple peasantry of Northern Galilee to His heavenly message was surely gratifying to the soul of the Great Teacher, burning in His zeal that they might "hear," and their souls live. He beheld a great company round Him, imbued to a degree with that fine spirit of the patriarch who said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). But the Lord Jesus, while joying to serve them with the wonders of divine mercy and truth, marked their physical faintness. The bodily exertions of bringing their numerous invalids to the Great Physician, their excited joy at the recoveries, and the mental strain of attention to the prolonged discourses had a reactionary effect upon the physical condition of the great crowd. This weakness the Lord saw and pitied, for He who healed their diseases and forgave their sins knew their frame also, and remembered that they were dust. Was He not among them as the Servant of

Jehovah, who was a God full of compassion and gracious (Psalms 111:4)? Nay, was He not Himself Jehovah, gracious and full of compassion? (Psalms 113:4;Psalms 145:8). According to the multitude of His mercies, therefore, His heart yearned over their frailty, and He purposed in Himself to satisfy their mouth with good things and renew their strength for their journey home. The people were weary with listening, and foodless; but was not the Lord Himself weary with speaking and serving them throughout those three days? The Blessed Master, however, had come not to be ministered unto but to minister. He was most truly that Servant raised up to Israel "like unto Moses," to whom the people in the wilderness came daily with their problems, and "stood by him from morning unto evening"? But in Galilee there was no Jethro to remonstrate with Jesus, and in love, if not in intelligence, to warn Him: "Thou wilt surely wear away . . . this thing is too heavy for thee" (Exodus 18:18). Consumed with zeal for the Father's will, the Lord was the Ideal Servant of God, flawless in perfection and glory. Paul spoke truly of his own ministry in the gospel carried on "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:27); but in all these respects he was but an imperfect imitator of the self-denying service of Christ, sustained in his devotion, however, like Him, by that secret food of which the world knows not (John 4:31-34). The Lord's Call for

Co-workers The Lord then beheld this great company of famished men, women and children, with a full knowledge of the physical infirmities, the mental anxieties, and the spiritual cravings that brought them to His feet, of their reception of His ministry during the three days, and of the extent of the journey home. In the spontaneity of His love for them, His heart overflowed with compassion, and He who looked in vain for some to take pity upon Himself in His sufferings sought to awaken the sympathy of His disciples in the needy condition of this people. The Lord called His disciples to Him, and spoke to them, for He would not have them see their brethren in need, and, shut up the "bowels of their compassion" against them, as if the love of God did not dwell in their hearts. He said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their homes they will faint by the way; and some of them are come from far." But there was no sympathetic response on the part of the disciples. They, under the influence of Jewish prejudice possibly, expressed no pity for the people, and offered no suggestion for their help. Could the memory of the Lord’s former goodness in feeding the seven thousand under similar circumstances have altogether gone from them? It would seem so. Helpless themselves, they utterly failed to realize what an inexhaustible fund of help there was in the Saviour. The disciples had yet much to learn. When the Great Shepherd of the sheep was brought again from the dead, then they, as under-shepherds, would be responsible to "feed the assembly of God which he purchased with his own blood." Then the same voice would come to them with a new significance, "Give ye them to eat," and then they would not fail in the exercise of the ministry allotted to them. The Lord had said to the disciples, "I would not send them away fasting" (Matthew 15:32), but they reply, "Whence shall one be able to satisfy these men with bread here in a desert place?" Foolish forgetfulness and unbelief! Whence was food given for the tribes of Israel in the deserts of Sinai? whence was it supplied to a similar company only a few weeks earlier, and not so many miles away? They themselves had wrought many mighty works in the name of the Lord (Mark 6:13), but while they must have known that divine power had been exercised in other circumstances, they failed to remember that divine power might be applied in this instance, and their captious words were not like the words of apostles. Even Satan knew that the Lord had but to command it, and the very stones would become bread. The King Serving at His Table The Lord thereupon called upon the disciples to mobilize their resources, saying to them, "How many loaves have ye?" He was about to illustrate before their eyes His own adage, "To him that hath shall be given." They answer, Seven. And these loaves the Lord took as a nucleus of the food-supply for the people. He did not as of old call down bread out of heaven, but He made use of what came out of the earth (Job 28:5). To this fruit of human toil, already multiplied from the bare grain, He gave a further increase.

After Himself commanding the people to sit down on the ground (on the previous occasion the disciples were told to do this) the Lord took the loaves in His hands, and in consequence all eyes would be fastened upon Him. All the people would know that their food was coming to them from His hand. Would David’s song of praise have occurred to any of them? "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom . . . The LORD upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalms 145:13-16; also Psalms 104:27).

While the eyes of the multitude were waiting upon the Lord, they could but observe that His eyes were upturned to heaven, as He gave thanks. Had He not taught His disciples to pray to their Father in heaven, and in addition to petitions of a spiritual order to say, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Now He who had taught to pray for daily sustenance teaches by example to tender thanks for the same. The Lord who was the Guest of Simon the Pharisee and of Simon the leper and of many others, sometimes welcome, sometimes, alas! unwelcome, acted as Host on that day to the great assembly. He it was who broke the bread. The disciples, as stewards of His bounty, distributed from His hand the broken pieces to the multitude, who ate and were satisfied.

Besides the loaves, there were a few small fishes. These the Lord also took and blessed, and the disciples passed them to the people. Thus He provided bread and fish for their repast, as after His resurrection He did for the seven apostles in Galilee (John 21:9). It was not then the day of the glory of the kingdom. When that day comes, He, as Melchidezek, will dispense bread andwineto the men of faith. When the ark is brought to its final resting-place in Mount Zion, the Lord will re-enact, but far exceed the bounty of David, who gave "to the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine" (2 Samuel 6:17-19). But the joy of full victory over the sin of the world was still future; hence the Lord said to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). He also said, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come and serve them" (Luke 12:37). The Riches of the Lord’s Goodness The word "riches" conveys the idea of an excess of supplies beyond the bare necessity. The rich man of the parable, for instance, required. larger barns wherein to store the goods not immediately in demand for passing needs. As applied to men and to their actions and possessions, riches must be understood in its limited sense, and but seldom in a good sense. For the Lord said that only with great difficulty can those that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand the dealings and ways of God manward are ever characterized by richness and riches. Both His grace and His glory are revealed to men in their riches (Ephesians 1:7;Ephesians 3:16). And the Lord Christ in His unsearchable riches is rich unto all that call upon Him (Ephesians 3:8;Romans 10:12). Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and the free gifts of God are ever bestowed in overflowing profusion. That affluence which marks the act which is purely divine was witnessed by the crowds that day in Galilee. The beneficent Power that causes the sower’s grain to yield a hundredfold multiplied the seven loaves and the fishes until every one of the thousands present was satisfied, and even then there was abundance to spare. For "they did eat and were filled," and gathered up of the broken pieces sufficient to fill seven large hampers.*

{*In this instance the baskets were not the small wicker hand variety as on the previous occasion (kophinoi), but rope baskets or hampers, large enough to hold a man (spurides). In such a one Paul was lowered over the walls of Damascus to make his escape (Acts 9:25).} This miracle was a great and a special exhibition of the active love of God in a selfish world, and it would be worth while, in our private meditation, if we did not hurry past this beautiful picture of the grace of Christ who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. It was in the days of His "poverty," that our Lord gave these instances of divine compassion. He Himself, the Son of David, knew hunger outside the gates of royal Zion (Mark

11:12), and at Sychar weariness and thirst also (John 4:6-7), as well as in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). Humbled thus, bearing their infirmities and carrying their sorrows, He pitied the hungry and weary throng before Him on this occasion, while the people themselves found abundant grace in Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, to help in time of need.

There is none good save One, that is, God, said our Lord, and in the bountiful meal of His free provision, these Galileans beheld a vivid illustration of what the apostle in a striking verse calls the riches of the goodness of God. Appealing to those who neglect such evidences, Paul inquires, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"? (Romans 2:4).

First The Kingdom, Then Perishing Bread In this incident we may observe that the Lord acted in harmony with His own previous teaching concerning the kingdom of God. He had publicly taught the supreme importance to men that they should in the formation and prosecution of their aims and plans place first the broad principles of the coming kingdom of the heavens. The dominating love of God in the heart, love for one’s enemies as well as for one’s neighbours, self-denial, secret prayer to the Father in heaven, and alms-giving purely done as in His sight — such qualities as these were pleasing to God rather than the all-absorbing pursuit of temporal benefits and possessions which is common to mankind. Having set in their true relative proportion eternal verities and physical necessities, the Lord declared to His hearers a new commandment, as it were, with promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these [temporal] things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord, then, as the Expounder of the polity of the new kingdom and as its anointed Administrator, was publicly pledged to redeem this promise to those who acknowledged Him to be the Teacher sent from God. This congregation of people had sought the face of the Lord that He might graciously remove the infirmities of their bodies and the ignorance of their hearts. In their zeal they continued with Him three days, beholding His marvellous works and hearing those heavenly precepts which were beautified with a grace unknown to those of Sinai. From one point of view the people might well be charged with imprudence for neglecting to provide themselves with food for the three days in the desert. But what had the Lord taught in respect to this matter? He had said, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." "Is not the life more than food? The birds of the air do not reap nor gather into barns: your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Be not anxious therefore. Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

Whether the people remembered these assurances by the Lord or not we do not know. But the Lord did not forget His own word. Waiting in His presence their stocks of food were exhausted; would He, who had publicly counselled them not to be anxious for the morrow, fail or forsake them in this extremity? On the contrary, having first loaded them with spiritual and physical benefits, He gave them bread to eat in the overflowing measure of the coming kingdom.

Comparison of the Two Food-miracles

There are many resemblances between the accounts given of the two food-miracles wrought in Galilee, but only such as might be expected to be found in records of two successive incidents so similar in their nature. There are, however, definite points of distinction between them, which should not escape us. The beauties of creation in many cases possess striking similarities, but

they are never found to be exact duplicates. For instance, the glories of two sunsets may be analogous in general character, but only the casual observer would pronounce them to be identical. Upon careful scrutiny, individual features of beauty are invariably discovered, as in all the works of God. In like manner, while there is given in the first two Gospels a double testimony to the divine beneficence, present in the person of the Servant of Jehovah, each miracle is represented with its own special characteristics. Some points in each record are placed side by side to facilitate the study of the two miracles in this respect.

Mark 6:34-44

1. The compassion of the Lord was moved towards the shepherdless multitude, and He taught them and healed their sick. The question of food arose at the close of the day's ministry.

2. The disciples take the initiative, and suggest the dismissal of the crowd, because of the lateness of the hour.

3. The Lord bids the disciples provide food, but they object on the score of cost and of the difficulty of purchase.

4. Five loaves and two fishes were brought to the Lord.

5. The company numbered five thousand men, besides women and children.

6. Twelve baskets of the broken pieces were collected after the meal.

7. The Lord sent away the disciples across the sea.

Mark 8:1-9

1. The compassion of the Lord was awakened after three days of service and healing, because He saw the people were hungry and weary.

2. The Lord draws the attention of the disciples to the condition of the people, and to the distance many are from home.

3. The disciples express no compassion, and although not asked to supply food mention the difficulty of purchase in the wilderness.

4. Seven loaves and a few small fishes were brought to the Lord.

5. The company numbered four thousand men, besides women and children.

6. Seven hampers of the broken pieces were collected after the meal.

7. The Lord went with His disciples across the sea.

These various points of difference are perhaps of a more suitable character for personal study than for general exposition, and only a few remarks upon them of a general nature are now offered. The predominating feature of the latter incident as compared with the former seems to be the Lord's sovereign compassion and mercy towards those who sought Him and continued with Him three days. As before, He made use of His disciples in dispensing His blessing to the crowd, but it was He who remarked their fainting condition and who arranged the details of the feast. The

occasion of the miracle as it is presented in the Gospel history is striking. The Lord, at this period of His ministry, was journeying in Galilee as an outcast, for Herod the Idumean king of that province had but recently beheaded John the Forerunner, and sought His life also (cp.Luke 13:31), while Pharisees and scribes had come down from Jerusalem seeking some ground, too, for His apprehension. But His hour was not yet come, and the Lord retired from this personal hatred which had not grown to its climax. Nevertheless, in face of this opposition of evil in the high places of earthly government and power, the Lord was still willing and ready to exhibit His rich stores of grace to the poor.

It is good for us to note the royal demeanour of the lowly Nazarene in these days of His humiliation. Though an exile from the throne of Zion, He scattered in profusion His regal gifts, recalling, by contrast, an Old Testament passage.

David, in hasty flight from Absalom, "hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness" at Mahanaim, was, with companions, made the honoured guest of the Gileadite and the Ammonite (2 Samuel 17:27-29). Then the Gentile strangers across the Jordan prepared a sumptuous feast for the outcast king of Israel, but in Decapolis David’s Son and Jehovah’s Servant, though possessing no more than a handful of loaves and fishes, spread therewith an ample table in the wilderness for the hungry crowd gathered to Him in those outskirts of the favoured land. In this impressive manner, the Anointed One offered Himself to the people as their Saviour King, proving Himself to be such to those who had eyes to see. For in this little picture of the personal government of the Messiah, it might be clearly seen that Jehovah was in the midst of the people as the Shepherd of Israel, seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and leading His flock into the "green pastures" in the spirit recorded in that ancient prophetic song of praise: "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Psalms 147:14).

Another feature of this miracle which may be remarked is the character of the multitude. The company on this occasion was not composed mainly of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to keep the passover (John 6:4-5), but of the poor populace from the Gentile borders of Northern Galilee. Nevertheless, the Lord displayed His transcendent grace to them as He had formerly done to those who were zealous and devout enough to journey up to Jerusalem to observe the feast. Thus His mercy is here seen to overleap the narrow boundaries of the law. And this overflow towards those not wholly of Israel was anticipated in the prophetic word, though this miracle was no more than a trickle, as it were, in comparison with the floods of blessing which are to be poured out upon the "pleasant land," and to extend even to the ends of the earth. This kind of open-hearted ministry towards all men by Jehovah’s Servant was particularly foretold by Isaiah, in language to which this incident is allusive. According to his prophecy, the Great Servant should not only raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel, but also be a light to the Gentiles. He whom man despised and the nation abhorred would cause the people to "feed in the ways and their pastures shall be in all high places." They should no more hunger or thirst. And in that reclaimed company the prophet in vision saw, as the Lord saw in Decapolis, those that came from far (Isaiah 49:1-26), for the gospel of the kingdom embraces the dispersed among the Gentiles.

Whether some such were actually among the assembly before the Lord that day in Galilee it is not stated, but He Himself noted that divers of them came from far (Mark 8:12). And as Peter declared in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the word of the promise was to the Jews and to their Children, and also

to them that are afar off (Acts 2:39). The provision of needful sustenance by divine power is a frequently recurring figure in Scripture, and one other instance may be cited in this connection. In one of the Apocalyptic visions, John saw a great company gathered out of all nations, clad in white robes, and bearing palms in their hands. They had come up out Of the great tribulation, and their robes had been made white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God in His temple, and they worship Him day and night. Immanuel is among them, and they hunger no more: for the Lamb in the midst of the throne feeds them and leads them into living fountains of water (Revelation 7:9-17). The following extract may help in the understanding of this passage, in its relation to the dispensational character of this Gospel:

"Power was not exercised [by our Lord] in the midst of manifest unbelief. This clearly marks out the position of Christ with regard to the people. He pursues His service, but He retires to God because of Israel’s unbelief: but it is to the God of all grace. There His heart found refuge till the great hour of atonement.

"It is on this account, as it appears to me, that we have the second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The Lord acts again in favour of Israel, no longer as administering Messianic power in the midst of the people (which was implied, as we have seen, in the number [of baskets] twelve), but in spite of His rejection by Israel, continuing to exercise His power in a divine manner and apart from man. The number seven* has always the force of superhuman perfection — that which is complete: this, however, applies to what is complete in the power of evil as well as good, when it is not human and subordinate to God. Here it is divine. It is that intervention of God which is unwearied, and which is according to His own power, which it is the principal object of the repetition of the miracle to display."*}

{*It may be remarked that [of units] seven is the highest prime, that is, indivisible, number; twelve, the most divisible there is.

{**Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby; Mark, in loco.}

05.44. The Grieved Servant of Jehovah

44. — The Grieved Servant of Jehovah

"And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why Both this generation seek a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and again entering intothe boatdeparted to the other side. And they forgot to take bread; and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned one with another, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus perceiving it saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces took ye up? And they say unto him, Seven. And he said unto them, Do ye not yet understand?" (Mark 8:11-21, R.V.). In this section the Evangelist shows how the Servant of the Lord was tried from "within and without." He was obstructed in His ministry (1) by the evil machinations of the leaders of the people and also (2) by the ignorant dullness of His immediate followers. The Pharisees who had recently criticised the Lord Jesus because they saw His disciples eat bread with unwashen hands (Mark 7:1-37) now came forth to oppose Him upon other grounds. On the earlier occasion they sought to invalidate His teaching, now their attempt was to detract from the value of His miraculous works of mercy and power. Accordingly they sought by cunning questioning to discredit the Lord before the eyes of the Galileans to whom He had given such cogent evidence that the kingdom of God was among them. Tempting Him, they asked for a sign from heaven, as if the fame of His many miracles had not previously spread throughout the province. The Lord’s works were not done in a corner. For instance, were there not at least five thousand witnesses to the second multiplication of the few loaves? And was not this sign, like all the Lord’s works, of a heavenly order? But these Pharisees had the will to doubt and disbelieve; otherwise the Lord might have said to them as He did to the messengers from John the Baptist, who asked Him, "Art thou He that should come?" The Lord’s answer to these men was, "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 unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be stumbled in me" (Matthew 11:2-6). The "honest and good heart" of John the prisoner was sincerely in doubt, and the Lord, though He did not work a fresh and special sign, sent to him the gracious reminder of the supernatural facts which none could deny, and which his messengers themselves witnessed (Luke 7:21-22). The Pharisees, however (who came with the Sadducees, as Matthew tells us) were hostile in intent: "They began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him." This request was made in shameless unbelief and hypocrisy on their part too, for in their heart of hearts these men knew that the Lord was "from above," and not "from beneath." Nicodemus confessed, being himself a Pharisee, "Rabbi, we

know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." The evidences of the heavenly mission of Christ were ample and indisputable, and open to the sight of all men. So manifest were they that Peter charged the Jews on the day of Pentecost with a full knowledge of His credentials. When the apostle declared: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22), not a single dissentient voice from the crowded audience was raised in protest. Indeed, during His ministry, the people said as they saw His wonderful works, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?" (John 7:31). And the Lord Himself, when surveying the whole course of His service said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24). The Pharisees wilfully ignored all this display of loving power, and their obduracy of heart, particularly noticeable as it was after the repeated miracle of the multiplied loaves, was characteristic of the nation as a whole from the day when Jehovah brought them out of the land of Egypt. Then "they remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered from the enemy; how he had wrought his signs in Egypt and his wonders in the land of Zoan" (Psalms 78:42-43;Psalms 106:7; Psalms 106:13; Psalms 106:21). The hardness and insensibility of their hearts to God’s marvellous mercies which all the Old Testament prophets charged upon them, were still unchanged, even when Messiah Himself was in their midst. A Sign from Heaven This occasion was not the only one on which the Pharisees sought from the Lord a sign from heaven. The first occasion was a plain indication that the nation would eventually reject their Messiah (Matthew 12:38;Luke 11:16), and the Lord thereupon began in public to teach by parables that the kingdom of heaven would assume a new form. But on both the former and the latter occasions, the request of the Jewish teachers was a tacit denial that the Lord’s miracles were signs from heaven, implying at the same time that His marvellous energy was Satanic in origin, as if He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. For if the miracles were not from "above," they must have been from "beneath." This foul aspersion arose from a gross form of wilful unbelief in the Messianic miracles, wonders and signs, but, in point of fact, the Lord Himself, apart from His works, was a sign from above to the people. He was the Second Man, "the Lord from heaven," come to them as Immanuel, according to the prophecy of Isaiah: To the house of David, Jehovah had said, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Hence the Incarnate Babe was the sign of the introduction of the promised gospel. This sign-character was mentioned expressly by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds of Bethlehem "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).* Further, Simeon alluded to this same characteristic of the Heavenly Babe, saying, as he blessed Joseph and Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

{*The Revised Version makes the sense and the prophetic connection clear: "This shall be the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe." The allusion is to the definite promise of a sign made by the prophet, and that the sign should be a babe. Compare the instances when the prophet Ezekiel was a personal sign (Ezekiel 12:6; Ezekiel 24:24-27).}

Looking ahead also to the future Advent there will be appointed premonitions from above. The second coming of Christ in power and glory for the redemption of Israel is to be heralded by the sign of the Son of man in heaven. This we learn from the prophetic discourse of our Lord to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. In reply to their query, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" He said, after naming certain coming events, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). The Sign of the Son of Man

Mark preserves for our adoring contemplation a record of the profound emotion of the Master at this display of unbelief and malice on the part of the Pharisees and Sadducees. "He sighed deeply in his spirit." There was no expression of wrath nor of a desire for vengeance, but we are permitted to know how keenly He was affected by the evil purpose of those who "lay in wait for His soul." "His heart was wounded within Him." As Jehovah's righteous Servant, He bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of His people in loving sympathy, but this oppressive burden of griefs was augmented by the plottings of those who had become His enemies, and whose secret thoughts stood revealed before His holy eyes; and He "groaned upward" at the sight. The Lord was the Great Prophet sent with a message of deliverance for the enslaved people of God, and their obstinate refusal to hearken to the pleadings of His love begat sorrows within Him too deep, as it were, for utterance then. Later this inward sorrow found articulation, and His weeping lamentation over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) expressed the spirit of the Psalmist who said, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psalms 119:136). The faithful servants of Jehovah in a former day of apostasy were distinguished by their grief over the waywardness of their people: they were marked off as those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations in the midst of Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 9:4). Here in this Gospel, by this unique phrase, the veil over the inner feelings of the Master is lifted for a brief moment that we may catch a glimpse of His loyal zeal for God and His passionate yearning over the guilty people. The heart ever sighing over Israel's perversity was always before the eyes of Jehovah, and gave cause for His unbroken complacency in that elect Servant in whom His soul delighted.

It is a profitable reflection that our Lord had a perfect knowledge of the value of His own service as well as of the depravity of those opposing Him. Without thinking of Himself more highly than He ought to think, He accurately appraised the character of His labours among them. His "judgment was just," and He knew that His own works were such as man never did before, and also that His words perfectly presented the ineffable love of the Father to man as well as the earthly things of the kingdom. But He also saw with equal vividness that His unremitting service, His self-consuming zeal, His absolute surrender to the interests of His mission were barren in result. His enemies, tempting Him, ask to be shown a sign from heaven, while His friends and followers are blind and deaf to the true significance of His ministry. The great impulses of His loving heart towards the sons of men were thus doubly resisted and thrown back upon Himself. The joy of the Shepherd in rescuing His flock was denied Him. He could adopt the language in the prophecy: "All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21;Isaiah 65:2). Accordingly, we read that at this juncture the Man of sorrows sighed deeply in His Spirit. The Spirit of Christ

There are three recorded occasions on which the Spirit of Christ was perturbed. In each case human sin was the agitating cause, and in these instances He was confronted with its grievous

effects; (1) upon the nation, (2) upon the family of Bethany, and (3) upon one of the apostolic band.

(1) The first instance is given in this section of Mark. Sin wrought so effectually in the midst of the chosen nation that its religious leaders refused to own the signs of His prophetic calling, and in malicious unbelief sought from Him a sign from heaven. He "sighed deeply in his spirit" at this unbelief.

(2) Sin wrought in the midst of the pious family of Bethany, where the Messiah was wont to turn aside to rest for a while, and where He was welcomed and honoured. Death removed Lazarus, and plunged the sisters into sorrow. Coming with the bereaved to the sepulchre, the Lord groaned in spirit at their grief (John 11:33).

(3) Sin wrought in the midst of the chosen twelve, and one of them became a tool of Satan for the betrayal of his Master. On the night of the last Supper, the Lord expressed to His disciples His knowledge that the doer of this infamous deed was even then among them. He "was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). One of you — one of my familiar friends — one of the holy circle (cp. Psalms 41:9; Psalms 55:12-14): this troubled His spirit.

These instances in some respects differ from each other, but their common origin may be traced back to the presence and action of sin in the world. Sin was always grievous and saddening in the eyes of the Lord, but these cases of its evil effects were the more deplorable because they occurred in a select circle, as it were,i.e.,in the elect nation, in the godly household, in the apostolic band. The pure and holy spirit must always be shocked in the presence of the horrid fruits of sin. It was so with the Lord: and it is a test of His followers, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). No Sign to be Given In reply to the Pharisees, the Lord said, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" They were then in Magdala, and it was in this very locality that the Lord wrought His marvellous cure upon Mary the Magdalene out of whom He cast seven demons (Mark 16:9). What greater testimony could there be Of the presence of the Mighty One subduing the power of the Evil One? Was not this the sign from heaven? But the blind Pharisees attributed all such signs of the Lord to the energy of Beelzebub, and not to Him as the Messianic Servant anointed by the Spirit of God.

It is noticeable how the Lord in declining to yield to the provocative request of His opponents speaks with the dignity and authority of His own right: "Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." This language is not that of a delegate, even though commissioned from on high. The introductory formula of the Old Testament prophets was, "Thus saith the Lord" but the Lord Jesus replied to these Pharisees who despised both His words and His works in His own name: "Verily I say unto you In truth, the Godhead was there amongst them in the Person of their Messiah in humble guise, and no more transcendent sign than this could be given them. The Lord therefore refused any further sign to that guilty generation which notoriously killed the prophets sent unto it. The Stone of Israel had been laid in Zion. If the nation stumbled upon it and rejected it, all hope must be abandoned. God anyhow would exalt that Stone, and it would eventually fall upon the wicked builders in Zion and grind them to powder. Thus the humbled Christ was the final test to Israel upon the ground of law, and no other Saviour-Prince but He would be offered to them. In seeking a sign the Pharisees were governed by an evil motive. It was

altogether otherwise with John the Baptist. To him, as the Forerunner, a special sign from heaven was appointed for the identification of the Messiah. His own testimony on this head was that he saw the Holy Spirit like a dove descending from heaven, and it rested upon the baptized Jesus. And this public anointing constituted to him the promised assurance that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:32-34). John’s mission was to prepare the way of the Lord before Him, and the sign from heaven given at the Jordan indicated that the Deliverer had come to Israel, and that his own service, as the voice of the Forerunner crying in the wilderness was accomplished.

John the Baptist was a Nazarite devoted to the will of God, but the Jews were a wicked and adulterous generation, and their determined will was to disbelieve and resist the gospel. These Pharisees in Dalmanutha were imbued with the same spirit as those which afterwards cried, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe" (Matthew 27:42). Had a sign been given they had no intention of believing. They were tempting the Lord to yield to them, as they did at other times (Matthew 12:38;John 2:18;John 6:30). Their request was modelled upon that of Satan in the wilderness, who said to the Lord, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:3). The Lord, therefore declined to accede to their request, and told these adversaries, that no sign would be given to them, except (as Matthew adds) the sign of the prophet Jonah. That prophet of Galilee, after being three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, preached to the Ninevites their imminent doom, and they repented at his preaching. The Son of man would lie three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40), and if the men of Israel, even after the sin of crucifixion, would repent at the preaching of His apostles, God would send again to them His Servant Jesus, whom they had crucified, that He might restore all things (see Peter’s address,Acts 3:19-20). But as the people refused the sign of a humbled Messiah in His life, so they rejected the sign of His crucifixion and death. To them, a veil being upon their hearts, He was a stumbling block, and the apostle so described their state, when writing to the Corinthians: "Jews ask for signs and Gentiles seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:22-23). But those who reject the signs of truth are open to receive the signs of error. The studied resistance of the Jews to their Deliverer who came to them as the Virgin’s Child, and who like the prophet of Galilee lay three days and nights in the heart of the earth will duly receive in the governmental dealings of God its meet and merited punishment. The generation, not yet passed away, who refused the appointed signs of the Holy and the True will be blinded to accept the signs of the Evil and the False. For when Antichrist comes he will show signs ostensibly from heaven in imitation of those the Christ did, and men will believe the lie. Paul declares that the coming of this Lawless One will be "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The apostle John prophesies in like terms concerning the False Lamb who is yet to appear. Speaking in the predictive present, he says, concerning the Antichrist, that "he doeth great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell upon the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast" (Revelation 13:13-14). The Danger of Leaven in the Kingdom The Lord thereupon turned away from the representatives of the "wicked and adulterous generation," and left them (solemn action!) in their obstinate unbelief, crossing again the Sea of Galilee. He then uttered one of His profound sayings to the apostles, bidding them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod." If the King was rejected, what would befall the kingdom? The influence of the Pharisees and of Herod aroused violent and insidious

opposition to the spread of the ministry of Christ Himself; what a powerful and inimical influence would they not subsequently exercise upon the ministry of His servants? He bade them beware of these corrupting influences.

Looking back, the disciples might have remembered that before leaving the opposite shores they witnessed an example of the power of Pharisaism to befog the heart and prevent the acceptance of the Lord whom they loved and revered as the Messiah of Israel. Looking still further back, they might have recollected that terrible exhibition of the power of Herod when John, the prophet and forerunner, was murdered in circumstances of horrible barbarity. These forces of religious hypocrisy and of civil government at work in these typical instances were proved to be alike antagonistic to the progress of the truth, and the Lord had turned away in avoidance of both. For the future guidance of His followers, the Lord now warned them against these sources of contamination and corruption. The time had come when the children of the kingdom must break away from those who professed to be teachers of the law and who sat in Moses' seat. The Pharisees were unreal pietists, and, the Herodians were political time-servers. It behoved the disciples in the exercise of such power and authority as the Lord had given them as His apostles to take heed lest empty-formalism and the fear of or undue subservience to worldly power should enter and vitiate the kingdom of God. Love of self and love of the world would, if allowed, work insidiously, like leaven, to the corruption of the followers of Christ, as it had already done in the Jewish nation. The warning of the Lord was uttered with a full knowledge of the coming menace, and, we find, historically, that evil afterwards crept into the churches of Galatia and Corinth, and is alluded to under this figure of leaven (Galatians 5:9;1 Corinthians 5:7-8). When the Lord was with His disciples it was, as it were, the days of unleavened bread, for He Himself was the Bread of God come down from heaven to give life to the world. But in the succession of Jewish feasts, the feast of wave-loaves followed that of the unleavened bread and the first fruits, and it was provided from the time of institution that the two wave-loaves should be baked with leaven (Leviticus 23:17). So the results of the public and united testimony of the Lord's followers, which would immediately succeed His own pure and untainted witness, would be leavened in character; and counselling them in view of His own absence, and of the coming dangers of corrupting influences, He bade them "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod."

Dullness of Hearing But the disciples did not apprehend the meaning of these cautionary words of our Lord. They did not, in the scriptural sense, "hear His word," and therefore they did not understand His phraseology (John 8:43). "Leaven" was the key-word to help them to the true explanation of the utterance, but, forgetting that their Master's kingdom was not of this world, they assigned to the word a physical not a spiritual significance: an error similar to that made by Nicodemus in a different connection (John 3:4). The disciples could think only of their own negligence in stocking the food-baskets of the company. Their hearts had not yet grasped the inner purpose of His teaching, and, therefore, His figurative expression concerning leaven was of the nature of a parable to them. It was a "hard word" to them (cp.John 6:60, New Tr.). "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread."

Why were they so dull? Truly the words of the Lord were spirit and life, while the Great Teacher was skilful and wise in utterance, and spoke to the disciples as they were "able to hear" (Mark 4:33). They however failed to use rightly those "ears to hear" which they possessed as those born anew for the kingdom. They were engrossed with earthly or secondary matters, and missed the

heavenly harmonies of His words. When the Lord warned against certain sources of leaven, their thoughts at once flew to food for the body. They had had but one loaf with them in the boat, and their conscience charged them with negligence in providing an adequate supply on reaching the other side (Matthew 16:5). No doubt they were the more concerned when they recalled the previous poverty of their stock on each occasion when the Lord inquired on behalf of the hungry multitude. But if it was a good thing for the disciples to recall their former failures, it would have been better still for them to have remembered the Lord's teaching. For He had already in one of the parables which He specially explained to them, associated leaven with the kingdom of the heavens, and showed how its surreptitious introduction resulted in the leavening of the whole mass (Matthew 13:33). The three measures of meal affected as a whole by the foreign element brought into it was set forth as a figure of the new religious organization which was about to be established in the place of Judaism. The Lord taught thereby that the kingdom in its coming phase was not the ideal one. When the great city, the holy Jerusalem, shall have come down out of heaven from God, and become the seat of government in the earth for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, the kingdom will then assume its incorruptible form, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27). But until the dawning of that day of glory, the kingdom of God in the earth will not be homogeneous:, but leavened by the presence of evil.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the leaven was the work of the enemies not of the faithful friends of the kingdom. Indeed, the faithful in the midst of a tainted assembly were held responsible for its presence, and exhorted to purge out the old leaven, and to "keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Seeing, then, that our Lord had delivered this parable of the leavened meal in the course of His public ministry, and interpreted its significance to the disciples privately (Mark 4:34), they possessed a key to the meaning of His words on this occasion. But as they had forgotten the first miracle of the loaves when the necessity for a second arose, so they forgot the parable of the leaven when the Lord used the figure to warn them against the evil influences of the spirit of Pharisaism and(Herodianism — of insidious corruption, religious and political. The Seven-Fold Interrogatory The Lord corrected His disciples by a series of questions which gave them the opportunity for self-conviction and self-condemnation. The gentle and forbearing manner in which He dealt with them is instructive too. We see in the Prophetic Servant a perfect exemplification of those qualities afterwards enjoined by the apostle Paul upon his dear son Timothy: "the servant of the Lord must not strive: but he must be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, forbearing, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24).

Let us proceed to inquire what was the cause of the erroneous thoughts of the disciples, and why they failed to profit by the Lord's teaching. It was needful for them that the true source of their dullness should be exposed, in order that their eventual spiritual progress might be secured. The stumbling-block to their understanding could not lie in the matter nor in the manner of the Lord's instruction; for, with regard to the subject of His teaching, He taught them such things as they were able to bear (Mark 4:33;John 16:12), and, with regard to His method of teaching, His representation of His subject to His hearers could not but be perfect: "as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). The fault and the failure to apprehend the meaning of the

Lord’s words therefore lay with the apostles themselves. They failed most of all in that they were not sufficiently appreciative of the incomparable worth of the One who was their Instructor, in whom were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It was then, though they did not fully realize it, the day of their visitation. The Dayspring from on high was with them, but they did not set such store by His presence as they might have done. They slighted the Lord’s testimonies, they disobeyed His precepts, and they forgot His wonderful works. The nature of the Lord’s questions seems to imply that they were guilty of neglect, and that this was the real cause of their want of progress in divine things. The skilful Physician of their souls by this exposure laid before them the inward cause of their weakness and spiritual backwardness. If they confessed their errors, as they were given opportunity to do, they would be forgiven and cleansed from their secret faults. For it is written, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). To bring before the disciples the truth concerning their hearts the Lord made use of the interrogative method, and His questions imply censure. It was by a similar but more extended "cross-examination" that Job’s self-conceit was broken down. Jehovah’s series of questions to the patriarch from the whirlwind is recorded in four lengthy chapters (Job 38:1-41, Job 39:1-30, Job 40:1-24, Job 41:1-34), and, in result, Job confessed, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

We may observe a sevenfold succession in the questions put by our Lord to the disciples. They all imply condemnation, and "work wedge-like to the proof." The series may be set out in the following order, and the implied charge is suggested for consideration in each case.

(1) Why reason ye because ye have no bread? implying a lack of confidence in the Lord on the part of the apostles.

(2) Do ye not yet perceive(vow)?implying lack of observation during their recent experiences.

(3) Do ye not yet understand(suniemi)?implying an absence of due reflection upon the Lord’s words and acts.

(4) Have ye your heart hardened? implying a lack of sensitiveness to divine things.

(5) Having eyes, see ye not? implying the non-use of their spiritual faculties in relation to the Lord’s doings.

(6) Having ears, hear ye not? implying the non-use of their spiritual faculties upon the Lord’s words.

(7) Do ye not yet remember? implying a lack of spiritual intelligence, and specifying their forgetfulness of the two recent food-miracles, especially of the bountiful supply of broken pieces over and above the amount required. This series of seven is followed by another question, which is separately introduced in the narrative, viz., Do ye not yet understand(suniemi)? This is in a sense a summary of the foregoing series, and it will be considered in its due order.

While considering this display of the dullness of the disciples, it is well to recall that there were many matters which The apostles were incompetent to understand until the Lord was glorified, and the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them at Pentecost (cp. Luke 18:34; John 12:16). But their incapacity in some respects did not exonerate them from their slackness in others. And the Lord dealt with their responsibility to make good use of their exceptional privileges as special

eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of His ministry as the Great Prophet of the kingdom of God. They were apostles; should not they, as such, display some intelligence of their Master's ways? It was written in the law concerning the whole nation: "there is none that understandeth" (Romans 3:11). If the same indictment was true in any degree of the twelve, after their special opportunities, were they not the more blameworthy?

Let us now briefly consider these several points raised by our Lord with His disciples in this series of questions (Mark 8:17-21).

(1)Lack of confidence in the Master.— The Lord's first inquiry was, "Why reason ye because ye have no loaf?" The disciples had been discussing among themselves the meaning of the Lord's remark concerning the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Not understanding the figurative significance of the allusion, all or some of them (for it was a matter of discussion, and they may not have been unanimous) concluded that the Lord's reference was to their lack of bread for food. Uncertain of their interpretation, they sought enlightenment one from another, although the Source of all wisdom was in their midst. That they turned to one another for help was evidence that they lacked confidence in the love and sympathy of Christ for them. Otherwise, would they not have appealed direct to Him, owning their dullness, and seeking to be instructed? They, however, reasoned and questioned and debated and argued one with another. The Divine Teacher was with them, and the promise was even then good: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5). But the disciples did not ask, and therefore they did not receive. On the contrary, the Lord had to inquire of them, Why do ye debate the question? He who opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45) could He not open their minds to understand the things of the kingdom?

(2)Lack of perception. TheLord said, "Do ye not perceive (noeo)"? This verb implies the giving of earnest attention to what is passing so that the event is impressed upon the mind. Its sense is stated to be "to weigh with intelligence, so as to understand." Levity and unconcern would hinder and even prevent perception. An instance of its use in the sense stated occurs in connection with the prophecy concerning the future days when the abomination of desolation will be set up in the holy place. Whoever reads Daniel's prophecy, quoted by our Lord, is exhorted to "understand, or perceive,"i.e.,to ponder, to consider seriously, to heed the prophecy (Matthew 24:15;Mark 13:14). Again, the apostle Paul states that the invisible things of God are "perceived" from the world's creation (Romans 1:20). Due perception therefore of the Lord's teaching is the result of studied attention with the heart. Had the disciples been attentive to the Master's service? If so, why was it that after His ministry had been exercised in their view for some two years so little impression had been made upon their minds? Their education and training to become able ministers of the new covenant by actual experience of the Lord's ways of working and teaching was being frustrated by their own lack of interest. Spiritual progress cannot be attained by mere outward contact with the workings of divine power and mercy. The doings of the Lord must be weighed and considered seriously. "Consider (noeo) what I say," Paul said to Timothy, "and the Lord give thee understanding(sunesin)in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7). In a like strain the Psalmist sang of what will be true in the coming kingdom, "All men shall fear, and they shall declare the work of God for they shall wisely consider of his doing" (Psalms 64:9).

(3) Lack of reflection. Spiritual perception is followed by spiritual understanding. The disciples first failed to receive and retain accurate impressions of the many acts of our Lord's power, wisdom, and grace, and they further failed to meditate upon the significance of the abundance and repetition of His works, and their superhuman nature. They had seen miracles of healing, the exercise of the power of Christ over the forces of nature, over the spirit-world, over death itself. They had heard the expositions of kingdom-truth, introducing what was altogether brighter and better than the law. But the apostles were not yet wise. "Whoso is wise shall give heed to those things, and they shall consider the mercies of the LORD" (Psalms 107:43).

Understanding is of the heart (Matthew 13:15). It was in her heart that Mary kept the deep sayings about the Christ, and in secret she kept pondering them that she might eventually understand (Luke 2:19; Luke 2:51). The next question bears upon the right heart-attitude of a learner in divine truth.

(4) Lack of sensibility of heart. — "Have ye your heart hardened?" Hardness or callousness of heart was attributed to the Pharisees (Mark 3:5). But it is also used with reference to the disciples. And in this case we notice that the term is associated (a) with failure to perceive spiritual truth, and (b) with the first food-miracle. In that connection we read in an earlier passage that they perceived not concerning the loaves, and that their heart was hardened (Mark 6:52). The amazement of the apostles at the stilling of the storm was was because they understood (suniemi) not the miracle of the loaves, their hearts being dull and insensible in both instances.

It is most important to see that want of spiritual perception is the result of deadness of feeling in the heart. And from the questions which follow we see that spiritual sight, hearing and memory are all affected by grossness of heart. In commissioning the prophet Ezekiel to be His messenger to the house of Israel, Jehovah said to him, "All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears" (Ezekiel 3:10).

(5) Lack of visual activity. — "Having eyes, see ye not?" The disciples are clearly credited with the possession of spiritual vision. Their eyes were gifted to see what the world could not. It is ever so with men of faith. Aged Simeon saw in the Holy Babe whom he took in his arms what the priests of the temple did not see. He discerned in the Infant the Lord's Christ, the salvation of Jehovah (Luke 2:26; Luke 2:29). The eyes of faith, when in exercise, behold what is unseen and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

These eyes are not our mental faculties, but the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:18, R.V.). They are associated with the emotions rather than the intellect, and are inseparable from inward affection and loyal devotion. They are the eyes which see in the Christ of the Gospels a supreme Person for our worship and service. The apostles undervalued the ministry of Christ because they undervalued Christ Himself. A follower of the Lord may fall into the same weakness still if the eye be not single for the Master. He loses the vision of his soul, and becomes guilty of the blindness of Laodicea (Revelation 17:1-18). Having eyes, let us therefore, turn them in the right direction, and sec Jesus, crowned and glorified.

(6)Lack of aural attention.— "And having ears, hear ye not?" It was an essential qualification of the apostles' service that therein they declared what they had seen and heard. So John wrote in his First Epistle: "that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with

our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). Paul's instructions were to the same effect (Acts 22:14-15). The Lord's question thus revealed a serious defect in the conduct of the disciples; having ears, they did not hear. Those who turn away their ears from the truth are false and evil teachers (2 Timothy 4:4). There is a proper attitude in which to hear rightly, but they had neglected the Lord's warning, "Take heed how ye hear." They should have listened attentively. Marychosethe good part of sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word. She had "ears to hear," and she used them well. It is not sufficient to be in possession of ears, they must be exercised. Hence the recurring exhortation to each of the seven churches of Asia was, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear" (Revelation 2:3). But the disciples had become "dull of hearing," like some of the Hebrew Christians, and therefore the saying of the Lord was hard of interpretation to them (cp.Hebrews 5:2, R.V.).

(7)Lack of recollection.— "Do ye not remember?" and then the Lord cited the two miracles of the loaves. The things which are behind, which relate to our former measure of attainment in the Christian life, we may usefully forget (Php 3:13). But the memory of the great goodness of the Lord should be ever with us to incite us to continuous praise (Psalms 145:7). The recollection of the Lord's ways with us in the past gives us guidance for the present. When we remember the food-miracles of yesterday we do not fear a famine today or tomorrow. A vivid and accurate memory is a great factor of the spiritual life. The importance of an active remembrance of divine things is emphasized by Peter, who makes four references to the subject in his Second Epistle (2 Peter 1:12-13; 2 Peter 1:15;2 Peter 3:1). In thus exhorting others, did he recall his own experience, when the remembrance of the warning words of the Lord caused him to repent of his shameful denial of his Master? (Matthew 26:75;Luke 22:61). The Lord's Supper is an act appointed to perpetuate the remembrance of the death of Christ by the church. Two Psalms (Psalms 38:1-22andPsalms 70:1-5) were specially written "to bring to remembrance"; and the recollection of the marvellous works of the Lord is stated many times in the Psalms to be the basis 0f confidence and trust in God. To the assembly at Sardis, the Lord sent the solemn warning, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard" (Revelation 3:3). In this instance in Mark, when the disciples were thinking that the Lord was chiding them for the shortage of their food-store, He reminded them of His double miracle so recently worked, and the number of baskets of broken pieces they were able to collect owing to His overflowing bounty. Might He not well say, O ye of little faith, do ye not remember? The Final Question When the Lord definitely inquired concerning the, miracles of the loaves, their memories were refreshed. They could reply accurately when He asked the number of baskets of fragments they had taken up. Whereupon the Lord put the question which was a repetition and a summary of the preceding ones: "and he kept saying to them, Do ye not yet understand; Mark 8:21)?" The question embodied a charge of reprehensible dullness How could they think that the Lord feared that He might have to make use of the bread of the Pharisees? Matthew, who does not record the sevenfold series, states the final question in a fuller form, "How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:2). Did they suppose that the Lord who had taught them not to be anxious about what they should eat and drink was Himself anxious lest He and His disciples should be compelled to eat the bread of the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

We also learn from the same Evangelist that after these words light dawned on the hearts of the disciples: "Then understood (suniemi) they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12). Their rabbis had leavened the holy bread of the law as it was given originally by the introduction of the leaven of the precepts of men (Mark 7:7). Their teaching was permeated by the traditions of the elders, and thus the unleavened bread of the scripture was spoiled for the children of the kingdom by the leaven of hypocrisy and formalism, making the word of God of none effect, as it did, by their tradition.

05.45. Dim Vision Made Clear

45. — Dim Vision Made Clear

"And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him. And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Do not even enter into the village"* (Mark 8:22-26, R.V.).

{*The additional injunction appearing in the A.V. — "nor tell it to any in the town" — is maintained by many scholars, though omitted in the R.V.} In the course of His tour, the Lord and His party of followers reached Bethsaida. This appears to have been the town or village known as Bethsaida Julias, situated on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near to which the first miracle of the multiplied bread was wrought. Here the Lord opened the eyes of a blind man in private, as Mark only records. A notable feature of this miracle is the gradual manner in which the sight was restored. He received first the faculty of sight, and secondly the ability to use the newly-given sight. The physical benefit granted to the sufferer affords an illustration of spiritual facts wrought by the power of Christ in the kingdom of God. Since man is blind by nature, and also blinded by wilful works of evil, he requires inward eyesight of heart and soul, and moreover that his newly-given eyes should be able to perceive the glory of Christ’s person and the truth of His teaching. This dual blessing, both in the physical and in the spiritual sense, was sometimes conferred by a single act of the Lord’s power, but in this instance of miraculous healing successive stages are displayed. First, the power of vision was bestowed, and then the power of perception.

While those totally bereft of natural sight were figurative of the spiritual state of the nation at large, the man with partially restored sight illustrated the spiritual condition of those who so imperfectly apprehended the truths of the kingdom which the Lord was proclaiming. They represented the believing remnant of Israel as distinct from the mass. Truly they had come out to the Messiah, but they were in a transitional state until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, and by Him they were guided into all truth. Then they saw the King in His beauty, and the "land that is very far off" (Isaiah 33:17). Then their eyes were fully opened, and they beheld wondrous things out of Jehovah’s law (Psalms 119:18). Previously, when Jesus came to them across the waves for their deliverance in the storm, they supposed He was a spectre. And as they failed to recognize Jesus as their Deliverer, so they afterwards failed to recognize Him as the King of kings. For when the three apostles in the holy mount saw their Master transfigured before their eyes, Peter with a confused judgment assigned Him no higher place than he did Moses and Elijah. A unique panorama of heavenly deeds was daily moving before the gaze of these privileged men, but none of the apostles rightly discerned the wonder of Messiah and His ways. The Lord Himself said to His disciples privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not;

and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24). But to those thus blessed He also said reprovingly, "Having eyes, see ye not? Having ears, hear ye not?" A Sign Wrought in Secret This miracle along with that of the healing of the deaf stammerer in the same neighbourhood, form companion pictures. They are both peculiar to the Second Gospel, and the figurative reference of both of them seems specially to be to the "little flock" of Israel who welcomed Jehovah's Righteous Servant, and who followed Him in His services, while the great majority of the nation refused His gracious overtures, and, in consequence, perished in their unbelief. Some remarks upon the analogies of the two incidents have been offered in connection with that section (Mark 7:31-37), to which the reader may refer (supra,pp. 73-75; 88-91).

It cannot but be noted in these verses with what scrupulous care the Holy Spirit records in detail the gentle and loving service rendered by the Son, who had become the Servant of God. The Lord assumed personal charge of the afflicted man. He took hold of him by the hand, and led him in his blindness and darkness away from the habitations of men. What did this action suggest? To those whose hearts were filled with the ancient prophecies, would it not recall Jehovah's promise to the nation: "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not: in paths that they know not will I lead them: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight" (Isaiah 42:16). The Lord then supplied moisture from His lips for the darkened eyes before Him, and laid His hands of beneficent power upon the blind man. Healing virtue was communicated, and the sightless orbs became sensitive to the light of heaven. Thereupon the Lord questioned him concerning the efficiency of his newly-given eyesight: "What dost thou see?" His organs of vision were made sound, but were they working in harmonious cooperation with their fellow-members? Along with ability to see, did he possess the faculty of perception, of discernment, of recognition? This the Lord tested by His question, "Seest thou anything?" The man's reply showed there was" still the incompetency of the inward eye. Images of outward objects were transmitted through the eyes, but the mind lacked the power of accurate perception and cognition. The man was able to see, but not to discriminate between the objects of sight. Looking up, he said to the Lord, "I now see the folk, because I see them walking as trees."* The light of his body — the eye — was no longer darkness (Luke 11:34), but its vision was obscured, veiled. There was new light for him, but it was the dawn, rather than the noonday.(cp. Judges 9:36).

{*The exact shade of the meaning of the original phrase here may be doubtful, but the general sense seems to be that given by Dr. G. Campbell, "I see men whom I distinguish from trees only by their walking" (The Four Gospels,by G. Campbell, 4th ed., 1813, vol. 2, p. 148). The rendering by Dr. Swete is "I see men, for I perceive objects like trees walking" (Gospel according to St.Mark,3rd ed., p. 174.)} The Lord, however, chased away these shadows by a second exercise of His healing functions. He again "laid his hands upon his eyes; and he (1) looked steadfastly, and (2) was restored, and (3) saw all things clearly." The threefold result of this second imposition as thus expressed was that the man (1) instantly gained clearness of vision (2) recovered normal eyesight, and (3) began and continued to see even distant objects clearly. As in some other cases of healing, we are told that the Lord imposed His commands upon the man before His departure. Men who received temporary benefit in recognition of their faith were required to exercise their faith yet further, and obey the Lord's directions in respect to their immediate movements. Like the sick of the palsy, and the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 2:11; Mark 5:19), the restored blind man was bidden to go to his own house, and moreover not even to enter the town of Bethsaida, from which

the Lord had led him.

What does this Miracle Teach? The miracle was performed privately, and the Lord’s expressed will was that it should be kept secret; clearly, therefore, it was not wrought for the wicked and unbelieving generation who had rejected his teaching. To them the Lord shortly before had said emphatically that no sign should be given: and the healed man was accordingly bidden not to advertise his cure, but to go straight home. But it may well be inquired whether this miracle has any significance beyond the evidence it affords of the inexhaustible love and compassion of the Lord and of His ready power and will to relieve the afflicted; and, if so, in what way it illustrates the general purpose or design in this part of the Gospel; further, if it was not for the people at large, whether it had any significant application to the followers of Christ.

Clearly, the prominent features of this case of healing are (1) that the man was taken apart by the Lord and healed in seclusion, and (2) that the process of the cure was not instantaneous but in stages. Now a close analogue to this sight-giving miracle will be found in the preparation of the disciples to receive and retain the Lord’s teaching, and by this means to become His competent witnesses in the world when He Himself was not bodily present. The apostles were specially chosen by the Lord out of His followers, and led apart from others. "He ordained twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). They, at their call saw sufficient of the supreme attractiveness of Christ to forsake all and to follow Him. They believed that He was the appointed and promised Redeemer come to restore the kingdom to Israel. But their vision of the true nature of that kingdom was by no means accurate and complete, as such of their sayings as are recorded amply prove.

There are many instances which show that these disciples of the Lord could not clearly see the true spiritual value of the kingdom of God: they were, as it were, confused between men and trees. And it will be noted that this defect of the apostles is one of the connected threads woven into the texture of the Gospel.

Let us take a few items from the preceding narrative which illustrate the imperfect spirituality of the apostles. In the first storm at sea they concluded that the Son of David and His followers were all about to perish, but at the same time they thought that only He could save them. Their despairing conduct was in striking contrast with that of the serene assurance of Paul throughout the storm of many days’ duration.

Then, when a crowd of listeners was famishing with hunger, the disciples, so imperfectly understanding the love and the compassion of their Master, besought Him to send the multitudes away to shift for themselves.

Again, when the Lord came to the deliverance of the apostles in the second storm, walking to them on the waves, they were affrighted at His unexpected appearance, and cried out in fear, mistaking their Beloved Master for an apparition.

Afterwards, when the Lord reproved the folly of the Pharisees in their ablutionary rites and their connected formalism and hypocrisy, the disciples confessed their ignorance of His meaning, showing themselves "without understanding" like the mass of the nation.

Further, when a large audience was again present and without food, the disciples, oblivious of their former experience of the Lord’s resources, were unable to suggest any means of feeding the people. Also when the Lord passed from the physical to the spiritual things of the kingdom, and spoke of the dangerous leaven of the Pharisees, their thoughts rose no higher than loaves of bread.

All these events follow one another closely in the earlier part of the narrative, and combine to exhibit the immaturity of the Lord’s immediate followers as "co-workers" with Him. To state their spiritual condition in the Lord’s own figure, they had eyes to see, but they did not perceive. At this juncture in the history, the duplex cure of the blind man is introduced. He was taken aside, and, first of all, a measure of restoration was given to his organs of sight, so that they became susceptible to impressions of external objects. But, according to his own testimony, he was unable to discern the real nature of those objects, for he confused such dissimilar objects as men and trees. A further effusion of power was needed, and this the Lord bestowed, so that the man thereupon saw all things with clearness. The application of this object-lesson to the undeveloped spiritual condition of the apostles is plain, and harmonizes with the plan of the Gospel, which not only shows the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah Himself but His preparation of His followers to carry on a divine witness in the earth when He should be absent. They had been chosen and ordained by the Lord to preach the gospel of the kingdom, but how could they efficiently undertake this service, if they were themselves unable to discern the mysteries of the kingdom? The new features which were to characterize the people of God were put before the multitudes in parables, but the underlying truths were fully explained to the believing remnant (Mark 4:34). These doctrines were placed before the apostles in word and illustrated by miraculous deeds, but in’ this last year of the Lord’s ministry it is clear they still needed to have the eyes of their heart strengthened to discern "things new and old" — the teaching of Messiah Himself and the scriptures that foretold Him and His doings. No subject seemed more difficult of apprehension to the disciples than that of the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah as a prelude to His displayed glories. And this subject of all-surpassing importance the Lord was about to introduce to them. By a tableau in the holy mount, He would afford some of them a glimpse of the kingdom in its coming glory (Mark 9:1), but teaching them of the sufferings and death of the Son of man (Mark 8:31) which must necessarily precede that manifestation. Could their eyes bear the sight and their hearts receive its meaning? The result showed that their vision in these matters was indistinct, and like this imperfectly restored blind man, and like the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 22:31-32) a further application of the power of the Lord was necessary.

Other Gospel Instances of Physical and Moral Blindness The cure of the blind is used in other parts of the Gospels to illustrate the Lord’s power to illuminate the mind and the heart. A striking instance occurs in Luke. He records several cases of spiritual blindness, and then brings in the healing of Bartimaeus, showing by this acted parable how the Lord delivered those who sought His mercy (Luke 18:1-43).

First, there is the Pharisee in the temple blinded by pride and self-sufficiency, a strong contrast with the publican whose eyes were opened to see the sinfulness of his own heart before God (Mark 8:9-14).

Secondly, there is a further contrast between the little children, on the one hand, who in their simple way saw enough of the divine winsomeness of the Saviour to come to Him, and were suffered to do so, and on the other, the rich young ruler who had many moral and religious qualifications, but nevertheless was so blind that, like the nation as a whole, he saw no beauty in the Lord that he should respond to His call and follow Him (Mark 8:15-25)

Thirdly, the apostles whose eyes were opened sufficiently to leave all and follow the Lord were still so blind of understanding that when He spoke to them of His coming sufferings and death in accordance with prophecy, they perceived nothing of His meaning (Mark 8:31-34).

Fourthly, we have the introduction of the healing of the blind beggar, in immediate sequence to these passages, showing that although men were blind (1) to themselves, (2) to the Saviour, and (3) to the scriptures and the Lord’s own teaching, there was One present who would open the eyes of all those who sought His power. Bartimus implored mercy like the sinner in the temple; he was brought to Jesus like the infants; he followed the Lord like the apostles. In contrast with the Pharisee he was aware of his poverty and his blindness; and in contrast with the young ruler he saw that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Son of David.

Take another instance. In the Gospel of John the man blind from birth constitutes a typical example of the work of grace in the spiritual world, which is so fully presented by the Evangelist. In John 8:1-59 the Lord’s revelation of Himself as the Light of the world is recorded, but the Jews did not follow Him, as is shown, and consequently they walked on in darkness. The Light was shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. But in John 9:1-41 there is given the case of a blind man living from birth in a world of darkness, whose eyes were opened upon his submission to the Lord’s directions. In his case there was an effect upon the heart as well as upon the eyes. His apprehension of the worth of his benefactor developed in ascending stages in contrast with the opinions of the Jewish teachers. He spoke of Him as the man called Jesus (John 9:11), as a prophet (John 9:17), as "from God" (John 9:33), and finally he confessed Him as the Son of God (John 9:35-38).

After this record, the Evangelist immediately makes reference to the perverse type of blindness which characterized the Pharisees who were spiritually blind, but who deceived themselves by assuming they could see. This condition of blindness was demonstrated by their attitude towards the Lord Himself. Perfect goodness was before them, but they discerned Him not. The Lord said of them, "For judgment am I come into this world that they which see not may see, and that they which see may become blind." The Pharisees were saying, "we see," therefore their sin remained (John 9:39-41). They were of that generation who in the language of prophecy, "call evil good and good evil: that put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

Cases of Blindness in the Gospels

Omitting the general references to the healing of the blind; of which there are several, as in Matthew 11:5, there are seven specific cases mentioned in the four Gospels, viz.

(a) Two whose eyes Jesus touched, Matthew 9:27-28.

(b) One blind and dumb, Matthew 12:22.

(c) One at Bethsaida, Mark 8:22.

(d) One in Jerusalem, blind from birth, John 9:1-41.

(e) Two near Jericho, Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35.

(1) Of these seven cases, five are named by Matthew, two by Mark, one by Luke, and one by John. None of these cases is mentioned more than once with the exception of the two near Jericho. In this instance Matthew refers to both men, but Mark and Luke to one only. Matthew also records the greatest number of cases five.

(2) These seven witnesses were distributed between the northern and southern provinces. Four (a,b, and c) occurred in Galilee during the earlier part of the Lord's ministry, and three in Judea (dand e) during the latter part, and these were three who sat and begged.

(3) Three of these blind men (a and e) asked that they might be healed; three others (b and c)were brought to the Lord; and one who was blind from birth (d) was first addressed by the Lord.

(4) In every case but one (b) the Lord laid His hands upon them, or touched their eyes. On one occasion (c) He touched twice. In two instances (c and d) the Lord made, use of spittle.

(5) Two blind men in Galilee (a) and two in Judea (e) acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David, and after the healing of another (b) the people said, "Is not this the Son of David?" Besides these four men, no one confessed Him in this character, except the Syro-phoenician woman (Matthew 15:22), and the women and the children upon the occasion of His public entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9; Matthew 21:15). These testimonies to Jesus as the Royal Seed of David are recorded almost entirely in the First Gospel, which from the outset (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 1:20) presents Him particularly as David's Son and David's Lord.

Chapter 88

05.46. Jehovah's Anointed Servant disowned by many, confessed by few.

46. — Jehovah’s Anointed Servant disowned by many, confessed by few.

"And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Caesarea Philippi: and in the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged him that they should tell no man of him" (Mark 8:27-30, R.V.).

Accompanied by His disciples, the Lord Jesus went northward towards the sources of the river Jordan. The neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi, some 120 miles from Jerusalem, was the most northerly point recorded among the scenes of the Lord’s ministry. Thence the Lord turned southward to Capernaum first, and then to Judea for a final presentation of Himself to the "daughter of Zion" as the Anointed of Jehovah. The period of this visit to the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi coincides therefore with the commencement of the last year of His public service. But up to the then present moment, what was the fruit of His labours? Jehovah’s Servant had spent His strength in zealous and loving ministry among the lost sheep of the house of Israel, doing among them works such as man had never seen before. Truly God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. The Great Prophet had preached the good tidings of peace, and had gone about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil, God being with Him. What degree of conviction had this unique service of word and deed wrought upon the hearts of men? How did the people regard this Man approved of God unto them by the mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of them?

Such was the question raised in Northern Galilee at this juncture in the history of the Servant of Jehovah. And the Lord made inquiry of His disciples, not, of course, that He needed that any should testify concerning man, for He knew what was in man. But for their own sakes He put the queries, that they might share with Him the burden of unrequited love, and learn the secret of serving God in the face of apparent failure. It is noteworthy that the Lord’s own knowledge of the obduracy of man’s heart in no wise diminished His energy nor His love. Nevertheless the sorrow was there that the sons of Israel were not all prepared like aged Simeon to receive Him as the Lord’s Christ, and His lament might be expressed in the recorded words of Jehovah to Jeremiah: "They have turned unto me the back and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction" (Jeremiah 32:33). In the Way

It has been computed that the various journeys of our Lord in the course of His public ministry in Galilee and Judea extended considerably more than two thousand miles. These journeys would have been slowly accomplished on foot, and throughout them the Lord was, for the most part, accompanied by His disciples, and particularly by the twelve apostles who were specially chosen that they "might be with Him."

Two thousand miles of heavenly intercourse with the Son of David and the Son of God! Well might one of the apostles as he recalled with adoring reflection those marvellous travels with his Master add to his Gospel that striking conclusion: "there are many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25) Of that antediluvian patriarch who "was not, for God took him" it is recorded that he "walked with God." Here were twelve men who walked more than two thousand miles with Him who was God "manifested in flesh." It was theirs to see, to hear, to contemplate, to handle the Word of life (1 John 1:1). As the Lord said privately to His disciples on one occasion, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see and saw them not, and to hear the things which ye hear and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24).

Very, very little of these communications is recorded. The effect of them upon the apostles was however abiding, and was manifested when the Lord had departed out of this world unto the Father. Then after the baptism of the Holy Spirit they became the foundation of that new spiritual building in the earth, growing now, as it is, unto a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-22).

It was on such occasions that the Lord and His followers took "sweet counsel" together. Like the communications in the house at Capernaum (Matthew 13:36) and those also in the upper room at Jerusalem (John 13:1-38; et seq.), these conversations in the way near Caesarea Philippi were for the most part private, intimate, choice, personal, precious. Of a correspondingly private character, as we have already noted, are such of the Lord’s works as are recorded in this part of the Gospel. A further instance of this sacred privacy we gather from that touching description of the incident which occurred shortly afterwards, "in the way," when the Lord was setting Himself steadfastly to visit for the last time that city so "beautiful for situation," but defiled with the blood of Israel’s martyred servants. "And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed, and they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen to him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again" (Mark 10:32-34; Matthew 20:17).

These intervals of seclusion were opportunities to be prized highly, and to be used to advantage, but on another occasion we find the apostles misused their privilege as companions of the Lord. While "in the way" with Him, they forgot that they were disciples of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, who was made a little lower than the angels, who had come, humbling Himself, not to be served, but to serve. The apostles had heated arguments among themselves, when travelling to Capernaum, on the question of pre-eminence. The Lord rebuked them, but not publicly. When He was in the house He asked them, What were ye reasoning in the way? But they held their peace, for they had disputed one with another in the way, who should be greatest" (Mark 9:33-34),

Popular Opinion The ways of the Great Servant of Jehovah in instructing His co-workers beforehand concerning the true character of coming events are found full of interest as we meditate upon them. Before making the first announcement of His imminent crucifixion and death, He prepared them for the news by drawing from their own lips the general thoughts of men

regarding Himself. The disciples, both in company with and apart from the Lord, had traversed the country in all directions, teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, the word being accompanied by corroborative signs. They had therefore come into personal contact with the crowds, and had special opportunities to ascertain their real feelings.

Now when the Lord was in a private place praying, as Luke tells us, bearing the burden of men's obduracy of heart upon His spirit in His Father's presence, He asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" He Himself knew the answer, as He necessarily knew all things, but for their sakes He asked this question. It would be good for them not only to think vaguely in their hearts, but to say definitely with their lips that the world was against their Master's claims, that the best of men's judgments was short of the truth, and was therefore detrimental to the Lord's person and damaging to His glory and kingdom. The priests and the Pharisees, the professedly and zealously religious parties, were undoubtedly His strong opponents, but were the taught as well as the teachers antagonistic to the Lord? "Who do men say that I am?" was His question. In reply, the disciples did not recite the worst sayings about their Master. There were those that said He was a Samaritan, that He had a demon, that He was mad, that He was a blasphemer, a gluttonous man and a winebibber. All classes were against Him, from the officials in the gate of justice to the drunkards in their ribald songs (Psalms 69:12). The disciples knew these things, but their love for their Master filled them with a solicitous regard for Him. They were sensitive to His honour, and sought to shield Him to the best of their ability from what would be painful to His feelings. So, on another occasion, when He spoke of going into Judea, they, out of a similar regard, sought to restrain Him, saying, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? (John 11:8). Now, as there was a division of opinion among the people concerning Him (cp.John 7:12), they gave Him the best of the common reports regarding His person and mission. Some, they said, declared that He was John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others, One of the prophets. And yet how very far from the truth was the best of the thoughts of men: it was, indeed, the distance between heaven and earth, between God and man. John the Baptist as a man and a prophet was indeed highly-favoured of God. And the Lord's own testimony regarding him was remarkable: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." But the greatness of John, however, was relative, not absolute, official not personal. He was a light-bearer (John 5:35), but not the Light itself, though he bore witness to the Light (John 1:7-8). Nevertheless, he was pre-eminent among all prophets and messengers of God since the world began, in that he alone among them witnessed the fulfilment of his own Messianic predictions, and as the great forerunner, he was able to declare of One standing before him: "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." This office was the choicest service given to men; "yet," the Lord added, "he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

John himself, whom all the people held to be a prophet, gave no ground for the popular saying. His plain testimony was, "I am not the Christ. He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11;John 1:20;John 3:28). And when John saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and abiding upon Him, he knew that He was the Son of God. The thoughts of men in these matters were foolishness. Some said John the Baptist was the Christ, while others said Christ was John the Baptist. Some said He was Elijah, the prophet of stern judgment, but none said He was the minister of heavenly mercy and grace. The truth was as the

Lord declared, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither Both any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). The opinions of the populace showed how they were under the leavening influence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, of which evil effects the Lord had just previously bidden the disciples beware.* They, while glad of the Lord's beneficent miracles, altogether missed the sweetness of the grace of Christ. How otherwise could they mistake the meek and lowly Saviour for Elijah, the prophet of devouring fire from heaven and famine on earth, the precursor too, of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5), or John the Baptist with his fierce denunciations of the sins of Israel. In their blindness the people utterly failed to discern the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ.

{*The connection between the warning to the disciples and the questions put to them on this head, is very marked in Matthew (Matthew 16:12-14), In Mark the miracle of the Lord's power over the dim-sighted intervenes, and is, in itself, a close link of topical connection,} Personal Confession of the Christ The Lord then turned away from the unworthy thoughts of the multitude, who had ever been the special objects of His loving service, to the circle of His own immediate followers. He now appealed to the judgment of their love and intimacy, saying, "Who say ye that I the Son of man am?" The question was a direct challenge to their loyalty and affection, like that one in the Canticles: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Do you regard your Master as a John, an Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets? Their reply was undoubtedly refreshing to Him who was so depreciated and under-valued elsewhere. Peter answered and said unto Him, "Thou art the Christ." From Luke we learn that the Lord addressed these questions to the disciples after He rose up from private prayer. In hallowed communion with the Father, He bore upon His spirit the anguish of a baffled and spurned love. After all His service in the midst of the favoured people He, their Messiah, was still unknown, and the Father whom He came to manifest was also unknown. The Lord could have said even then, as He did later, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me' (John 17:25).

Only that part of Peter's confession which bears directly upon the special character of the Gospel is given. In Matthew, the words, "the Son of the living God," appear also, for there the announcement by the Lord of the building of the assembly upon that acknowledgement follows. Here the Lord was owned simply as the Christ, the Anointed One, for this is an essential feature of the Gospel which sets Him out as the Servant of Jehovah upon whom the Holy Spirit rested. The disciples, whose affections the Lord had kindled towards Himself by His love were filled with the serene confidence that He was the Sent One of God, while in the uncertainty that unbelief engenders the people were distracted with conflicting opinions. It is faith alone that gives assurance, and Peter and his fellows believed that Jesus was the Christ. They told the Lord so, even as Jonathan came to David in the wilderness of Ziph, while Saul sought his life, and expressed his confidence that David was anointed to be the coming king in Israel (1 Samuel 23:17). Jonathan's confession of allegiance, we read, strengthened David's hand in God, and may we not say that He who "sought for comforters and found none," rejoiced at the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ"? But the time of public testimony to His rights as Israel's Messiah was now past, and He charged Peter that he should tell no man of him. W. J. H.

S. A Heavenly Christ, therefore a Heavenly Church.

A Heavenly Christ, therefore a Heavenly Church.

It is the uniform tendency of man's mind to practically dissociate Christ and the church, particularly with regard to those relations of intimate unity which scripture reveals and emphasises as the peculiar marks of the Christian calling; Which of the great sections of Christendom really holds that the church is so united to Christ in heaven that its constitution derives an essential character from this very fact? The Roman, Anglican, and Dissenting, not to speak of the Greek, communities, all fall short of discerning that the living connection between the church and its risen Head on high is not a mere abstract notion, purely theoretical and altogether inoperative, but a vital principle meant to be embodied in its every action.

Now it is impossible to understand the heavenly nature of the calling of the church apart from Christ; for the raison d'être of the church is Christ. And it is not meant by this to refer now to the atoning and redemptive work of the Saviour. Undoubtedly that incomparable work supplied the immutable foundation on which God's dealings with man are based. Anticipatively or retrospectively, the death of Christ formed the sole ground for blessing to the children of faith for all time. It does not follow however that the blessing offered and given has been of an identical character from the beginning. On the contrary that blessing has varied in character and measure according to the then purpose of God, as it has been successively revealed in connection with the varied glories of the Son. The Old Testament, speaking broadly, is occupied with the promise and prophecy of the advent of the Messiah Who would come to the chosen people of Israel as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and exalt the seed of Abraham above all the nations of the earth. The blessings which the saints of old were taught to expect were of an earthly nature. The daughter of Zion was to look for the coming of her King Who would reign in righteousness. The oppressor should be broken in pieces, and their enemies made to lick the dust. Peace should flow like a river, and the earth be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Long life and prosperous days should be the happy portion of every subject of the glorious kingdom of David's Lord. In short, Christ in the Old Testament is brought forward as the earthly ruler and the executor of divine justice in the earth, especially in connection with the nation of Israel. Accordingly the blessings of the people assume an earthly and national character in perfect accord with these promises.

Now just as the hopes of Israel derived their points of distinction from Messiah the Prince coming to reign here below, so the hopes and calling of the church receive their distinctive marks from the position now assumed by Christ on high. This establishes the widest possible difference between Israel and the church. The difference is that betwixt earthly and heavenly, carnal and spiritual blessing. Wherever we look in the Old Testament, we find the same kind of anticipations. In Egypt and the wilderness, they look for the land of promise with a bountiful basket and store. In Canaan when groaning under the idolatrous rule of apostate kings, or when weeping by the rivers of Babylon, the faithful long for the Redeemer to come to Zion, Who shall bless every man under his

own vine and his own pomegranate tree. But the New Testament sanctions no such expectations for the Christian. The Jew was entitled to hope for blessing here of a worldly nature; but the believer's blessings are heavenly and spiritual, enjoyed alone by faith. They take their character, as has been said already, from Christ; and from Christ, not as the king of Israel and the ruler of the nations, but as the glorified Head of the church.

Now the epistle to the Ephesians unfolds the mystery of the heavenly blessing of the church in a very full manner, but always in connection with Christ. The close of the first chapter establishes the truth of the present exaltation of Christ on high and binds up with that momentous fact the position of the church in the heavenlies along with Him. Let us look at the way in which this doctrine is brought forward.

Ephesians 1:1-14 contain a summary of truths relating, to the saints, bringing out their place in the mind and purpose of God. This calls for a remark worthy of note. It is a principle of the word of God that personal blessings and responsibilities are invariably set forth before corporate blessings and relationship. And it is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in this epistle which exceeds all others in the fulness of its divine unfoldings concerning the church in its most comprehensive aspect. For we have it presented in its totality, from eternity "hid in God," "now made known," and by-and-by to be presented to Christ perfect and entire. Nevertheless there is even in this epistle no exception to the general rule observed throughout the whole scheme of revelation to state first of all what relates to the individual. We are told not only of election and inheritance in Christ, but of what might seem very elementary, of forgiveness of sins and of hearing the gospel. This is significant enough. The individuality of the believer ought not to be swamped by the generalities of the church. It is also well, nay imperative, for the soul to be assured of its personal relationship before God in order that it may be able to enter more truly into its place in the church. Neither should an acquaintance with the privileges of Christ's body cause any to forget or under-value their individual standing through grace.

Having therefore unfolded to the saints at Ephesus their blessed place individually before God in Christ, he tells them of his prayers on their account that they may be made to know yet more. He seeks that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of the heart being enlightened. His petition on their behalf is threefold, viz., that they may know:—

1. — What is the hope of His calling, and 2. — What the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and

3. — What is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He (a) raised Him from the dead, and

(b) set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come, and (c) hath put all things under His feet, and

(d) gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:16-23).

Here then we have the inspired desires of the apostle for these Ephesian saints. He sought that they might grow in divine knowledge ("full knowledge" is the word employed). In the first place (1) as to their calling; it had already been brought before them in the early verses, but did they grasp the hope of that calling? The hope is the consummation, the crown, the climax of what we now enjoy by faith. We are in point of fact even now blessed in the heavenlies, even now accepted in the Beloved. But the hope is yet to be realised when the Lord takes us to the Father's house on high and the purpose of God with regard to us is fully, accomplished. The calling is individual, the hope takes in all; for it contemplates that unity in which Christ will present the church to Himself in glory. Into this view the apostle prays that the saints may now enter fully.

He further prays (2) that they may know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. It is not so much, as has been pointed out by others, that the saints themselves form this inheritance, but that in the saints God in Christ will take the inheritance. Christ is "heir of all things" (Hebrews 2:1-18), and when He enters into His right, the church will share the glory of that inheritance as joint-heirs

(Romans 8:17 ; 2 Timothy 2:12). Christ will not enter into His glory apart from His bride. He says Himself, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them" (John 17:22). And it is the desire of the apostle that the saints may now by faith apprehend their high destiny in the coming day of glory. The next clause (3) of the petition is that they may know the exceeding greatness of God's power already exercised upon believers in raising them up to share the exaltation of Christ. This is so important as to call for special attention in a subsequent paper (D.V.).

1896 77 The strongly and distinctly marked clauses of the apostle's first prayer for the Ephesian saints (Ephesians 1:16-23) have already been noticed. He sought on their behalf that they might be made to know (1) the hope of His calling, (2) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and (3) the exceeding greatness of His power toward believers. The last petition introduces a subject on which the apostle in a characteristic manner enlarges in a very full way. It was a theme especially near and dear to the heart of Paul. Christ in heaven and. the consequent effects for us of His present exaltation are prominent in almost every epistle. Paul knew not Christ in the days of His flesh. He did not meet Him on the banks of the Jordan, like John or Peter. It was a heavenly Christ that confronted the mad persecutor; and it was the memory of that vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ which ever hung like a brilliant beacon star on the horizon of the apostle's life, shaping his course and animating his zeal. He loved to think of Christ in the glory, and when led to speak of the power now working in us, he immediately unfolds its connection with the power that put Christ there. The self-same power that wrought in Him works in us.

Thus the doctrinal truth is made as ever to rest on the solid substructure of fact. It is a fact however only to be appreciated by the spiritual mind; and this the apostle has in view. Such he calls to consider the most recent display of God's omnipotent power in the resurrection of Christ, unveiling its profound import to the church of God. In the beginning God displayed His power in the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the history of Israel, He showed His power by their redemption from Egypt. But the greatest exemplification of God's power for the Christian is in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. This transcends in character the power exercised in furnishing the material universe, as it also does that which crushed the military power of Pharaoh and over-ruled

natural phenomena for the deliverance of His enslaved people. For here we have the annulment of man’s last enemy — death, God raising Him Who lay under its power, not merely to life but up to the very chiefest place of authority and glory. In that supremest position dominion is given Him, and that over all things ; "He hath put all things under his feet." He is Lord of all. Though this universal sway is unseen as yet, the time of its public administration not having come, the glorification of the One Who lay in the rich man’s tomb is no secret to faith because revealed. It is to the believer the most signal exercise of divine power. Wondrous are the potent and invisible forces of nature operating alike on the mightier orbs, forming the remoter stellar systems, as in the countless swarms of minute life which people the stagnant ditch. But the glory of God in creation is infinitely surpassed by the glory of the Father in raising the Son.

It is surpassed to the same degree as spiritual things surpass natural, and as eternal things surpass temporal. Mechanism of the universe! Cleavage of the Red Sea! Of what small account are these in comparison with what He has done for the Son of Man, for Him Who was "crucified in weakness," but "raised in power." He Who passed by the heavenly dignitaries, in His descent to the assumption of manhood and the subsequent shame and death of Calvary, has now passed them by in His ascent to occupy His seat on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

What a super-eminent example of the working of God’s mighty power is this! Life from the dead is much, but exaltation to the very utmost how much more! Singularly few are the instances of resurrection in Old Testament times. And those who thus issued from the gates of the grave through direct divine interposition full soon returned. But here is One thither again truly raised but raised to die no more, being elevated out of the domain of death beyond its reach into the heavenlies whereto death can never come. There even now abides the Son of Man, the permanent demonstration to faith of Omnipotent interference.

Now having strained our thoughts to their utmost in setting forth the heights of exaltation to which Christ is raised, the apostle brings forward a fact of the profoundest interest to the church. In that place of conferred glory, the church is associated with Him, He is not only "head over all things" but "head over all things to the church," The self-same power, that wrought in Christ to set Him on high, works in us to set us along with Him there. As Son of Man He has those who are destined to share the headship bestowed upon Him in resurrection; and they are described as being already, in purpose and effect, associated along with Him there. The intimate connection of the church with Christ is illustrated by the figure of the body — "the church which is His body." This is not the relationship of subjects to a ruler, though of course it is at the same time true that the church is subject to Christ. But this expressive metaphor implies the marvellous truth that the eternal purpose of God would not be realised unless the church is united to the Risen Man in the place of glory to which He is exalted. Indeed, this is the particular import of the succeeding phrase, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The church is called out to become the complement, that which is necessary to complete the Mystic Man on high.

Here then we have the revealed purpose of God with regard to Christ and the church. We are brought into indissoluble association of the most intimate character with Christ, not as a man here below, for this could not be, but as a man in resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand. The

fact (for it certainly is not a theory) of itself stamps a unique distinction upon the church. The grand objects and purpose of God in reference to her will never be accomplished on earth. The scene of her consummation in glory is on high, a secret as completely hidden from the world now as the fact of the present glory of Christ. On this account the aspirations of the church, where the true nature of God's calling is apprehended, will be exclusively heavenly, while the world will be regarded as a place of temporary sojourn in which all arrangements are purely provisional and in no way objects of chief concern.

How far this is borne out by the practice of the professing church of today needs no word of comment. W.J.H.

S. A Plea for the Gospel

A Plea for the Gospel

1916 175 One often hears the complaint, 'Oh, we seldom have a conversion.' If asked the reason the answer is often, 'Well, we have a preacher every Lord's day, and the testimony seems faithful enough but, as far as we know, souls are not led to confess and own the Lord Jesus as their Saviour through the preaching.' And the blame is tacitly thrown on the preacher, as if he were the only one responsible in the matter. But is this so? Are we not all responsible in measure? Will this shirking of individual responsibility do for God? I trow not. Surely He will call to account each one who is indifferent to the well-being of precious souls. And can we close our eyes to the fact that there is a manifest neglect of gospel services, and a condition of supineness, respecting the prosperity of the word, creeping into the assemblies of the saints in many places? This is a state of things which is evidently productive of sad results. Thus some Christians are not seen at the gospel service so often, by far, as the new moon appears. The weekly prayer meeting is not attended so regularly as might be. Business matters, which might often be postponed, some prefer attending to on that evening, glad in their hearts of any excuse for absenting themselves. Yet this is only what one might expect. For neglect of perishing sinners' souls goes along with carelessness and sterility in one's own.

Oh! that our hearts could rise up more fully to the contemplation of God's own love towards the ungodly in giving His own Son to die for them (Romans 5:8). Methinks we should thus be stirred up to increased diligence in seeking to help on the work of soul-winning. But some one will say, probably, 'What can I do? I cannot preach. I do not feel qualified for the work.' Perhaps not. Still there is much work to be done besides preaching the gospel. We can seek to bring our friends and neighbours to the gospel services, for instance, so that they may hear the words of life. It would be well also if we cultivated a more implicit faith in the power of the word alone to reach the hearts of sinners. Again, a tract may be given by the way, or a word spoken to some weary heart, which may result in eternal blessing for the soul, and bring glory to the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus every Christian may be used in some way, if not in the same way, in proclaiming the message of salvation to all, through Christ.

Then, further, if Christians are desirous of witnessing blessing at the gospel preaching (and who are not?) there should be an understanding amongst them as to what they need, and perfect agreement too. For it is absolutely necessary that there should be unity of purpose and desire as well as united effort. Thus having a definite object before them they could come together for presenting their requests (Matthew 18:19).

Now in Acts 1:14 we have an example of this unanimity as to a definite want seen in practice. We read, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Again, "They were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Thus were they, brethren and sisters as well, united in prayer for blessing, and together in waiting for, and expecting, the fulfilment of the Father's promise — the gift of the Holy Ghost

(Acts 1:4). See also Acts 4:31-32.

Let us seek then to imitate this example, showing by our reiterated supplications our felt need and dependence upon God; and by our continued waiting, our trust in our Father, and faith in His infallible word of promise. But if we desire to see souls saved through the preaching we must avoid the pernicious spirit of hyper-criticism which is so apt to creep into our midst, working untold mischief in many ways. Instead of watching the preacher's words, like a cat does a mouse, ready to pounce upon him at the first slip in word or sense, would it not be better to have our hearts occupied with God in prayer that He would give the speaker the right word, and by His Spirit prepare the hearts of sinners present to receive it? To see this would delight the heart of our Father, and, I am sure, He would not fail to bestow the blessing so manifestly desired by His children. And those who preach the gospel should realise fully the solemn fact that nothing but Christ and Him crucified will meet the need of the sinner. Let us see to it, therefore, that we present Him, and the way of salvation through Him, clearly and distinctly to those who listen, so that they may not mistake the road that leads to life, and strive to enter in some other way. But in holding up Christ the Saviour to the gaze of others, let us hide behind Him that nothing of self be seen. To this end we should seek to be natural in manner, and plain of speech, preferring rather to use short words, if giving the sense, than long ones, which may be sometimes misplaced and not always understood by the whole of the audience. Hearing preachers sometimes trying to imitate the style and language of their superiors in education, one is painfully reminded of the fact that when David put on Saul's coat of mail it did not fit him. May we be careful, then, to avoid bringing ridicule upon the glorious gospel by such untoward sin. And let us strive rather, by an earnest and unpretentious manner, to convince souls that we have their welfare at heart, and not our own aggrandisement. Faithfulness in this way and continued waiting upon God cannot fail to be owned by Himself in blessing on souls. W.T.H.

S. Alive Unto God

Alive Unto God Notes of an address on Romans 6:11-23

W. J. Hocking.

1913 349 I commenced to read this evening at the eleventh verse, because the practical application of the truth communicated in the early part of the chapter begins there: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." On a former occasion we saw that the apostle treats of the manner in which the believer is delivered from the power of sin as a principle of action, and the whole question of his conduct was seen to rest, like all such questions, on Christ Jesus and His work.

We have to look to Him for the solution of all the problems of practical moment that arise day by day in our lives, and one of our most difficult problems is how to regard the uprising of the evil nature in our hearts. This nature asserts itself in spite of the sense of God’s love within us. We may have cherished the vain hope of growing out of such tendencies, and year by year of approaching nearer a state of holiness and perfection.

If so, honesty must compel us to admit that so far as our hearts are concerned, little or no real progress is made towards the extinction of inward evil. This chapter, however, sheds light on this problem. It shows that the evil nature whose presence and action we mourn received its utter condemnation in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin itself (speaking now not of sinful acts but of that which is the origin of them) was judged at the cross when He who knew no sin was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). And we learn that in the mind of God we are associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, and thus, as descend ants of the first Adam, we have passed into nonexistence, but have also partaken of the risen life of Christ beyond the judicial death. And this instruction brings us to the exhortation with which we opened this evening.

Reckoning Ourselves Dead to Sin The apostle had spoken of the death of the Lord Jesus, and that He now lives to God in a state altogether apart from sin. The Lord passed through this evil world uncontaminated by sin within and without. He went to the cross absolutely pure, but was there made vicariously the abhorrent thing, and judged on account of it. But rising from the dead and being exalted by the right hand of God, a new state of things ensued — a new creation — of which Christ is the Head. And in this newness of life sin is a past thing. The apostle therefore directs believers to regard themselves as having already passed from death to life where Christ is: "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 11). This verb "reckon" carries us back to the fourth chapter of this Epistle, where we read of God reckoning Abraham righteous because of his faith. The patriarch believed God in a matter which seemed in itself most improbable. For in the ordinary course of nature it seemed an incredible thing that blessing should flow to the earth through the unborn seed of an old man and woman. But Abraham believed the LORD and His promises, and this was counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God looking down from heaven regarded Abraham as a

righteous man. His faith was in connection with the seed which was to come, that is, Christ; and indeed this confidence was true also of all the Old Testament saints. There might be and was failure, as there were faults; but wheresoever there was faith it) the Coming One it was reckoned for righteousness.

Here we are exhorted to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God. It must be carefully observed that this is an exercise of faith. If we consider ourselves conscientiously we shall find ourselves capable of sinning, if not actually sinning. We fail to find inward or subjective evidence that we are dead to sin. But faith accepts the testimony of the word of God that I am associated with Christ in both death and resurrection. Hence I am dead to the dominant power of sin and alive heavenward. This status I must accept if I believe God rather than self. To God or to Self?

We must broaden our views of what sin really means. Taken comprehensively it includes all that lacks due reference to God. Actions precisely similar in outward appearance may nevertheless differ in essential quality and value according as they are done to self or to God. An instance of this is recorded in the Gospels. It occurred in the temple courts at the time when the offerings were being placed in the treasury chest. Here was an opportunity of making a sacrifice to God by depositing a sum of money for the use of the temple service. Many rich and influential persons gave substantial amounts, doing so in an ostentatious manner to attract the attention and admiration of their neighbours. Thus the offertory became to them a means of self-advertisement, and they gained as their reward the notice of their fellows. But the Lord observed among the offerers a person of another order. There was a poor widowed heart in the company overwhelmed with gratitude and praise to God. Something had happened in her experience which caused her to be full of thanksgiving to God who had granted her some special fulness of blessing. She was therefore impelled to offer some sacrifice of her goods to His service (Luke 21:1-4).

What should she render to the Lord for all His benefits? Two mites constituted her sole livelihood. Under such circumstances should she not divide the small pittance, giving a part and reserving a part? From the point of view of what is called practical economics this course would seem the more reasonable. But the widow did not regard the matter from the standpoint of her own present or future needs, for she was full of a sense of the great kindness of Jehovah to her. She resolved she would not hold back anything, being a contrast with Ananias and Sapphira of a later day. She placed her all in the box — not the widow’s mite, but her two mites. Her gift was to God. She gained the victory over self, and everything being offered to God, the gift was appraised by the heavenly standard. Her motives gave the sacrifice of her goods a value above that of all the rest.

Another example of this truth is to be gathered from the Epistle to the Philippians. Paul, by reference to himself, shows how worthless, though moral in themselves, acts become when the will of God is contravened. In the third chapter he speaks of himself and of what he was before he knew the Lord. He enumerates the privileges he possessed at that time only to pronounce them to be not only valueless but even offensive. His circumcision and law-keeping were quite proper matters for satisfaction until he learned the super-excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The qualities he names are not such as are sinful in themselves, but such as might reasonably give him confidence in the flesh. And the flesh is not necessarily the evil principle. It is the natural way of doing things, that is, always acting from the individual’s own standpoint, without looking

above and seeking the will of God.

Saul of Tarsus before his conversion had a position of pre-eminence. If any one might have confidence in the flesh, he most surely might have done so. Did he not contend zealously for the law? Was he not desirous of keeping it to its most minute particular? Yet at the very time during which he supposed he was doing God service he was persecuting the church of God.

Touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. Can you imagine anything more desirable in a man? In outward demeanour he was perfect and upright so far as the eye could see. But having learned the truth of the person of the Christ in glory, he counted the whole of his own attainments in this respect as nothing and worse than that.

He wrote then quietly in prison, looking back upon his past life in the light he had received through advancing years, without a warped imagination and without self-deception, and he describes his early days as blameless. The statement is a remarkable one; but whatever gain this unblemished character might have been to him he counted it but loss for Christ. He reckoned himself to be dead indeed to those things and alive to God through Jesus Christ the Lord. The things he mentions had no more effect upon him than upon a dead person. This piece of autobiography is an illustration of our text. What Paul wrote by way of doctrine in Romans, he exemplified from his own life in Philippians. In the earlier Epistle he spoke of being alive to God through Christ Jesus the Lord. In the later we see the activities of that life expressing themselves in intensity of desire and earnestness of effort.

There was therefore a continuity in the life of the apostle. He did not depart from the self-renunciation of his early days. His enthusiasm did not wane as trials and persecutions multiplied. Neither did self assume a Christian garb. Christ was the dominating object before him, as the Epistle to the Philippians reveals. In practice he was still reckoning himself dead to sin, but alive to God. The Reign of Sin

We now come to a further exhortation: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (ver. 12). The truth underlying this command is that in our natural state the inward evil principle lords it over us completely. The whole person is carried away by selfish pursuits and pleasures, and from this bondage the gospel delivers us, bringing us under a new Master, even Jesus the Lord. To Him we are called to yield ourselves as those who are alive from the dead. We are not free agents in the sense of being "our own," but we are His who died for us and rose again. We cannot plan to serve the Lord today or tomorrow as it may suit us. In such matters self has no right to rule or to decide. We are delivered from its reign, and Christian service is but to give Christ His own.

Yielding Ourselves and Our Members From verse 13 we gather that there are two divisions in the act of surrender. The act is to apply to the person as a whole, and to the various separate powers he possesses. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

We have then to present self, that is, to present the entire being, spirit, soul and body. This we offer to Him as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, our reasonable service. The whole entity is His, and we "yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead." This act may be called

consecration or dedication, or whatever you please. But in fact it constitutes the heart's response to the living Lord, from the initial stage of its history. Saul of Tarsus from the dust said "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In self-abnegation he placed himself unreservedly at the Master's disposal. This surrender was, of course, in principle at first, but he followed on in that attitude of heart, schooling and educating himself physically and morally to do the will of God in all things, all his members subjugated and working together harmoniously to this common end.

Justification of Life The apostle brings in practical righteousness as the outcome of such service as this, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." "Now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." In the previous chapters of this Epistle the apostle treats of that judicial righteousness which we receive through faith. But the concomitant effect upon the believer is to make his conduct righteous also. Righteous actions or "works are the evidence of inward faith. So James instructs us. He says, "Faith without works is dead," and he refers to the case of Abraham. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (James 2:20-21).

Now the patriarch believed God some forty years before the sacrifice of Isaac. It was a settled thing between God and him. God promised; Abraham believed God; and He counted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). But this righteous, ness of faith was to be demonstrated before men, and on mount Moriah Abraham's life was justified by his actions.

Fruit Unto Holiness

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (ver. 22). Holiness implies separation to the service of God. The vessels of the tabernacle and of the temple were holy, for they were used exclusively in the worship of Jehovah. When Belshazzar used them at his revels, the judgment of God fell upon the impious king.

Believers are holy vessels belonging to God, and placed here in the world for His service. Filled with Christ, what use may we not be to thirsty souls? The result of our yielding ourselves up as bondslaves to God will be "fruit unto holiness."

It involves an error to think of holiness only from its negative side; for it implies much more than the absence of sin. Consideration of this aspect alone leads to a morbid state in which there is often a long and unavailing struggle to attain to this condition. The whole truth is that holiness is positive as well as negative. It expresses itself in an absolute devotion to God. The holy are His instruments. When God takes hold of a man, the divine touch makes him holy.

We are therefore to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive to Him, not keeping back a part like Ananias and Sapphira, whose devotion was a pretence and abomination to God. Such fruit was not unto holiness.

Sin's Wages and God's Gift The apostle concludes this section with the weighty declaration, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 23). This is one of the few instances of the mention of eternal life in the writings of Paul. In John the

subject abounds both in his Gospel and in his Epistles. The two apostles, however, are in no sense in opposition to one another, but were inspired to record different views of the same blessing of God for man through His grace.

Paul shows us eternal life in its activities in the justified person — the new life which is in a risen Saviour. Instead of corruption and death which are the emoluments of a life of sin, God bestows eternal life through Jesus Christ. Through the grace of God, we are justified by faith, for Jesus the Lord was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification; and that great sacrifice made way for us to be delivered from the thraldom in which we were once held to the evil propensities of our nature. This then is the new life which God gives. He has made us free to live to Him and to serve Him in the name of Jesus Christ. W. J. H.

S. Another Comforter"

Another Comforter"

Notes of an address on John 14:16.

W. J. Hocking.

1919 277 In John 14:3 we have the Lord’s coming again in bodily presence to take His own to be with Himself; but in verse 18 we have His spiritual coming to us now. Prior and preparatory to the latter announcement, He tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit (ver. 16). The Lord was going away from His disciples and they were therefore very sorrowful, but He tells them here that His very going would be a gain to them — during His absence He would be with them more constantly than in the days of His flesh (see John 16:7). The sisters of Bethany, when Lazarus was sick, mourned that Jesus was not there; but we never have to mourn that He is not with us in our time of trouble, for He is always at hand. Now His bodily presence was to be removed from them, but in compensation He promises to send the Holy Spirit: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." These are His words to them; thus He becomes the harbinger of the Holy Ghost. John the Baptist had foretold the immediate coming of the Lord Jesus; He Himself foretells the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word here used, which may be literally translated Paraclete, means even more than Comforter. We need comfort assuredly during our journey through this world, but we need other services too; all we need, the Paraclete can and will supply.

During those three years the disciples had been with. the Lord, they had learned to turn to Him and depend on Him for everything, to come to Him in every distress. Now He was going away, and they felt desolate, but He promised to send them another Comforter, who should be to them all that He had been, and who would abide with them, not for three years only, but "for ever" — the Spirit of truth. The world would not receive Him, because "it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him," but we know Him, for the Lord said, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

After the Lord’s resurrection He appeared to His own, to Mary at the sepulchre, to the disciples in the upper room, to the two going to Emmaus, to the disciples at Olivet; but the world knew nothing about these manifestations: so now with the Holy Spirit. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." He is here to reveal Christ to us. The Lord Himself will come to us in our need — "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" — but it is only by the agency of the Holy Spirit that we realise His presence. We cannot tell how the Lord comes to us; we cannot explain His coming to others, but we know He does come, for we have experienced it, and it is the Holy Spirit who reveals His presence to us. The enjoyment of these great privileges, however, is contingent upon our faithfulness and obedience. Hence we read, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

We know what His commandments are. "Do this in remembrance of me" is one of them. You will say this is a privilege — that it is a request which the Lord makes of us. So it is; but it is a

command too, for it is the Lord who speaks — the One who has a right to command. To those who love Him and keep His commands, He promises to reveal Himself in a very special way — "I will manifest myself to him."

Judas asks how the Lord would manifest Himself to them and not to the world and then the Lord goes further, saying "If a man love me, he will keep my word"; not His commands only are in question this time, but the whole tenor of His life. He refers to one who not merely wishes to keep His actual commands, but to please Him in everything (compare Php 2:3, "Let this mind be in you"). The Lord says of such a one — "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with Him." Thus one loving and obedient heart becomes the abode of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the shrine of the Holy Trinity is in the heart of one that loves the Lord. But we read, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." The Holy Spirit would also work upon the memories of the disciples and revive thoughts and words of the Master (ver. 26). He also works with ourselves. Everyone who has been for any time in Christian fellowship and Christian surroundings has usually within his heart a great store of the words of Scripture and of holy associations. The Holy Spirit will often bring to our remembrance what He has said to us, in the assembly or by the Lord’s servants, so that it gives us just the help we require in our time of need. The Lord said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." W. J. H.

S. Breaking Bread at Troas.

Breaking Bread at Troas.

W. J. Hocking.

It is of no inconsiderable importance to seek to arrive at a clear understanding, not only of the real intention of the saints at Troas, but of God’s mind in the record of their assembling together on the occasion made memorable by the presence of the great apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 20:7). For the practice of the early saints recorded thus by inspiration affords a certain guide for the observance of the church from that time onward; because in as far as their example is approvingly cited by the Holy Ghost, so far may saints follow with boldness and confidence. A great distinction however must be made between the inspired account of the founding and development of the assembly of God in apostolic times, and that which proceeded in later but early days when men wrote no longer by the unerring power of the Holy Spirit. The difference is not in degree but in kind. While the Scripture is the adamantine rock, the productions of the so-called "Fathers of the church" are the treacherous quicksands: the one affords unyielding support, the others offer nothing but at best a dim uncertainty, coupled with the risk of following their departure from the truth. The reason for this wide difference is not far to seek; though at the same time it is of such profound importance that no apology is offered for referring to it here. To some it may appear trivial and commonplace to insist upon the inspiration of Holy Writ and to contend that its inspired character elevates it immeasurably above every other writing whether ancient or modern. But it is certain that none can in these days advance too far in reverence for the Scriptures, or hold too tenaciously that the voice of God is heard in every word from Genesis to Revelation. The perfect and sufficient presentation of the mind and will of God, under the unerring operation of the Holy Ghost, is to be understood not in the statements of doctrine and in the revelations of the future only. The historical portions are no less divinely given and guarded. Even in recounting events that came under their direct cognizance, the writers were never suffered to pen just what their memories retained or their fancies dictated. The Spirit was there to secure the accomplishment of His own purpose in the Scripture as well as to preclude any human frailty or error.

Thus, in the instance before us, the writer, Luke the physician, was in no wise left to his own wisdom in the compilation of the history. While leaving the impress of his individuality upon his writings, and that so distinctly that they can never be confounded with those of Matthew, Mark, or John, the impress, nevertheless, was such as to include none of the prejudices, the distortions, the foibles, or the partialities that are common to every uninspired historian in a greater or less degree. For the "human element in inspiration," to use a familiar phrase, never supposes or admits any taint of the weakness and wilfulness, the blindness and bias, which are altogether inseparable from fallen human nature.

Indeed in this latter particular the written word of God may be said to resemble the Incarnate Word. In Him, blessed be His holy Name, we have One Who was both God and Man. Since He was the Son and eternal God, He could and did reveal God and the Father. Since in grace He

became Man, He revealed the Father in such a sort that we might see and hear, believe and know. Yet though He descended so low in order to bring the fulness of grace and truth to poor ruined man, He remained in that state of immaculate purity which was true of none but of Himself. Unsoiled, unstained, though in the semblance of sinful flesh, perfect without and within, of the Saviour alone is it written that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," that "He knew no sin." In like manner are the Scriptures divine. In the one case God reveals Himself in our nature; in the other He reveals Himself in our speech; but in both cases is there the most rigid exclusion of sinful imperfection. And the reason is patent. For in the word, God reveals Himself and the triumph of His ways of grace over the sin of man. And this is communicated by the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 2:13); for who indeed but He could write on such a theme? And since He graciously undertook to express the mind of God to man, how daring and impious to impute error in any way to the writings He has inspired for this purpose I

Still the revelation while emanating from the Spirit of God took a human form. It was given to men and intended for men; hence human phraseology and modes of speech were employed. Nay, even the actual state of the language, Hebrew or Greek, when employed, is reproduced there. Nevertheless it is of amazing comfort to know that every expression, however human, is cleansed from the moral imperfection, from the mistakes and misrepresentations, which under all other circumstances are to be found in the writings of even the most accomplished and illustrious authors. So that it is one of the most blessed characteristics of Holy Writ that it forms an absolutely immovable foundation on which the soul may rest. Remembering this truth we desire to examine the passage before us.

"And on the first [day] of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them, about to depart on the morrow, and prolonged the word till midnight* (Acts 20:7).

{*Mr. Kelly’s trans., Bible Treasury, 17. p. 26, and in his Acts expounded, vol. 2. p. 177.}

What is the teaching of this Scripture and its context as to the breaking of bread? Was it the general usage of the disciples to assemble on every first day of the week to break bread? In other words, had the breaking of bread such a paramount claim upon the disciples that it was the specific object before them in gathering together? On the other hand, was the breaking of bread deemed by them of such minor importance that the presence of Paul was a sufficient pretext for setting it in the background in favour of the apostle’s ministry? The latter view is held by the apologists of ecclesiastical tradition, as well as by the upholders of all but universal modern practice; both of whom unite to rob the Scripture before us of its plain unequivocal meaning by using it to place the Lord’s Supper in a subordinate position utterly unknown to either the Gospels or the Epistles. We do not now speak of those who pervert it into a sacrifice for the living and the dead, and the accompanying horrors of that unbelieving and superstitious system.

Let us consider the interesting and instructive circumstances of the breaking of bread at Troas, and notice the unobtrusive way in which they are woven into the texture of the narrative. The voyage of the party from Philippi occupied five days (Acts 20:6). This was probably longer than it might have been calculated that the vessel would take. At any rate we know that, when they crossed into Europe on a former occasion, the journey between the same towns was accomplished in two days only (Acts 17:11-12). The extension of the two days to five proves pretty

conclusively, that in this instance the progress of the ship must have been considerably hindered by contrary winds or the like, to account for the wide difference.

It would appear that the party landed in Troas during the latter part of the first day of the week, or the early part of the second; for they abode in that place seven days (Acts 20:6), which brought them to the next first day of the week. The fact of this lengthened stay is highly significant. For what reason did Paul protract his stay in Troas at a time when, as we know, he was hastening if possible to be at Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16)? He deliberately avoided Ephesus because he would not be delayed on his journey. Yet here at Troas he spends no less than seven days. And it was immediately after leaving Troas that he asked the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus, a distance of thirty miles, that no time might be lost. Are we not bound to gather from these facts, that some important consideration was of sufficient weight with the apostle to cause him to tarry so long in Troas? But the narrative supplies another circumstance which sheds considerable light on the motives of Paul and his companions. When the first of the week did come and the disciples had broken bread together, the apostle was so unwilling to lose another moment that, though he spent the whole of the night in the company of the saints, he set off (we are told) at break of day on foot to Assos. It is clear therefore that Paul remained the seven days in order to be present at the meeting of the church in Troas. That the period of this stay should be just seven days and no more could hardly escape comment. And it is the more to be remarked upon, since we find the mention of the same period at a later stage of this very journey to Jerusalem, and in like manner immediately followed by the departure of the travellers. Luke records that at ’lyre, "finding disciples, we tarried there seven days." "And when we had accomplished these days, we departed and went our way" (Acts 21:4-5).

Yet another instance occurs in this book. When describing the journey to Rome, Luke writes "we came the next day to Puteoli, where we found brethren; and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome" (Acts 28:13-14). This then is the third recorded occasion in the Acts when Paul and his company after a sea voyage remain in the place of landing with the saints just seven days, and then at once recommence their journey. The explanation that lies on the face of the narrative in Acts 20:1-38 : supplies the key to the other cases, since no other is given, and the ground or motive is constant. The travellers through unexpected delays on the voyage landed at Troas just too late to join the usual weekly assemblage of the disciples to break bread. In order therefore to partake with them of the customary eucharistic remembrance of Christ, it was necessary to stay a week for the next occurrence.

There would be no such necessity to tarry until the first of the week in order to discourse to them. Of this he could and doubtless did avail himself as far as it was practicable on other days: so we know he subsequently did with the Ephesian elders. But the object of gathering at Troas, etc., was certainly not to hear Paul, though this was of deep interest and a very sufficient reason at other times for such as could be gathered. Here the standing or habitual purpose is expressly declared to have been "to break bread." At the same time it is noticeable that the purpose is stated without special emphasis or any word of enlargement. This indicates the all-importance, not the unimportance, of the motive of the disciples in so assembling. It attests not only the veracity of the historian but the divine design of the history to those that seek the truth. For there stands written the instructive fact that breaking of bread on the first day was the then established and regularly recognised institution of the Lord for the assembled saints in the apostolic age.

1895 246 It therefore appears from the account in Acts 20:1-38 : that the saints on that particular occasion came together in their ordinary and customary manner for the purpose of breaking bread on the first of the week.

It is true that, in earlier days, the disciples at Jerusalem broke bread more frequently. But they or at least many of the saints were specially found there then, as visitors unfettered by secular duties, rather than as residents; and in the love and joy of their hearts they took advantage of their opportunity, and day by day kept the feast at home (that is, in private houses in contrast with the temple). "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house (at home) did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). But at Troas we have the practice not of Jewish but of Gentile believers, and that as occurring under no such exceptional circumstances, but amid the general routine of their daily lives. From both instances it is ours to profit. At the institution of the Supper, the Lord Himself made no restrictions. "This do in remembrance of Me" was His own word to the apostles of the circumcision; but nothing did He lay down as to the frequency of participation. Neither when making a special revelation to the apostle of the Gentiles,* did the Lord define the interval that should separate the observances of the feast of remembrance. From His silence on this point therefore it may surely be gathered with the utmost certainty that He has left it to the love and fidelity of our hearts to respond to His own expressed desire by eating bread and drinking wine as often as circumstances will allow. And this we have seen was the practice in early days. In Jerusalem at the first the saints were able to break bread at home daily. In Troas the custom was to gather for that purpose on the first of the week. Considering both examples, we conclude that they were under neither the incitement nor the restriction of any rigid rule, but that they met together as often as was possible.

{*As recorded in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, which was written before the event in Troas occurred (Acts 20:1-38).}

It must however be observed that the first of the week affords the most suitable occasion on which to celebrate this feast. What can be more fitting than that the Lord’s Supper should be eaten on the Lord’s day? To both the supper and the day the Lord has prefixed His title in a distinctive way, thus marking them out as His in a special sense (1 Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10). If the use of this term (kuriakos) elevates the supper above any ordinary meal, as the apostle argues in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 :, contrasting the "Lord’s supper" with "their own supper," it is none the less true that the Lord’s day is in a similar manner distinguished from every other day of the week. Notably it was upon this day that the Lord arose. How salutary therefore that the joyful associations of His resurrection should be mingled with and tempered by the solemn remembrance of His death! It was also upon the first day of the week that the Lord twice appeared to the apostles when gathered together (John 20:19; John 20:26); while upon the same day of the week the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost to form and indwell the church of God on earth. So that there is no lack of reason for the settled custom of breaking bread on the Lord’s day as shown to exist at Troas. So much for the occasion or time upon which it was usual for them to gather together; let us now consider their intention in so assembling. This is lucidly and definitely expressed in the scripture before us, "and on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them." Their professed object is thus specifically declared to have been "to break bread." And this is stated without word or comment, which would certainly have been added had there been anything peculiar in this celebration.

It is well to note that, though Paul himself was there, his presence was not allowed to overshadow the claims of the Lord. For it was avowedly the breaking of bread that brought them together, showing what supreme control it had over their hearts, and that even the ministry of the great apostle himself ranked but as a secondary matter. No doubt the bulk of the saints were there; and after announcing the Lord's death, advantage was taken by Paul to discourse to them in a farewell fashion, "being about to depart on the morrow."

It cannot but be believed that, in the previous week, the active and zealous servant of Christ used every opportunity to impart the truth to the brethren both in public and in private. But now he was on the point of leaving them — perhaps to see their faces no more. And the apostle loved them every one as a father loves his children. As he spoke, his heart swelled with that tender anxiety for their spiritual welfare peculiarly characteristic of Paul; so that he prolonged the word till midnight. Blessed season of refreshing without doubt! But the Holy Ghost is particular to record the facts in such a way as to leave it unmistakable that the saints, without in the least undervaluing apostolic gift, met together, not to hear the farewell discourse, but to break bread. But another point deserves consideration. The correct reading, without question, is as already quoted, "when we were gathered together" etc., not "when the disciples came together" etc. The emendation is by no means unimportant and rests on ample authority. The action of gathering together is not referred to the local saints only, but the expression implies that the visitors also joined. Paul and his company were as much concerned in the assembling together as the disciples in Troas. In the revised form of the text there is not the slightest ground for the unworthy assumption that the band of labourers were themselves relieved from the responsibility, not to say privilege, of breaking bread, nor for the equally baseless inference that the Lord's Supper is a mere matter of local arrangement. On the contrary, the coming together was the united action of the whole assembly of God in Troas including the travellers. In reference to the expression, "when we gathered together," it should not be overlooked that while "we" is often used in the Acts to indicate Luke's own presence in connection with the events he is narrating, on the other hand "we" is the invariable word used in the New Testament to introduce what is characteristic of the whole of the saints of God, corporately or in the aggregate.

Thus, when Paul writes in Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," can it be doubted that "peace with God" is the common portion of every soul justified by faith? So throughout the epistle the standing of believers is taught in a similar way. The apparent exception of "I" in Romans 7:7-25 proves the rule; for there the apostle takes up the case of one not brought into the knowledge of true Christian privilege but groaning under the law. Hence "we" would there be unsuitable, as the verses are not descriptive of the normal condition of the saints of God; consequently "I" is used to set forth what is a transitional state rather than the proper position of a soul in Christ. So in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, to select another of the instances which occur almost in every chapter of the Pauline and catholic epistles. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Here it is evident a revelation is made by the writer himself an apostle and prophet, concerning the whole and not a portion of the saints of God. It is manifestly not true of the Corinthian assembly nor of Paul and Sosthenes that they should not all sleep. They have all been put to sleep by Jesus long since. But the apostle had no such contracted thought, in saying "We shall not all sleep," as to

limit its application to his contemporaries. He expressed the common privilege of all the saints, inasmuch as there is no necessity for them to pass through death. In like manner, in writing to the Thessalonians, he says, referring to the coming of Lord, "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up" etc., (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Here as in the epistle to the Corinthians, he contemplates the saints who would be on earth at the Lord's return, without at all implying as some destructive critics suppose, that he had a mistaken assurance of being alive himself. The truth taught is that the general hope and cherished expectation of the saints of God was to be, that they might be not unclothed but clothed upon with their house which is from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2-3). In John's first epistle this form of expression is remarkably prevalent, as might be expected in a communication addressed, not to any local assembly, but to the whole family of God in its broadest and most general aspect. "We know" is a formula which constantly occurs. But surely enough has now been said* to indicate that "we" is a recognised mode in the New Testament of enunciating what is universally true in the assembly of God. And it is submitted that in Acts 20:7, "When we came together to break bread," there is an example of this use. The coming together, and the breaking bread were the habitual practice of the church in Troas, and, if there, in all the churches. See 1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 7:17, 1 Corinthians 11:2; 1 Corinthians 11:16.

{*It will hardly be necessary to point out that the apostles sometimes use the plural pronoun in reference to themselves and their fellow-labourers. There is nothing of particular import in this, as there is in the usage above mentioned. On the other hand, the apostle sometimes alludes to his own personal attainments; as "For me to live is Christ" (Php 1:21). "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1): so in 2 Cor. This he predicates of his own experience, vouching nothing for others.} In accordance with this too, we find in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, where the principles of distinction between the Lord's table and the table of demons are laid down, that similar language is used. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread [and] one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." The unity of the "we" is expressly declared — one loaf, one body. It is the general truth that is in question, and would apply in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Troas, as much as in Corinth. But in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 : where the apostle takes up the particular malpractices of the Corinthian assembly in regard of the Lord's Supper, "ye" is used. "When ye come together therefore, this is not to eat the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). Here the local misbehaviour is the subject, and not universal practice. In Acts 20:7 therefore, as it stands in the corrected text, it is taught that it was the established custom of the assembly of God to come together on the first of the week for the express purpose of breaking bread. The words can mean nothing else; for none will seriously contend that "we" includes only Luke and those with him and that it was the party of travellers who came together to break bread, while the others gathered to hear Paul's discourse.

1895 261 It has already been noted that the gathering together of the saints at Troas (Acts 20:7) was the united action of the assembly in that town. And the phraseology employed is such as indicates a common and habitual custom of the church of God. This indication is certainly obscured in our ordinary version through the use of the third person for the first. But the revised and other critical translations restore the true force of the passage by rendering a better text "when we were gathered together to break bread" (verse 7), and again, "in the upper chamber where we were gathered together" (verse 8).

These words are sufficiently precise to establish that we have here a spontaneous action in concert of the assembly; while not a syllable implies that they were specially summoned to hear Paul's parting instructions and exhortations. In further confirmation of this view it may be not without profit and interest to refer briefly to similar expressions used in this very book. The assembly in Jerusalem was certainly not specially convoked on the occasion recorded in Acts 4:31. On the contrary it was so much the habitual arrangement for them to be together at that particular time, that Peter and John, on being dismissed with threats by the Jewish council, went direct to their own company where united prayer was made to God. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together" sunegmenoi as in Acts 20:7-8 : cf. Acts 4:31. In contra-distinction from this instance of formal and customary meeting we find that, when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after their tour of service in the gospel, they "gathered the church together" and "rehearsed all that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27). Again, when Barnabas and Paul with Judas and Silas returned to the same place with a certain communication from the assembly at Jerusalem, it states "when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle" (Acts 15:30). In like manner, Paul calls together the Ephesian elders to Miletus (Acts 20:17).

Here then are three instances of special gatherings of the saints by invitation, and each is distinguished by that form of expression we might expect from the stated and usual gatherings of the saints in their corporate capacity. At Troas therefore we are undoubtedly taught that the visitors gathered together along with the whole assembly to break bread, just as Barnabas and Paul had previously done for a whole year at Antioch (Acts 11:26); and those who deny this wrest the scripture to the damage of their own souls and of the souls of others. But turning to another kind of perversion of the truth there are those* who will have it that breaking of bread has reference to the love-feast or the social meal eaten by the early Christians and not to the Lord's supper except as a minor adjunct; but not so those who are bound by the clear and unequivocal language of scripture.

{*Such as Bengel in loco, "Itaque credibile est, fractione panis hic denotari convivium discipulorum cum eucharistia conjunctum, praesertim quum esset tam solennis valedictio."} The usage of the phrase "breaking of bread" in the Acts is surely convincing in itself. Speaking of the Pentecostal assembly, the record is "and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This use of the term along with "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" and the "prayers" forbids our reducing the breaking of bread to common social intercourse or even the love-feast. Indeed it is expressly distinguished from ordinary meals in the verses that follow. "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people" (vers. 46, 47). So that breaking of bread cannot be confounded with eating meat on this occasion; and it is the evident intention of the Spirit that they should not be so confounded. In the passage, Acts 20:1-38 :, the same distinction is maintained. In verse 11, after the Eutychian episode, Paul returned to the upper chamber, broke the bread, ate, and conversed till break of day. This does not sound like the Eucharist as it is often supposed to be,* which is invariably referred to as the action of the whole assembly. Compare verse 7, "when we come together to break bread"; and 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The bread which we break." But in verse 11 it is Paul who breaks the bread, as he does in Acts 27:35, after the fourteen days' fast on

ship-board. Here the apostle, after his discourse and before his long journey which was to commence at dawn, partakes of the loaf to satisfy his hunger; so that eating in this case is not participating in the feast of remembrance, but taking a meal as in Acts 10:10; in connection with which "conversing" is appropriately used, in distinction from the more formal discourse that had gone before.

{*"The bread… points to the Eucharist," says Canon Cook on this passage in the Speaker's Commentary. London, 1880. [The article has no such force there if anywhere, being inserted or omitted on its regular principles. If the writer present aught objectively before the mind, the article's used; if predicatively, it is withheld. "The" bread in Matthew 26:26, if rightly read, would have meant what was there on the table; but the best edd. with the best MSS. have it not, which then convex s simply that the Lord took "bread." So it is in Mark 14:22, Luke 19:19, and 1 Corinthians 11:23. It is yet more pertinent to notice that in Acts 2:1-47 : where the Lord's supper is twice referred to (42, and 46), one statement has, while the other has not the article. Our English usage here is like the Greek. We speak of "the breaking of the bread," when we designate it formally as the well-known Christian institution; but we say if we desire it that certain Christians were "breaking bread" at home. Acts 20:7, as well as 2: 46, contradicts the Canon's notion, both being anarthrous. Ver. 11 simply shows that, after the incident, Paul made a meal of "the" bread. It was the same loaf; but g. would not be used of the Eucharist, nor would the singular follow that solemn act. On the other hand we see "the bread" employed, and "the breaking of the bread" as the phrase (Luke 24:30; Luke 24:32) where it was a supper to make Himself known, not the Eucharist. In every way the statement of Canon Cook and of others too is indefensible. — Ed., B.T.}

Page's note on the passage therefore* is quite groundless. "They had come together 'to break bread'; this would have taken place naturally at the end of Paul's discourse but for the interruption; he now therefore resumes the interrupted order of the meeting by 'breaking the bread.'"

{*Acts of the Apostles (Macmillan 1886) page 213.} This comment contains at least two assumptions which are without the slightest scriptural warrant. He assumes (1) that although the saints came together expressly to break bread, the act of remembrance was as a matter of course put aside for the purpose of listening to Paul's farewell discourse; so that, according to such exposition, to eat the Lord's supper was but a nominal reason for gathering. And it was quite "natural" too for the feast to be supplanted by ministry of the word, not necessarily introductory to the solemn observance, but as in this case a final charge in view of the apostle's immediate departure! Such a theory is without the support of a single word of scripture. It is never of the Spirit of God to displace the claims of the Lord by the claims of the church, or of the very foremost of the apostles. If the ministry of Paul was needful to the saints, the breaking of bread was due to the Lord. Nor would the apostle himself be a party to setting aside in any way what he had insisted upon in his recent epistle to the Corinthians.

He could find no word of praise for the assembly at Corinth in respect of their observance of the feast; indeed he sharply rebukes them for the very thing for which misguided men contend as the truth. For it was at Corinth not at Troas where we find the saints allowing social intercourse to stultify if not to destroy the solemn character of the remembrance of the Lord. "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?" (1 Corinthians 11:22.)

They truly came together in one place, but it was not (in effect) to eat the Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). For, although their professed object in gathering was as at Troas to eat the Lord’s supper, on account of the flagrant disorders that prevailed that object was nullified. So that, as the apostle tells them, they came together "not for the better but for the worse" (ibid).

It is true that there were in the young Corinthian assembly the excesses of drunkenness and gluttony: but the principle enforced is that the Lord’s desire on the night in which He was betrayed is paramount to all besides. And this principle effectually disposes of every human arrangement that tends to enfeeble the transcendent claims of the Lord’s supper, whether it be an agape or a liturgy or a sermon apostolic (or otherwise). The second assumption in the quotation made above is (2) that as a matter of course Paul breaks the bread — that is, in an official capacity. This likewise is without scriptural support. We have seen that the reference is to eating to appease hunger, and not to the feast of remembrance at all (ver. 11). But so far from affording ground for presidency* at the table of the Lord, scripture teaches that there all saints meet as one for the remembrance of Him. The Corinthians in their levity were introducing class distinctions at the supper, and even of a worldly character: the rich ignored the poor; self, not Christ, ruled to their shame. The apostle gravely reproved them and told them plainly that, in bringing personalities into prominence, they made it "their own" supper and not the Lord’s.

{*Presiding, or taking the lead, is quite proper in its own place, as we may see in Acts 15:22, Romans 12:8; Romans 12:1 "Thess. 5: 12. Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17; Hebrews 13:24. Indeed, it was the prime duty of elders (1 Timothy 5:17), not necessarily teaching, but ruling or presiding. Only scripture nowhere mixes it up with the Lord’s supper, the nature and order of which exclude it there. — Ed. B.T.} The truth is that the breaking of bread is the action of the whole assembly of saints at which the Lord and none else presides, not even Paul or Peter. For the same one who declared himself not one whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles also confessed himself as less than the least of all saints. When it was a question of communicating the truth of God, he did so as an apostle and a prophet, as a teacher and a preacher. When it was a question of remembering the Lord he mingled with the rest. But it was the carnal desire for formalism that introduced the figment of ministerial administration in sub-apostolic days to the immeasurable loss of all concerned. What the Lord designed to bring the souls of His own in contact with Himself ("This do in remembrance of Me"), man thus perverts by setting up a medium between the soul of the saint and the One he remembers. Surely every child of God should resist such an innovation and all else that would hinder or mar the true character of the hallowed fellowship at the table of the Lord. W. J. Hocking.

[NOTE. — Is it not instructive to notice that the correction of abuse (which the apostle effected by recalling the Lord’s supper in its true order, aim, and character as revealed expressly to himself) is introduced and closed, before the subject of the Holy Spirit and of His varied action in gift is entered on? No one would think of so treating either the one or the other according to the traditional practice of Christendom. For men are apt unconsciously to read and interpret scripture according to their ecclesiastical habits day by day. It is clear that God has written His word so as to be a standard of truth, to let us know what His mind was from the beginning, and thus to counteract that slipping away from His will, which is even more easy and inveterate in the Christian profession than it was in the previous Jewish one. The levelling of God’s order is religious rebellion. This was at work actively at Corinth against the apostle himself. Similar evils have

developed more and more to this day. All the more are the faithful called to own and honour His good pleasure. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers," etc. God has not abdicated His rights. But this other weighty matter is distinctly and designedly separated from the due and divinely appointed celebration of the Lord's supper. The disorder therein was not made the charge of elders even, or of any other official, but pressed home on the conscience and spiritual feelings of the saints themselves. Meanwhile the Lord, Whom they forgot, did not forget to chasten the guilty that they might not be condemned with the world. The fact is that few of God's children are conscious how great and wide the departure is from the only standard of authority. Thus do we often hear of the church teaching this or that. How opposed to scripture! The church is taught and never teaches. The word of God comes to the church, and to all the church (not to one only), never from it: and for this God employs His servants. It is ministerial work, not at all the church's place. But the Lord's supper is essentially the church's feast, wherein ministers, however eminent, merge as saints, and the Lord alone is exalted in the communion of His infinite love and the incalculable indebtedness of each and all to His death. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion with the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Sin once levelled all where difference vanished; so does grace now in the remembrance of Him. It is good and right to own the Lord in every servant He sends; it is as least as good, if not better still, even here below to enjoy that blessed and holy supper, where such distinctions disappear in remembering Him Who died for our sins, and Who deigns to give His real presence in our midst. Ed. B. T.]

Chapter 94

S. Christ Jesus Emptying Himself

Christ Jesus Emptying Himself

W. J. Hocking. In his Epistle to the Philippians Paul exhorts the saints to avoid all self-exaltation and to cultivate a spirit of humility (Php 2:1-4). The apostle does not press humility of disposition as a virtue in an abstract sense, but as a unique excellence perfectly exemplified by Christ Jesus. He writes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form" (Php 2:5-7). From this revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the incarnation of the Son of God we learn that its outstanding feature lay in His making Himself of no reputation, or emptying Himself, the latter being a preferable rendering of the Greek text.* The apostle teaches that Christ Jesus Who was in "the form of God" voluntarily took upon Himself "the form of a servant (or bond-slave)," whereby He "emptied Himself." Being "in the likeness of men," He abstained from using the prerogatives of His deity apart from the will of Him that sent Him. This act of self-abnegation expressed "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," which "mind" the apostle desired should be in His saints also.

*The comment of a great scholar on Php 2:7. is "emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty"; and again, "He divested Himself, not of His divine nature, for this was impossible, but of the glories, the prerogatives, of Deity. This He did by taking upon Him the form of a servant" (Commentary on Philippians, 12th ed., 1908, by Bp. Lightfoot.). In connection with Christ's self-emptying, a charge of heterodoxy has been brought against the late William Kelly, based, as it seems, upon a half-dozen words occurring in one of his early lectures on this Epistle. This charge of false doctrine is preposterous, but we hope is not as malicious as it is ill-founded. The words of W.K. quoted against him are: "He (Christ) emptied Himself of His deity." And on the evidence of this brief sentence, it is declared that W.K. taught that on becoming man Christ ceased to be God, founding this serious accusation upon what is merely their own hasty interpretation of a brief sentence selected from the speaker's somewhat lengthy expository remarks upon the Philippian passage (Php 2:5-8).

Indeed, the falsity of this implication is evident even from the speaker's remarks which precede the words quoted. Before using them, W.K. had made clear to his audience what he himself considered was conveyed by the passage he was expounding (Php 2:5-8), and especially the sense of the phrase, "emptied Himself." He taught his hearers that "emptied Himself" meant not that Christ Jesus in taking the form of a bond-servant thereby dispossessed Himself of His absolute deity, but of its prerogatives by abstaining from using these on His own initiative. But on this point, we may let W.K. speak for himself. From the long passage (some five pages of print) dealing with Php 2:5-8 we have selected from the Notes the following extracts, dealing with the deity of Christ Jesus.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal (on equality) with God, but made Himself of no reputation (emptied Himself), taking a bondman's form, being come in men's likeness" (Php 2:5-7). What an illustrious

testimony to the true, proper, intrinsic deity of Christ! It is all the stronger because, like many more, it is indirect (p. 46). . . . Nothing can be conceived more conclusively to prove is own supremely divine glory than the simple statement of the text, . . . Of Christ alone it was true that He took a bond-servant's form; and of Him alone could it be true, because He was in the form of God. In this nature He subsisted originally, as truly as He received a bondman's; both were real, equally real: the one intrinsic, the other that which He condescended to assume in infinite grace (p. 47). . . .

"Yet must we carefully bear in mind that it would be as impossible for a divine person to cease to be God as for a man to become a divine person. But it was the joy and triumph of divine grace that He Who was God equally with the Father, when about to become a man, did not carry down the glory and power of the Godhead to confound man before Him, but rather emptied Himself. . . He was God: yet in the place of man which He truly entered He had, as was meet, the willingness to be nothing. He made Himself of no ana1hema reputation (emptied Himself). How admirable! How magnifying to God! He put in abeyance all His glory (pp. 47-8). . . .

"There are two great stages in the advent and humiliation of the Son of God. The first is in respect of His divine nature or proper deity He emptied Himself. He would not act on a ground which exempted Him from human obedience when He takes the place of servant here below (p. 49). . . . But we find another thing; if He emptied Himself of His deity when He took the form of a servant, when He does become a man He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death" (p. 50). From these extracts it will be seen that W.K. maintained the full deity of Christ Jesus and also that His deity was unimpaired when He took manhood. Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman. Of His own will, He divested Himself of His prerogatives as God, choosing not to command as God but to obey as a servant. All the inherent rights of deity are His inalienably; obedience, however, is a function not of deity, but of one who takes the place of submission to the will of another. Being God, and being come in man's likeness, Christ Jesus undertook the place of servitude. "Though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Yet He, "according to flesh, is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 9:5).

Such is the doctrine of scripture concerning Christ Jesus, and from this doctrine W.K. does not appear to depart even in the sentence over which some seem to have stumbled through lack of attention to its context. In his address, W.K. was at this point passing from the consideration of Php 2:5-7 to Php 2:8. In the former the subject is Christ's humiliation; as One in "the form of God," He takes "the form of a servant." In the latter, Christ further humbles Himself and is obedient as man even to crucifixion. Referring to this transition of subject, the lecturer said, "But we find another thing: if He emptied Himself of His deity when He took the form of a servant (Php 2:5-7), when He does become a man He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death" (Php 2:8). "Deity" and "man" are the two key-words in the two sections of this sentence, and the word "if" should be noted especially.

Obviously, W.K.'s teaching is not fairly represented by quoting only six words from this sentence, and also by omitting the little word "if." Thus, "He emptied Himself of His deity" is made to appear as an independent and absolute sentence, which it was not intended to be. The author did not say Christ did so, but "if" He did so. The speaker's object at this stage was to point out that in Php 2:7 Christ's humiliation is related to His deity, and in Php 2:8 to His humanity.

W.K. is not alone in this interpretation. The same distinction is pointed out by J.N.D. in his "Synopsis" of the passage. In similar language he states that as God Christ emptied Himself and as man He humbled Himself. He writes, "Christ . . . when He was in the form of God, emptied Himself, through love, of all His outward glory, of the form of God. and took the form of a man; and even when He was in the form of man, still humbled Himself. It was a second thing which He did in humbling Himself. As God, He emptied Himself; as man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient even unto death. His humiliation itself is a proof that He is God. God only could leave His first estate in the sovereign rights of His love. It is sin for any creature so to do" (pp. 468-9).

Deity is manifested by the exercise of its attributes and prerogatives. In His incarnation, these were suppressed by Christ, but were not abandoned, which could not be. Hence Christ appeared among men as One Who had (to use W.K.'s phrase) "emptied Himself of His deity." As it were, He had laid aside His garments (His seamless robe) and girded Himself with a towel for menial service at the disciples' feet. His dis-robing did not affect His personal relationship to them as the Lord and the Teacher (John 13:14). When Christ Jesus emptied Himself for obedience, He was still God, for it could not be otherwise. But, if we may so speak, He was pleased that in His incarnation His deity should remain quiescent, and His bond-service appear. In the wilderness after His baptism Christ Jesus was twice tempted by Satan to exercise His own deity and do what is impossible to man, though possible to God. But having emptied Himself for service and being there as bond-servant, He remained steadfast in His obedience to and compliance with His Father's will. Hence He neither made stones bread, nor cast Himself down from the temple to prove Himself to be the Son of God, which nevertheless He was, and is. In the garden of Gethsemane Christ is seen to he the self-emptied One, choosing the Father's will, and not His own. There in agonized anticipation of the cup before Him, He cried, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I (emphatic) will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Along with omniscient knowledge of what was before Him on the morrow, there was the display of the spirit, not of self-assertion and of escape, but of self-surrender and submission. He laid aside His own will, accepting His Father's, and on the cross doing that will, offering Himself to God in the sweet savour of His perfect obedience as Jehovah's Servant.

We conclude with three other quotations from J.N.D.'s ministry, all referring to Christ's emptying Himself in His incarnation: (1) "There are two degrees in Christ's humiliation. He first strips Himself of His own glory, and becomes man; then, being man, He goes down even unto the death of the cross;" (2) "He laid aside the form of Godhead, and was found as a man; and, being a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant;" (3) "Leaving God in the glory, leaving the form of God, in abeyance, He became a servant for the blessing of others." All three extracts are taken from his Collected Writings (Vol. 27 pp. 255, 274, 323). They all treat of the stoop of grace taken by Christ Jesus when He was found in fashion as a man, and all note the two stages in His humiliation as W.K. also indicates.

NOTE.-The following is a brief history of the phrase under consideration. It first appeared nearly a century ago in W. Kelly's "Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians" (The Bible Treasury. Vol. 5). The words in question occur in the article on pp. 283-4 (June, 1865). These notes being compiled from shorthand reports of W.K.'s oral ministry were issued in book form in 1867, and entitled "Lectures on the Epistle to the Philippians." Since that date, fresh impressions from the original have been published, without revision, as required. In connection with W.K.'s phrase, "emptied Himself of His

deity," it is interesting to record a remark of his on the same subject made some ten years previously and occurring in The Christian Annotator for the year 1855. in that journal (vol. ii. p. 91), a contributor, writing on the parables of the treasure and the pearl (Matthew 13:44-46) stated, "The man is He Who parted with all He had, even His Godhead, which He laid aside, and . . bought . . ." On p. 119 of the same volume, in criticizing this remark on our Lord's renunciation. W.K. wrote, "Our Lord does not, and cannot, cease to be 'over all, God blessed for ever.'" As a result, on p. 158 the author of the remark "heartily" withdrew his original expression, substituting for "Godhead" the "glory of the Godhead." He had spoken without due deliberation.

It will be observed that W.K., before using the phrase. "emptied Himself of His deity" had fully explained what it could not mean, viz., that Christ Jesus yielded up the possession of His deity or His Godhead, or His Essential Being, which is an impossibility. In His flesh He was still God, blessed for ever. Taking the form of a bond-slave, He thus emptied Himself, subjecting Himself absolutely to, the will of Another. For our sakes, "He being rich became poor": an unsolved mystery to the understanding, but an amazing comfort and unending joy to the heart of faith.

S. Christ the Propitiatory

Christ the Propitiatory

W. J. Hocking.

1915 344 It has been already observed, in a former paper, that propitiation is, by the apostle John, intimately associated with the person of the Son of God (1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 4:10). It is no less true that Paul, by the Spirit of God, speaks in perfect agreement with John, using terms modified to suit the character of the communications he was inspired to give. In the Epistle to the Romans, the great theme is the demonstration of the righteousness of God, especially in His provision of a righteousness for unrighteous and guilty man. And in the first part of the book the dazzling search-light of the truth of GOd sweeps the broad face of the habitable earth, revealing the intractable evil of the universal heart and ways of all mankind, whether Jew or Gentile. Unrighteousness was to be found everywhere; righteousness nowhere. And what thrilled the great heart of the apostle of the Gentiles with joy was that he was commissioned to proclaim in the gospel that, when it had been fully proved that a man could not provide a righteousness of his own for God, God had Himself provided one for him. What had been foreshadowed and foretold by law and prophets for so long was now at length revealed.

"Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe. For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and do come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:21-26). In this very full and rich passage there are two main subj ects brought forward which can now be no more than indicated, viz.: (1) the righteousness of God, which is offered to all; and (2) the vindication of God’s righteousness in so doing, and in making the believer righteous. Nothing can be more essential for man in having to do with a righteous God than righteousness. This man does not possess in himself, but the God of grace offers it through faith in Jesus Christ. The offer is made to all men, and the righteousness is bestowed upon all who believe. Not a single soul is excluded from the opportunity of accepting this justification, for all alike have sinned, and fall short of God’s glory; whilst each believer is justified freely by His grace. But is God righteous in thus justifying the ungodly? Had He not declared under the law, "I will not justify the wicked" (Exodus 23:7)? On what ground, then, does God righteously impute righteousness to the believer? The apostle, replying as it were to such a question, points to the PersOn of the adorable Son of God. It was Christ Jesus in whom God showed forth His righteousness in justifying thOse who believe. Prior to this time, God’s gracious dealings were only secretly, not manifestly, set upon a righteous basis. The foundations of His righteousness in grace could not be revealed till Christ came. And what was the result of Christ’s coming? That God was shown to have been righteous throughout

Old Testament times, as, indeed, He is now, in blessing every soul who receives the gospel. "Whom [Christ Jesus; God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare (1) his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare (2) I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26). God's righteousness is, therefore, said to be declared in regard to His remission (or, strictly, the praeter-mission, that is, forgiveness based on that which was coming) of the sins of Old Testament believers, and also in regard to His present act of justifying the believer in Jesus.

Now, observe that this public declaration of God's righteousness is connected with Christ as the propitiatory. It is in this character that Christ displayed God's righteousness "" Whom God set forth a propitiatory . . . . to declare His righteousness." For it is a remarkable fact that a different word is used by Paul from that used in John's Epistle. This fact can be verified by anyone having the slightest acquaintance with the Greek tongue, and is noted in most versions. In John's Epistle, Christ is said to be the ilasmos, but in the Epistle to the Romans He is called the ilasterion. We have one other instance only in the New Testament of the use of the latter word, which establishes its meaning beyond just question. The apostle, when enumerating the furniture of the holy of holies in the ancient tabernacle, spoke of the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat (ilasterion, Hebrews 9:5). From the two passages, therefore, there can be no doubt that Christ is the Antitype of the mercy-seat, or propitiatory, as He is also the ilasmos or propitiatory sacrifice (1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10), whose blood was sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat (Leviticus 16:14).

It will be remembered that Moses was to make the mercy-seat of pure gold, and to place it upon the ark of testimony. "There I will meet with thee," said Jehovah, "and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat" (Exodus 25:17-22). Fine gold was emblematical of the intrinsic righteousness of God, as brass was of His judicial righteousness. Hence, when the blood of the victim, on the great day of atonement, was sprinkled upon the golden mercy-seat, the act clearly signified, in type, that the claims of Jehovah's righteous nature were glorified thereby. And the seven-fold sprinkling before the propitiatory indicated that a foundation was thus laid for communion with Jehovah, as He had said to Moses. In the Epistle to the Romans (to which we have been referring) we find the mercy-seat, the blood, and the righteousness of God, all associated together. For Christ Jesus is shown as the propitiatory through faith in His blood to declare God's righteousness. This declaration He has made. As the exceeding riches of God's grace will be declared in coming ages (Ephesians 2:7), so God's righteousness has been already declared "at this time." Moreover, it was done here below. For this Epistle deals with the position of the believer in this world, not in the heavenlies as is done in the Ephesians. So the moral history of the world is summarised to prove it guilty before God; and where the fruits of man's unrighteousness abounded, there — not in heaven — God's righteousness in justifying the ungodly was demonstrated. In Old Testament times, as may be seen in the book of Job, the possible relation of unrighteous man to a holy God was unknown; but now Christ has declared it to be consonant with God's righteousness by becoming a propitiatory. In His own blessed Person lifted upon the cross, He formed the blessed answer to all the righteous demands of God. Is there a difficulty in that Christ is the sacrifice, and, moreover, the mercy-seat where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled? It is no greater difficulty than in Christ being both the Shepherd of the sheep and the Door through which He leads them (John 10:1-42). It was unbelief that could not

understand how Christ could be both David’s Son and David’s Lord, Such paradoxes do not stagger faith. All the difficulties vanish when we remember He was "God manifest in flesh." An ancient writer (Theodoret) has put it: "The Lord Christ is God, and the Mercy-seat, and the High Priest, and the Lamb, and in His blood He has worked out our salvation." Christ is indeed all. His Person is one, and His work is one.

Herein was the great distinction between the Anti type and the types. They were many and varied and terrestrial; and they were, by reason of their very nature, in all points exceeded by the Antitype, as the heavens are higher than the earth. To insist on the necessities of the type in the Antitype is to speak derogatorily of the Person of the Son. In the type you must have a person to take the blood of the sacrifice from the altar to the mercy-seat; but in Christ the sacrifice and mercy-seat coincided, and hence there was no necessity for such transference of His blood, as in the type. And, on the word of Christ Himself, the work was finished when He bowed His head, and dismissed His spirit (John 19:30).

Moreover, the fact of the closure of the work was attested by the veil of the temple being supernaturally rent from the top to the bottom (Mark 15:38). The veil signified of old that the way into the holiest of all, for communion with. God from above the mercy-seat, was not then made manifest (Hebrews 9:8); but when rent thus it proclaimed that a new and living way into the holiest had been dedicated; so that by the blood of Jesus we may enter with boldness. But the veil was emphatically a figure of Christ’s flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20), and plainly points that the work whereby the restrictions of the most holy place were removed was accomplished in His flesh* on the cross, and not in heaven after death. For Christ’s death (the rent veil) declared the way open, which implies that the work on which this could be righteously done had then been accomplished, and, moreover, accepted by Him for whom it was accomplished. W. J. H.

S. Christ the Source of Life

Christ the Source of Life (Notes of an address on John 5:17-36)

W. J. Hocking. The General Character of John’s Gospel The subject of eternal life is peculiar to the fourth of the Gospels. And that this peculiarity should be found there will not be a matter for surprise when the character of this Gospel is remembered — a character which is easily observed on comparison with the others. For while the Synoptics, as the first three are often called by way of distinction, set out the varied glories of Christ as the One who was deputed, in mercy and righteousness, to establish God’s order in a world of disorder and sin, the disciple "whom Jesus loved" was inspired to write upon a more exalted theme. To him was assigned the high and holy task of presenting, in His divine nature, the Person of Him who came forth from the Father. In other words, John gives us the Godhead side of the marvellous and mysterious Incarnation, not stated in the abstract terms of a philosophical disquisition, but exemplified for our spiritual apprehension in the words and actions of Jesus the Son of God. In this Gospel, then, the children of God have the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and receiving this by faith we receive Him, and receiving Him we receive Him that sent Him. Yet it is well to remember that this reception on our part must be in a progressive sense. Nathanael may exclaim in wondering rapture at a transient vision of His glory, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel"; and Simon Peter, illuminated by the revelation of the Father may confess, "Thou art the Son of the living God." But this knowledge of theirs must deepen and develop before either the one or the other can attain to that stage of Christian growth at which a person is said to know Him who is from the beginning (1 John 2:14). The Influence of This Gospel upon the New Life

It is a matter of common experience among the simplest of believers that the Gospel of John possesses an irresistible attraction above other parts of Scripture. And this attraction, apart from the recognition of the all-absorbing Personality who shines in radiant glories throughout its chapters, is inexplicable. The new nature turns instinctively to Him who is its source of light and life and love. Hence we always in the devout breading of this Gospel discover heights and depths altogether beyond our comprehension. We feel an inexpressible sweetness which is nowhere else. We recognise that its study brings us into a sphere of elevating and ennobling influence such as we love. Why is this so? Is it not because we have here the dignities and glories of the Lord Jesus Christ? The record of His majesty captivates our heart’s affections. We cannot but rejoice to learn the greatness of Him who comes so near to us in His love. We delight in the knowledge of the glory of Him in whom we trust. We see that He is not one of ourselves, not one of the saintly personages of divine history, not one of the mighty angels from above, but the Son of God, the Word become flesh. And He is, therefore, One whom, in His ineffable love, we cannot but worship and adore. The only-begotten Son has revealed the Father and His love. Clearly we could not have penetrated heaven to obtain the knowledge of this love. Neither is such a task now needful, since this love in its glory and heavenly perfection has been brought down to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. And to know Him and the Father who sent Him is eternal life. This knowledge comes to us through the Scriptures. Hence it is that the Gospel of John which testifies of the Son as the

Revealer of the Father exercises such a powerful influence upon the spiritual life. The perusal of it develops the essential quality of deep reverence. It is not sufficient to love, we should also honour a loved one. And for all believers there is need that the habit of reverence should be acquired and practised. For we are exposed in a greater degree than we sometimes realise to the serious danger of undervaluing the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are liable to depreciate His work for us and His care for us. But the scriptural record affords a needful corrective of these natural tendencies, the Gospels and Epistles of John setting the Lord before us in the very atmosphere of heaven, as it is written, "The Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). When we see Him we see the Father. When we hear Him, we hear the One who is in the bosom of the Father. And such experience as this cannot but affect the most deep-seated springs of our inner spiritual life. The Nature of Life Unknown

We have seen that there is an intimate relation between the subject of eternal life and that aspect of the Incarnation revealed through the apostle John. It is clear that apart from the possession of eternal life there is no apprehension of the Father nor the Son, The sheep know the Shepherd, but then He gives them eternal life. The fact of this gift is declared plainly enough, but the nature of the life bestowed is, in its essence, unrevealed and therefore remains unknown. That portion of Holy Writ which is so full of references to life eternal as possessed by the family of God contains no definition of the nature of this subtle principle. What the new life is abides a mystery inscrutable to psychological and every scientific inquiry, just as physical life, that is, the life which is the common possession of mankind, baffles all research into its nature and origin. Nor can the enshrouding veil be lifted even in the case of the lowliest organism. God has reserved to Himself the knowledge of the mystery of life, whether in man or in monad. This is true in the natural order of things, and it is certainly true in the matter of spiritual life.

However, we do not find that this ignorance of the nature of physical life in any way interferes with the faithful discharge of its duties and responsibilities. Were such knowledge necessary in spiritual things we may be sure it would have been revealed. And it is worthy of remark that the many references to this subject in scripture are made in terms which are addressed not so much to the intelligence as to the heart. The various statements are not susceptible to analysis and definition like the theme of a philosophical treatise.

Life itself — the fact of it, the truth of it — is the main thing. And the knowledge of this we receive on the authority of the word of God. We know we are born of God. not only by the subjective evidence of our own love to God and to the brethren (1 John 3:14; 1 John 5:1), but by the objective testimony of the record that God has given of His Son. The truth of eternal life is the truth of our present life. It is the basis of our being now children of God. And this life is in the Son. As to the old creation it is true that in God we live and move and have our being, and as to the new creation our life is hid with Christ in God. The Sovereign Rights of the Son

We are now brought to the theme of the chapter before us. For in John 5:1-47 we learn that the origin — the source — of divine life is the Lord Jesus Christ. This life may be and is utterly beyond our comprehension, but we may derive much comfort from the knowledge that it originates with the ever-living Son. And it is as the Quickener that He displays Himself in this connection. Moreover, in this act of quickening, which is essentially a divine one, He claims to exercise His own sovereign right — "the Son quickeneth whom he will."

Now the sovereignty of our Lord is prominently displayed throughout this chapter, and indeed is especially noticeable in the incident of healing with which it opens. The person healed was one of a great company of afflicted folk, all of whom were desirous to avail themselves of what relief there was to be obtained at the troubling of the waters of Bethesda. But the Lord chose to go to this company, without any invitation, so far as the record goes. And He went among them as One who had His sovereign rights in this world, making a selection, from the crowd according to the good pleasure of His own will.

We must remember that this man, desperate and pitiable as his case was after thirty-eight years' suffering, was not thereby entitled to demand relief from God. Neither had he physical strength to seek Him who came from heaven to render relief. But the Lord sought him where he was. In this He was exercising His right. So on another occasion He demanded the use of an ass with the simple statement of His paramount rights: "The Lord hath need of him." But this is altogether an exceptional instance; for throughout the Gospels we have many examples of individuals coming to Jesus and seeking some favour from Him, and when the case was stated the Lord readily gave more even than was asked. And if crowds came He would help and bless them all. There was mercy for any and for all. The Man at the Pool

1913 216 Here then we have the unique instance of the Lord singling out one from a number of sick folk, and putting to him the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Why is this case given? Because it is good for us to know that He possessed the right to help and to heal whomsoever He would. It is so still. In our prayers, for example, we have no rights before God. The rights are wholly His. He is gracious to hear and to answer, but He is supreme, and we have no valid claims upon His bounty. The Lord's question awakened only surprise in the sick man. It was to him a strange question. From the countenance of the speaker he did not discern the Lord of glory. He only regarded Him as a man who might perhaps have kindness enough to stand by and put him into the pool at the proper moment. His thoughts rose no higher than, this: "I have no man to put me into the pool," he said in reply. There was thus no recognition of the Lord. The eyes were dull, the heart heavy, the sensibilities blunted. The Son of God was speaking in solicitude; but there were no ears to hear. There was no appreciation of the Person who addressed him. In short, there was no spiritual life there. This deficiency however proved no hindrance, for the Lord had come to Bethesda to supply all that was lacking in this case, in contrast with the provisions of the law. "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). While the law was "weak through the flesh" the Lord rose above such limitations. In spite of the man's dulness, debility, and deadness, He bestowed upon him the gift of healing. He was acting here in His own rights as the Son of God.

Thereupon the word of the Lord went forth to the prostrate sufferer, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Now with that word went a supernatural power which wrought a stupendous change in the hearer. He no longer regarded Jesus as a man who might peradventure put him into the pool. He now recognised Him as One whom he was bound to obey. The word of the Lord imparted new life to him. He believed. He obeyed. He was confident that the word which bade him rise was not spoken in mockery and that the ability to respond which he lacked in himself would in some manner be supplied. He believed the Lord, and like millions beside, he was not made ashamed.

Persecution by the Jews A great testimony for God was hereby rendered in the city of Zion. The Son acting in His Father’s name avoids the temple which He had already pronounced to be no longer His Father’s house, and visits the crowd of impotent folk waiting for one of their number to be benefited by the troubling of the pool. He selects an absolutely helpless and hopeless man who, in obedience to His command, carries his bed through Jerusalem on that very sabbath as a witness to the genuineness of the cure. But this was a witness to more than the power of Jesus; it testified also to the authority He possessed as the Son of God to abrogate the conventionalities of the law. This act of grace by the Lord became a reason for His abuse and His persecution by the Jews. They repudiated altogether the claims He made. They sought to kill Him because He had broken the sabbath, and because He said that "God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." This obstinate unbelief and opposition of the Jews gave occasion for the Lord to reveal further glories concerning Himself. Their blindness of understanding showed the desperateness of their case as a nation. Though they were well acquainted with the letter of the ancient oracles, they utterly failed to receive the Lord and His words, and this failure in the face of such exceptional testimony was because they were spiritually dead.

What then is the resource when there is such hopeless obduracy? What sort of a person can help in such circumstances where the powerlessness is that of death? Only One who can act for God without any compromise of the nature of God; and, more than this, only One who can act as God and with God. Hence the Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Such a One then can only be God’s own Son. He possesses more than a delegated authority, for in His own inherent right He can speak in His own authority. This He does, prefacing His words with the phrase characteristic of this Gospel, "Verily, verily, I say unto you" (verses 19, 24, 25). The Son Claims Equality with the Father The Lord in His answer to the Jewish cavils demonstrates His equality with the Father. This mode of reply is to be weighed. In respect of His work of mercy on the Sabbath, the Lord does not here refer, as in the other Gospels, to the case of David and the show-bread, nor to the priests in the temple, nor to the utilitarianism of the act justifying it, as when the life of a sheep was preserved. In, this instance He calmly asserts His divine right as the Son of the Father. The Lord then declared His glory as the Eternal Son, resting it upon three grounds. He showed that His Sonship appears —

(1) In His union and communion with the Father (verses 19, 20).

(2) In Himself as the Quickener of whom He will (ver. 21).

(3) In Himself as the appointed Judge of mankind (ver. 22). In the first place then, the Son is seen to be acting in the Father’s name. His competency to do this is shown by His union with the Father. And the union is implied in the statement, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." His adequacy is also further affirmed by the communion existing with the Father; "for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Had He not said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"? To work in such partnership involves equality with the Father; for while not acting independently, 1:e., "of Himself," He is competent to do all the Father does, and to do it all in the same manner, that is, divinely. The Son does not only what He is told to do, but also what He sees the Father do. Consequently, in the life, the actions and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ we have the fulness of the Father’s heart of

love, otherwise inaccessible to man, brought into view in this world. It is indeed cause for marvel when we reflect that in that lowly Man passing patiently onwards through a path of obloquy we have a perfect exhibition, of the Father’s love on high. So that looking upon and studying Him we learn the essential features of God’s ineffable grace and truth. And this subject we can only learn in communion with the Father and the Son. There is a great difference between learning a thing from a companion and learning it from a book. Affection and regard play not a small part in the former process. This part of the New Testament, which from one standpoint may seem abstract and dreamy, enters into the very marrow of Christian life because the Person of Christ stands there revealed in His highest glory. Through and in Him the believer learns his most valuable lessons. The Christian life is not a mere code of ritualistic obedience to a series of specified commands, the fulfilment of certain duties defined with precision. Such was the Mosaic method, where you have not the operations of a new life so much as the repres sion of the old life. The law came with the coldness of an "army order"; it lacked life. The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.

Eternal life brings us into relationship with the living Word — a Person to whom we may come and appeal directly, telling Him our sorrows and our joys, and find comfort and peace in the telling. For this privilege, true from the beginning, is not now obsolete, except so far as we make it so by our neglect.

We now come to the second point: the Son is the Giver of life. It has been observed that He is in no whit inferior to the Father. What God does, the Son does in like manner. What a Saviour for sinful men! In addition, we are taught that the Son exercises the divine function of bestowing life. "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." And this function He exercises in His lowliness as Son of man: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (ver. 26). This attribute was displayed in His ministry. Everywhere He went He had life in Himself. There could therefore be no death in His presence. He possessed a store of life-giving energy, to the power of which the daughter of Jairus, the widow’s son of Nain, and the beloved Lazarus were monuments.

It is true that in all these vivifying acts, He was the subject One, but still in the place of subjection He had what no creature could have, His sovereign rights, and could give life when and where it pleased Him: "the Son quickeneth whom he will. In the third particular, also, the Son is said to exercise a divine function. Who but God can in the absolute sense (and this is the only possible sense here) judge men? And we read, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." This authority to judge mankind is conferred upon Him "because He is the Son of man." But being Son of God He is at the same time competent in His own right to execute this high function. In the days of His flesh He was in this dark and evil world as Heaven’s Light to expose, not to judge, sins, to forgive sins not to condemn the sinner. But we learn that He who was sent to atone for sin is He who will be sent as the Executor of divine judgment, all judgment being committed unto the Son.

Hence the call to honour the Son in His proper excellency. Those who do not by faith see His glory in His humiliation will be compelled to witness and acknowledge it when He is manifested in His own glory and in. His Father’s. This glory will be so transcendent in character that it will perforce bow all stubborn hearts and knees in reverent homage to the Son of man, the Father’s fiat being that all should honour the Son even as they honour Him. The believer recognises this equality in

worship and adoration. Whatever God is, the Son is also. This we freely and gladly acknowledge, and God is jealous of this, since it was the Son who suffered for sins. God was glorified in Him. And "if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself" (John 13:31-32). The Charter of Life

1913 The passage relating to the present possession of eternal life is familiar: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life." This positive statement comes to us with an intensified force of conviction as we view its context. We recollect the glory of the Speaker. He who speaks of the possession of life is the One who quickens. Words carry weight in proportion to the dignity of Him who speaks, and to His ability to establish the truth of what He utters. Here the Son of God speaks, the divine Quickener, the Judge of all. Our part is to receive His words by faith in spite of our feeble apprehension of their significance. The value of them is only to be measured by the Person of Christ. Their validity rests upon Omnipotence. When the Son of God says that a person shall riot come into judgment He has the unchallengeable right to speak on such a matter. For the Judge is speaking, the One who will preside at that Great Assize. He has therefore the necessary authority to grant an exemption from the process of judgment. This He does in the solemn declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and shall not come into judgment." The word "condemnation" in the Authorised Version falls short of the meaning of the text. This may imply being judged but escaping punishment, whereas the Lord promised freedom from the judgment itself, that is, from arraignment at the trial. This assurance is made to `the hearer of Christ’s word. Hearing, however, is not merely listening, but receiving in the heart the Son’s word of grace and power. It was so with the man at the pool. If he received the word "Rise" as the word of a man he could only regard it as a mockery of his helplessness; but discerning it as the voice of One who spake as never man spake he received the power he otherwise lacked. Essaying to rise in obedience to the command, he rose in a strength bestowed by the Life-giver. So, hearing the word of the Son, and believing the Father who sent Him, are inseparable from the living water which the Son of God imparts to the needy.

Thus in this passage we have the assurance (1) from the Quickener that the hearer and believer possesses eternal life, and (2) from the Universal Judge that he is immune from future judgment. These momentous questions are by this text answered definitely and finally, and placed once for all upon an immutable foundation.

Signs of Life The presence of life is determined by its action. An absolutely impassive life is unthinkable. This is true of physical life which invariably exhibits itself in motion; where there is none, death is assumed. And so, by analogy, it is spiritually; without motion Godward, there is spiritual death. But if a person possesses eternal life, he has passed "from death unto life." Such a person has the consciousness of God as Father, of the Son as Saviour and Lord. He has esteem, regard and reverence, as well as adoration and worship, for the Father and the Son.

Eternal life places a person in the right relationship of heart and will to the revealed Godhead. It must not be confounded with active philanthropy. A sense of duty towards one’s fellow-creatures is not necessarily evidence of the possession of eternal life. Take the case of Judas Iscariot who had every symptom of such a regard for men. In this world of suffering and sin he did many wonderful works of healing and mercy in the name of the Lord; but there was no appreciation of

the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ upon his lips. He did not confess like Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Judas betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. There was no life in him — no honouring the Son even as the Father.

Again: hearing the voice of the Son of God is evidence of eternal life; "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." How can this be? Can a dead per Son hear? In a natural sense, it involves a contradiction of terms. Yet the testimony of Scripture is that Lazarus, and the widow's son, and Jairus' daughter heard that voice. So it is with dead souls according to the witness of the verse before us. The Speaker is the Son of God. And God in the Person of His Son quickens. He gives life — not notions, not creeds. Our part is that of faith. We miss the value of the words of Jesus if we seek to compass them by our own puny thoughts and ideas. Let us believe; for in this is life. The Two Hours

Moreover, life-giving is a present act. It is a process in progress. The "hour" for it "now is." Spiritual life is bestowed on those who hear the word of the Son. But there is another "hour" of which the Lord goes on to speak. "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." As the present hour has reference to the inner life of man, so the future one refers to the body. Light is here shed upon the darkness of the tomb into which the voice of the Life-giver will penetrate.

Resurrection is life for the dead body. The spirit of the departed believer is with Christ, which, as the apostle says, is a "far better" state than the present. This state is reached immediately upon falling asleep. Hence the Lord said to the robber, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." There was, in consequence, for his spiritual nature, an instantaneous transfer to the highest heaven, while the mangled body waits in the dust of the earth for the awakening word of life in the coming hour. Then in the first resurrection the Lord's redemptive work will be completed for spirit, soul and body — for him and for all who had like faith. But this resurrection of life is the resurrection of those who heard the voice of the Son of God in the first hour. The response to His voice at His coming is the response of those that are Christ's. It is the response of a previously formed, and a living, relationship. The Lord comes into the air and speaks, and a resurrection from among the dead is the immediate result. This is the secret rapture — secret because the voice of the Lord will be unperceived then as it is unperceived now by the world, and was formerly unperceived by ourselves. The result then of hearing the Son's voice in that coming time for those who hear His voice now, is that life will then be known by them in fulness and glory. Now the new life is hindered and hampered by the influence of present things. The spirit is clogged. Then we shall rise unfettered to ascend into a sphere of uninterrupted communion with God the Father and God the Son. The life already imparted rises to its source — to Him who is the true God and eternal life. But the wicked dead will not escape the power of that all-compelling voice — the summons from their Judge. They will subsequently (Revelation 20:1-15) rise too in the resurrection of judgment, from which the believer, as we have seen, is exempted. In conclusion, we may observe that the possession of eternal life is not the result of a personal struggle. It is not consequent upon a successful career of morality and philanthropy. It is a divine gift — "the gift of God is eternal life." There is therefore no adequate cause for self-satisfaction or boastfulness. The free gift is of grace. The Son quickens whom He will. He sought us when we were lying helpless in the folly and degradation of sin. He granted unto us a new life, breathed out from Himself. Let us, therefore, as Scripture teaches us to do, ascribe all praise and glory to Him who is the Bestower of life upon

those who hear His word. W.J.H.

S. Christ's Obedience and Ours.

Christ’s Obedience and Ours.

W. J. Hocking.

1892 94 The obedience of Christ was marked by the unvarying character of perfect uniformity with the Father’s will; and the manner of His compliance with that will was always unhesitating and unquestioning. So that His obedience was of the very highest order. There is an obedience among men which is the result of persuasion or even fear, as when an adverse will is overcome by tender entreaties or powerful reasons or a superior will. But the Lord’s obedience was not of any such nature. It was His very meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." His own will never asserted or exercised itself but in one direction alone; and that, in faultless unison with the Father’s. In connection with this thought, it will be observed that the Spirit of God, in witnessing of the obedience of Christ, uses a term highly expressive of its character. The word employed is always hypakoe, or its cognate forms, indicating how completely He was governed by what He heard from God. So the prophet had testified beforehand, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 1:4). This position of continual dependence the Lord never left. "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge." "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do" (John 5:19-30). In contrast with the men around Him, self as a ruling motive was obliterated and the spring of His actions lay without Himself in the Divine Will. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself. He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory" (John 7:17-18, R.V.)

Never had there been or could have been such obedience on earth, nor even in heaven. For although the will of God was and is perfectly done above, the angels only fulfil the purpose of their creation in "hearkening to the voice of His word." But this obedient Man, scorned for that very reason by all the disobedient, was the beloved Son of God in Whom He was well pleased. It was the transcendent dignity of His Person that elevated the obedience beyond compare, to say nothing of the adverse and afflicting circumstances in which it was rendered up to death, and what a death! As the eternal Son, He was the ruler over all. From the meanest creature on earth to the archangel on high nothing stirred but at His bidding. Yet "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php 2:8). What a marvel was this, that the divine Son should become a bondman and "learn" (subjection being foreign to the Lord of all) "obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). And the lesson was learned perfectly. From first to last not a single exhortation was needed; for, without exception, He invariably did those things that pleased His Father. This obedience was unparalleled, and gave infinite satisfaction to God. By so much as He was displeased by the disobedience of Adam, by that much, and far more, was He pleased by the obedience of the Second Man. Not, however, that the obedience was primarily on man’s account, nor in any proper way, or strict sense, vicarious; but therein God found a perfect answer upon earth to the divine mind in heaven. Christ alone, as

being ever the dependent and subservient One up to the death of the cross, was worthy to be Head of the new creation. In the very particular wherein Adam failed, Christ perfectly glorified His Father and His God upon the earth. Therefore all that are Christ's are bound to exhibit the same moral attitude toward Him Who has called them. For as surely as we are elect, sanctified, and sprinkled, so surely are we called unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:2). This not only refers to outward action but we are to bring into captivity every thought even to "the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). And the significance of this phrase is not so much that we are to obey Christ as our Master — which, of course, is in itself true — but rather that the peculiar kind of obedience which characterised Christ should characterise us. There had been obedience of old. "By faith Abraham obeyed" both in leaving his father's country and in offering his son (Hebrews 11:8, Genesis 22:18). Again, the allusion seems to be to Israel's obedience of the law under the sanction of death set forth in the victim's blood sprinkled on all concerned. But the obedience of the Son transcended all and afforded an example beyond all. He lived upon every word proceeding out of the mouth of God, His life, as a Man, being the prompt and joyful response below to the divine will above. He obeyed as a Son; while we also are privileged to obey as children. This is in entire contrast with legal obedience in view of a threat or a reward. And no less than this is what God looks for in His saints. When the Spirit portrays in detail the incomparable stoop of grace, He precedes it by the exhortation "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5). Conformity to Christ commences in the heart and mind. So that the mind of the saint, like that of his Exemplar, should ever be open for directions from above. Obedience is implicit subjection to that which is heard. This principle marks even the initial stage of the believer's life. The hypakoe of faith, was the aim of Paul's preaching (Romans 1:5; Romans 16:26), for faith cometh by hearing, "akoe" (Romans 10:17). And no saint, however advanced, gets beyond dependence on the word of God. The most obedient child is the one whose words and ways are most influenced by the scriptures. Not the dull, wearisome, legal-minded, external conformity to His word, because such and such is known to be His will, and, therefore, must be obeyed; but a running in the way of His commandments a saintly alacrity in divine things, a holy anxiety to know His will and to do it. Such a cheerful obedience to His revelation will be a savour of Christ in His people, well pleasing before Him. And is not this worth seeking? Thank God, He has made us "partakers of the divine nature" and given us of His Spirit, in order that the task may not be in vain.

S. Conversion to God

Conversion to God Notes of an address on 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

W. J. Hocking.

1915 312 "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

I suppose that there is hardly another passage in Scripture which gives us such a clear and definite presentation of Christian conversion as we find in this First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and especially in the first part of it. By comparing the Epistle with the Acts (Acts 17:1-10), which gives us the history of the apostle's visit to Thessalonica, we find that his labours there were very short. But his service was evidently blessed of God, and blessed of God in this particular sense, that the work of conversion in the men and women of Thessalonica was short and sharp and effective. The work was not of slow growth, but the word of the gospel came upon them irresistibly, and revolutionised their whole life and conduct, so that they became absolutely different persons in conduct and demeanour from what they were before. The change was so rapid, and so pervaded their whole being, that the eyes of all could not but discern that some marvellous work had been wrought; and every one of these persons became in consequence a living witness of the power of God's gospel in men's lives. The gospel worked in a way that no doctrine, no philosophy had done or ever could do. Here were Gentile men, immersed in heathen darkness and blindness, men degraded by the impurities of heathen worship, visited by a certain man who preached the good news concerning Christ and His work; and the immediate effect of the preaching was that they abandoned their lifelong worship; they abandoned all the dark practices of their lives, and heaven's light began to shine out from them. The effect was such that, as you heard in the verses I read to you, not only throughout the city itself, Thessalonica, but throughout the two provinces, Macedonia and Achaia, the news had spread like wildfire. The gospel of God had been at work in Thessalonica, and there were well-known persons who were completely changed in their lives by the acceptance of that gospel. Anyone could go to Thessalonica and see these converted persons, and watch them in their daily lives. They could listen to the words that came out of their mouths, and they could ask themselves, What has done this? What is the cause of the change? What explanation is there of this wonder? And men were asking such questions throughout Macedonia and Achaia.

Thus the word was being sounded abroad through the converted, so that the apostle could say, 'Our work here is taken away from us. It is not now necessary for us to preach the gospel in this district, seeing there are men who are living it. Here are men who, in every step of their ways, testify to the fact that they are now in living touch with God above, and that a power has entered into their hearts and lives, and is enabling them to travel in the reverse direction from that which they had hitherto followed.' This is a grand testimony, beloved friends, of what real conversion is. We do find, through the grace of God, instances of it still — multitudes — of such instances — and

we can only earnestly pray to God that these numbers may be multiplied. There are other multitudes watching these examples. And we should remember that there is not a more effective witness for God in this dark and sin-stained earth than the heavenly life of a man, woman, or child in this world. Men then see what God's grace can do for a sinful person.

Paul was called to speak of what the gospel had done in Thessalonica; and what it had done there, he knew could be done elsewhere. It was the great work of his life to go into Satan's strongholds, and to make known there the ways of life and salvation, and it gladdened his heart to see these shining lights in Thessalonica, showing out the bright glories of Jesus, the Saviour of men.

Now, I wish to bring before you one or two features of these verses. You will notice how very comprehensive the verses are of true conversion. The apostle speaks, in the first place, of what the gospel had done for them. He says, (1) "Ye turned to God from idols." This was one important fact: but this was not all. I have referred already to the past of their lives. It is not sufficient that there should be such a change, but there must be some Person before them who becomes the Director of their lives. Thus he speaks of them (2) as serving a "living and true God." But there was a third item. They not only turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, but, as to their future, they were waiting "for his Son from heaven." And thus, you see, that in this short passage the christian life is, as it were, portrayed in all its aspects: with regard to the past, with regard to the present, and with regard to the future. And this is stated of those who answered in this remarkable way to the description of true Christian conduct — and these were recently-converted persons in Thessalonica.

Well, we ought to seek to come up to the standard that is given us in the word of God, and to this exemplification of the standard, which was so striking, so far as the Thessalonians were concerned. In the first place, then, the apostle speaks of their definite turning to God from idols. We can hardly conceive what a revolution this was in the case of these persons. We must think of them for a moment as they were before they heard the gospel. They had given up to idol-worship the higher and nobler part of their nature — the spirit that was within them, given to man in order that he might have to do with God above. But the Thessalonians bowed down to gods of gold and silver and stone; while, behind these idols, there was the power of the wicked one, drawing them away from God. They gave all their best to that which was false, and to what affected their morals and their whole nature. What a man worships, he becomes in character. The man who worships darkness and evil becomes dark and evil and brutal himself. And it was so in Thessalonica. And we can realise the power of the gospel of God which brought these heathen to the knowledge of a living and true God, and to the hope of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let us not think only of those who were so far away from the light, and so far removed in character from the persons amongst whom we are. We are in a highly-favoured land, where the knowledge of God is spread abroad by means such as were never known in apostolic days; and the "knowledge of God," as the Bible declares it, is made known thereby in an outward way, so that one can hardly pass through life without receiving most of the facts of divine history. But, how terrible when, in the face of this privilege, the allegiance of the heart is still given to something inferior to God, which is, after all, only an idol, since it takes the place of the Supreme One. What is it, beloved friends, that men and women, in our country, are bowing down to? They are giving all

that is best in them to themselves, worshipping self, worshipping the world, desiring only success and ease and pleasure here in the world, and God, thus, shut out of their lives. Be not deceived; there are many idols in the world. And the apostle John, writing to the family of God, says "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." It is so easy to allow something in the heart, which replaces God, to which we have bowed. You may take an innocent child, so beautiful that the hearts of men are irresistibly attracted to such a picture of unspoiled goodness. You may put your child in the place of God. You may thus displace God. You may refuse to listen to His word because of your idol. You may refuse to obey His call because of your idol. Where an idol, whatever it be, is enshrined in the heart, the result is terrible! There are idols of friends, idols of circumstances, which take possession of the heart, and which stand between the man and God. Is this so in your case, my hearer? Have you an idol? Have you something in the heart which intervenes between you and God, and shuts out the light of the glorious gospel of God, the all-glorious truth of His word from your life? Flee from such an idol. Let the light of God's truth shine into your heart and show you that there is nothing comparable with His Son and His Holy Spirit. The work of conversion mentioned in our text is as much needed now as it was then. The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living and true God. Beloved friends, it requires an effort to do this. You will observe that these men turned. There was a definite revolution in their affairs. They were proceeding in one direction. They turned, and went the reverse way, and the light of God shone into their hearts.

It is a great achievement to have the heart turned towards God. It is a great comfort to have in this world the sense of this great Heavenly One above, and to know that He is omnipotent, and that He exercises a part in my daily life. How many a man has been brought close to temptation, brought to the very threshold of an evil deed, and has been arrested by the thought of God!

O beloved friends, never, never seek to exclude God out of your life. The robber on the cross said to his colleague railing against the Holy Sufferer also there, "Dost not thou fear God?" His whole life showed that he had not feared man. But now he says, "Dost not thou fear God." That man, stricken down with his penitence, feeling the horrible sin that he had committed against God, was brought to confess his sin, and to know that Jesus was the only Saviour.

You, my friends, have you been converted? Has your life been turned towards God? Are the heavenly powers of holiness shining down upon your way in the things that you say and do, and in the things that pass through your mind? Is all that concerns you subjected to the Lord of heaven? A converted man is the man who has turned to God. He has been living with his back to all that is holy and good, and he now turns about, like the man whom the Lord Himself described as going into a far country. By and by, he said, "I will arise and go unto my father." He arose and went to his father, and, in doing so, he was a converted man. He turned from his profligacy to the father against whom he had sinned.

Now, in the history of every child of God there must have been a moment when the change was made, when there was the passing from darkness into light, from death unto life. Has it been so in yours? In the case of the Thessalonians, conversion affected them so completely that men saw and wondered. Men found that these were now governed by new motives of which they were ignorant. The course of life to which they had been accustomed was the encouragement of their evil passions. Idol worship taught that what a man lusted after was right, that what man wanted to

do he might do. Conversion changed all this.

Sin is also a custom nowadays. Is it not thought, nowadays, that you can do what you will? and that if you only strive to do what you ought to do, you will come out safely in the end? Beloved friends, is it true that the man who sins is really doing his best, and that the drunkard who reels in the gutter is reeling towards heaven? Such doctrines are contrary to the teaching of God's holy word. No, you are called to turn from the evil way into the way of light and holiness. But there is not only the act of turning. There is the conduct that follows, and that conduct, so far as we have it expressed here, is summed up in a very beautiful phrase indeed — they turned to God from idols "to serve the living and true God." We are told to serve the living and true God. I do not think that these Thessalonians acted in some special manner, and devoted their lives to God in some particular way. I do not think that they gave up their calling in life, and threw themselves exclusively into the service of the propagation of the gospel. I do not think the phrase implies this separation from ordinary pursuits. On the contrary, the Epistle implies that they went on with their work, that they continued in their customary vocation. In the midst of the place and circumstances in which they had been brought up they stayed, only now they worked for their God above. They had found a living and true God, and they had found out the way to serve Him in the midst of their ordinary duties.

Think of it, as life's aim! To serve the living and true God! Is it not, from one point of view, as simple as A B C, doing the will of God, doing daily what He would have us do? And yet, although it is so simple, it is an idea that has not occurred to a great many persons; even some who are piously inclined fail to grasp the fact that the living and true God has a service for each one of us to do. There is a pathway through this world for you and me (for I am now addressing those who are converted) there is a pathway through this world marked out for every one of us. We have our something to do. We have our words to speak. We have our works to perform. They are such that no one else can do for us. They are such that, if they are not done, the world, our companions, those around us, will be the worse because we fail to do them. God works through His servants, and His servants are men and women who have been saved from the wrath to come. They are those into whom He puts a new nature and His Holy Spirit, and places them here in this world for His praise and glory.

Beloved friends, this is a noble calling. It is a grand privilege to be here in this world to serve God. We look around us. Is it not a fact that, in general, God's name and God's will are despised? Is it the principal characteristic of our times that the will of God is honoured, and that men systematically seek to know and do it? It must be admitted that even at this moment men are everywhere turning their backs upon God and His word. It is no excuse to say that God is great, and God is holy, while we are so finite and feeble. Man slights his God.

Take, for example, the honour and reverence that is due to this day. This is the Lord's day. Why must it be considered? Because it is the Lord's day, because His name is placed upon it, because it is the day that He has called His own. Is there a fear of what is due to Him? Is it not a fact that, just at the moment, when a great firm publishes a new Sunday paper, its circulation leaps at once to a million and a half or so? Is there that reverence of God's word, and of His name, and of what is due to Him that might be expected in a Christian country?

Dear friends, it is a great thing to serve God, but what does the term mean? It means that what I do and undertake must be entirely under the guidance and direction of God, and that I must have the sanction of His word for what I do and undertake, and that, in all my doings, I must fear God, reverence His name, and render unto Him what is due to Him.

Let us each in our measure seek to establish in our lives the fact that we are serving God. And when people inquire, 'Why do you not do this?' let us say, 'I serve God. I fear God. I have His word. I tremble to disobey that word, I fear to do wrong to Him. Knowing His will, I tremble to disregard it.' It ought to be so. These Thessalonians had found the living and true God, and were serving Him. Do not think this is bondage. It is the joy of liberty. The man who has the true God in grace before him feels that he can never do sufficient; that what ever self-denial he may make, it is unworthy to be mentioned; that God's grace is so great, the sacrifice of the cross for him was so infinite, that anything he may renounce is but trifling. Are you, then, living for God, or are you serving yourself? Have you an idol in your life? Perhaps you started on the new path in past years; you have still to make good your profession, and to serve the living and true God. There is a reason given in our verse why we should not slacken, and take holidays as it were, in the service of God. Why is this? The Thessalonians were told by the apostle to brighten the future of their lives with the hope of the return of God's Son from heaven. It must have been a tremendous revelation unto these men to hear that God's Son determined to visit this world again!

Once He visited it in His humility and grace. He came down, that mighty and holy One, and was found here in human form. It was a wondrous visitation that He, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, should be here as a man! Men saw the "Godhead glory shine through that human veil." One man, you remember, said, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It was a wondrous visitation, that the Son of God should tread this world without a place to lay His head, until He laid it down in death on Calvary's tree! It was indeed a wondrous visit. But it is equally wonderful to learn that He who came once will come again. And these men were called out to wait for God's Son from heaven. He was coming again. And how did they know this? Who could unveil tomorrow and say what would be in the future? They had the truth from the best of all witnesses; they had it from the Son Himself. Before He left this world, He gave a promise to those He left behind Him. When He was in the upper room, and the little company of disciples with Him, their hearts were filled with grief because they learned that He whom they loved was about to take His departure.

1915 332 The Lord recognised the love that made them, feel sad; He recognised the love that wished Him back and craved for His presence. He, therefore, said, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

Dear friends, a great promise was that! It brought them joy and hope. These men at Thessalonica heard it also. They heard it from the lips of the apostle. They drank in its sweetness and comfort, and said, 'Oh, what a glorious thing it will be for Him to come back here from His glory,' and they forgot, as it were, the difficulties and trials of their path through this world in the vision of hope that the Lord would return and receive them to Himself.

They heard also the angelic testimony to the disciples when they stood on Mount Olivet gazing up into heaven, where that beloved One had vanished from their eyes. They stood gazing up into heaven waiting for the cloud to open, and thinking He would return immediately; but the angel

spoke to them, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "This same Jesus!" It is the blessed Person Himself who is coming, the Person who bears in His hands and feet the marks of the nails. This is He whom the 1 hessalonians expected, and whom we, too, expect. That same Jesus shall come — not some bright vision for your deathbed — not something for your imagination — but no! that very Person who suffered here shall come back. This is a promise, the truth of which we cannot deny, for the Lord has said it. Can it be a fact that a man whose sins have been washed away in the precious blood of Jesus — can it be that a person for whom Jesus died on the tree, does not care to cherish the hope of His coming again?

Some persons think it is a doctrine for those who are well instructed in the word of God that it is a doctrine for persons who have studied, for instance, the visions of the wondrous Book of Daniel — that it is especially for such. But the Thessalonians knew nothing yet about Daniel's prophecies. Did they know anything about Daniel even? Here was the simple fact, that some idolatrous people had turned to God, and were ignorant of divine revelation. They had turned from lives that were absolutely devoid of heavenly truth, and they learned from the servant of the Lord that Christ would come from heaven.

We also have that word. Let me ask, What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for His coming? Waiting, I take it, means anxiously expecting. You will remember that those virgins who went out to wait for the Bridegroom slumbered and slept. Could they then be said to be waiting for the Bridegroom? How could they be waiting for Him? They were not even ready for Him. Do you say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," or is it a fact that you are affected by the scoffers that are around us, who say "Where is the promise of His coming?" But that promise was made nearly two thousand years ago. Then we are nearly two thousand years nearer the fulfilment of it! Beloved friends, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will surely love His word, and He says "Surely I am coming quickly." Wait for Him, then. Walk on the mountains, and look out for the Bright and Morning Star. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we be for ever with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). What a comfort this hope contains. Are you waiting for the Son from the heavens, even Jesus who has delivered us from the wrath to come?

There is a sad side to the future revealed in these words. Not only is the Son coming from the heavens, but the wrath is coming. The wrath of heaven is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and the Executor of that wrath is Jesus, our Deliverer. He has delivered us from the wrath to come. The believer expects the Lord Jesus to receive him into the bright mansions above. But the Lord is also coming to execute judgment upon all. God, who passed over the days of ignorance, now cornmandeth all men everywhere to repent. Why? Because He has appointed a day in which He will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

O beloved friends, it is a grim outlook for this world; for the world can look forward to nothing but God’s wrath. The unrighteousness, the disregard of God’s holy word and will, must receive God’s judgment by and by. God is holy, and He waits in longsuffering mercy, not willing that any should perish; but there is a limit to this longsuffering. This guilty world in which we are is stained by the blood of God’s Son. It is true this blood speaks better things than that of Abel. It speaks of mercy and salvation to the sinner, but God’s justice and holiness demand that the crucifixion of that just and holy Jesus should be avenged. The world stands guilty. Dear friends, all has to be answered for in a day that is coming. It is for you to come now to the refuge that God has provided, to believe on His Son, and to wait for His Son, that you may be taken away from this world before God’s judgments break upon it. Men shall say "Peace and safety," and sudden destruction shall come upon them. As it was in the day of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of man.

Beloved friends, these are established facts, resting for their truth upon God’s holy word. They are there. Search the Scriptures whether these things are so or not. If they are so, heed them, make them part of your lives. May the light of them shine upon your pathway, and great shall be your reward now, greater still in the day which is to come.

I ask you, on which side are you? What is the rule of your life here in this world? Is God’s Son governing your life? Are you ready to lay anything on one side for Christ’s name? Oh, beware of rejecting anything that you know is God’s will. Every person who has turned to God from idols finds that very shortly he must come to a decision. He has to obey God and give up something to do so. He has to break some tender cord, perhaps, for God. This is often a great struggle, and you have to bring yourself to face the naked truth, and ask yourself, Whom shall I obey?’ Shall I obey God, or shall I obey someone, perhaps, who is dearer than all the world beside?

Friends, to decide rightly in a question of this kind, you have to look at it from the right standpoint. Be on the side of God. Be on the side of truth. Let this holy BoOk be the standard for you, that to which you refer, and that which is your guide to obedience from day to day. May God bless the truth and light of His holy word! May the scripture we have considered have a deeper and fuller effect than ever before upon the hearts and lives of everyone present here this evening! W. J. H.

S. Death With Christ

Death With Christ Notes of an address on Romans 6:1-11.

W. J. Hocking.

1913 332 The verses which I have now read give us instruction with regard to our manner of life as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will at once be noticed that this instruction is not set out in the form of a detailed code which we are required to observe. There is no list here specifying the various conditions of our conduct. Indeed we shall look in vain in the New Testament for such particulars. This feature of the New Testament is in contrast with the Old Testament where we find the duties of life specified perfectly and precisely, and the Jew could with comparatively little difficulty discover what religious ordinances he was required to observe. But in the later and the last revelation the will of God in respect of His worshippers is differently expressed. The duties of a believer are not now furnished to him in definitely prescribed formulae. In other words, he is not, like the Israelite in regard to his sacrifices, commanded to do this in the morning, that in the afternoon, and something else in the evening. The followers of Christ are now provided with principles of action in lieu of precise rules. These principles enter more deeply into the marrow of our lives than the Mosaic regime did. They are matters of consideration for the heart and for the conscience, and they make it necessary that we should pay careful heed to our ways if we desire, as we surely ought to do, to comport ourselves in a manner well-pleasing to God.

Indwelling Sin

Here in this sixth chapter of Romans we have one particular principle with regard to the life of the believer and with regard to that part of the sincere believer which sooner or later causes him serious anxiety by its undesirable activity. The fact which underlies this portion of the Epistle is the continuous presence of sin within the believer. For that is but a foolish dream which supposes that the child of God may in this world arrive at a state of "no sin." It is merely a baseless notion to imagine that there are some persons who live in this world as if they were in heaven, and who are altogether unaffected by any evil influences from without or from within. Any persons who assume to be in such a condition of perfection grossly deceive themselves (1 John 1:8-10). The subject of this chapter therefore comprehends a great practical question, and one which for its vital importance should be fully faced. The apostle brings forward the evil principle of sin within the believer under the figure of a tyrant who seeks to exercise supreme control over the person in antagonism to righteousness and divine holiness. Alongside the description of the tendencies of this opposing power, the truth of the mastership and authority of God is developed. For help in the exposition of this section we may conveniently entitle this chapter "The Two Masters," just as a suitable title for the latter part of the previous chapter would be "The Two Heads." There we have set out, in the way of contrast, that which, as to origin, is Christ’s and also that which is Adam’s. From our first parents we derive our sinful nature as an inalienable inheritance. This is the first family, the family of human nature; but there is another family, of which Christ is the head; and as a matter of actual experience the honest and enlightened believer discovers that in spite of his

new position in the second family, sin itself as an active force is still present within him.

Sin and Sins In the former part of this Epistle (Romans 1:1-32 — 5: 11), the effects of sin in debasing the human family are expatiated upon, and the means, divinely introduced, of justification for the guilty. This portion deals with sinful deeds, overt actions, the specific acts which are offensive before a holy God; and from such offences none are exempt. But peace with God is shown to be the possession of the believer since the Lord Jesus Christ has secured justification for those who believe God — those who "believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:24; Romans 4:23). But in the sixth chapter the subject of offences, the evil things done, is not treated, but rather the question how these things arise in the history and experience of the child of God. Why are there evil tendencies present in the heart of an earnest Christian? How is it that sin springs up contrary to desire within such a person? That such distressing anomalies do occur is the practical experience of every person who follows Christ, devotedly follows Him perhaps through persecution and tribulation. In spite of our sorrow that such things should arise, and of our earnest desire to be preserved therefrom, evil obtrudes itself even into our most solemn occupations. We find that unholy thoughts spring up, uninvited and unwelcome, apart from any conscious influence around us. They arise from within, from indwelling sin.

How strange this condition of things appears in a person who has tasted of the grace of God and who is persuaded that Christ died for his sins, and who has confessed His name before the world! Many Christians are confronted with this difficulty in their own experience to their own consternation and grief. Often the person fails to find a satisfactory solution of this problem. He seeks perhaps an explanation in the literature and philosophies of the world, or in the wisdom and experience of his friends, but he is unable to discover any clue to the mystery why he finds himself perpetually doing what he hates to do.

It seems only natural and right to assume that if a person loves the Lord he will also love to do His will. And in seeking to do that will, if he does not at first succeed, he will by perseverance improve on the second and third attempts, and so eventually overcome the susceptibilities of his heart to evil. But such is not the experience of those who are faithful before Him who searches the hearts, as to the results of their efforts at self-conquest. The light of God manifests themselves to themselves. Even in their prayers and in their praises the inward evil intrudes. Some thereupon resort to stern measures to eradicate these unholy tendencies; they seek to choke them, to overcome them, to live them down. But in this self-imposed contest with the sinful nature they find themselves worsted again and again.

Such struggles with self therefore will in practice prove to be in vain. If there should seem sometimes to be a victory it is only a momentary one. The root of sin has not been extirpated nor even weakened. And all efforts to destroy it by fasting or by rigorous torture of the body also fail. Seclusion within four walls and regular series of protracted devotional exercises are likewise ineffectual to expel the inward evil.

Indifference to Sin

Such an experience of failure, sometimes, when the doctrine of scripture on this subject is ignored, leads to a reaction to a dangerous acquiescence in this state of things as if it were both inevitable

and unavoidable. It is then assumed that the presence and activity of sin is not to be regarded as a serious matter. A man argues thus: "If I cannot rid myself of the sin within me it cannot be helped, and I need not be anxious; God is gracious; His love is infinite; the sacrifice of Christ is efficacious for all things; my conduct as a believer is not a subject of grave concern; everything will be righted in, the end."

Now this Epistle utterly condemns such a spirit of license, and at the same time affords the real solution of this practical problem of Christian life. Here it is declared that where sin abounded so profusely there grace exceeded in abundance: "Where sin abounded there did grace much more abound, that even as sin reigned unto death, even so grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." So that inasmuch as sin overwhelms man in direst disaster, grace more than meets this condition of abject servitude, since it exceeds all the sum of evil in the whole world. We are to believe therefore that God’s grace is superior to all sinful influences that assail the believer, and must therefore lead to triumph. Only the practical victory may not be gained except by warfare on lines approved by scripture. The fact, however, is made clear that this eventual triumph of grace must not be abused to condone present licence. The apostle asks the question: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Let it not be. How shall we that are dead to sin continue any longer therein?" (vers. 1, 2). The habitual practice of sin by a believer is an utter denial of the delivering power of God. The concurrent reign of sin and grace is incompatible with the divine nature. And the fact that a man cannot deliver himself from the power of indwelling sin is no evidence that God will not deliver him. The apostle here condemns the evil suggestion that would seek in the abounding grace of God an excuse for sinful indulgence. Such a thought is unholy, and it is sufficient to state it to expose its self-condemnation. Can grace reigning through righteouness permit a sinful course to be pursued? And this evil thought to which we are subject is held up before us that we may see how wretched and unworthy it is and flee from it.

Self But it is needful to be aware of the diverse forms of sin; and perhaps no form of it is more common or more subtle than that of pleasing oneself. Continuing in sin may not necessarily imply walking in forbidden paths of flagrant unholiness, but simply living for self without any reference to God and His will. This subtle character of evil was manifested from the beginning. The first sin was not one that at first sight appeared loathsome in its nature, as some offences do. To have eaten of desirable fruit would not be regarded as an abominable crime, if judged from a human code of ethics. But Eve consulted her own interest or inclination or pleasure, in complete disregard and even defiance of God’s express prohibition. In short, she pleased herself. And such a selfish motive is the essence of sin. The description of the sinless Man is that He pleased not Himself (Romans 15:3). And the believer is called to imitate the life not of the First but of the Second man, by living not for self but for the praise and glory of God.

How We are Delivered

Now we are taught in this chapter that by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we are delivered from that bondage to sin wherein we were held. This redemption from slavery is as definite as the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. They were under the power of a despot in a strange ’rand where it was impossible for them to serve God. But the nation was first of all preserved by bloodshedding in the hour of judgment, and then rescued from slavery. Jehovah

brought them miraculously through the Red Sea, and they were able to look back and see the dead bodies of their oppressors upon the sea shore. They thus became Jehovah’s freed men.

Now the freed men of grace are those to whom this chapter is addressed. Sin is represented under the figure of a tyrannical master who carries away the heart and motives in pursuit of passionate desires, whether purely carnal or mental. Under the rule of sin these desires or delights are characterised by an absence of regard for the will of God in the matter. The delight may be in poetry or philosophy or pure science, but the natural heart only finds satisfaction in these things so far as the will of God is excluded from consideration. But the apostle declares that the believer is delivered by death from this order of things. He argues, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (ver. 2).

Death with Christ

It is important to observe that there is here no injunction to put oneself to death. The fact is announced that the members of the family of faith have died to sin. This is a judicial pronouncement with regard to the whole question. And we learn that the act whereby we become dead to sin was perfected in the death of Christ. The apprehension of this fact is a matter of faith in the declaration of the word of God. It could not be otherwise. Just as we learn that God laid our sins upon Jesus our Substitute, and believing we rejoice in the knowledge of this mercy, so it is necessary to believe in order to know that we were associated with Christ in His death, for our deliverance from sin. The apostle says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised unto Jesus Christ were baptised unto his death?" (ver. 3).

Burial with Christ In these terms a judicial association with Christ is predicated of all believers. We are regarded as having gone down with Him into death, leaving thus the place of bondage, to emerge into the place of life and liberty. For this identification applies to the burial as well as to the death of Christ: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (ver. 4). An illustration of this passage of the believer through death may be found in the Old Testament. I refer now to the crossing of the Jordan by the children of Israel. The general analogy of this historical incident is no doubt more with the aspect of truth revealed in Colossians and Ephesians than with that in Romans; but I make the reference now solely to the manner in which the tribes passed the barrier to their goal. By divine direction the ark of God was borne to the edge of the swiftly-flowing river, and when the feet of the priests touched the waters, the current stayed. The priests went forward, bearing the ark, until they stood in the midst of the river-bed. There they remained upon dry ground, and the Israelites were enabled to make their way across the stream upon dry ground. The ark maintained its position until the last person had crossed over, then upon its removal the waters resumed their normal course.

Thus, the supernatural power associated with, the ark prevented the floods of Jordan from overwhelming the people of God. So we learn in the New Testament that Christ Himself went down into death, and while we went through it with Him, He as it were held back its waters from us, and we passed through "dryshod "with Him. He died and rose again in the power of an endless life, and because of our intimate association with Christ we are now called to walk in "newness of life."

What are we to understand by these things? The facts are here stated in order that we may see how to gain the victory and how to live and walk in communion with the Lord after a new fashion of holiness. This result is not to be attained by any personal determination to overcome all the inward and outward forces which oppose holiness. The divine method is not to do, but to accept what has been done for us — not to conquer self by pure effort, but to live in the new, the Christ-life bestowed upon each believer. The Old Man Crucified

We find from this scripture that the believer is taught to find that in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ there is for him not only deliverance from the guilt of sins but also deliverance from the power of sin. We died with Christ, but are also alive again, even as He is. We have passed through what is here regarded as the judicial extinction of ourselves as sinful persons with irremediably sinful natures. The apostle, speaking of the child of God in his natural condition, declares that the "old man" was crucified with Christ: "Knowing this that our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin" (verse 4). There are many forms of death, but crucifixion is a form associated with shame and ignominy, and under the Mosaic law with curse. And the "old man" because of its evil propensities, was, in the language of the text, worthy not only of death but of the death of the cross. It was man’s injustice and malignity that assigned the Son of man to the death of crucifixion, but it was the justice and grace of God that sentenced our "old man" to be crucified with Christ. The purpose of this judicial act is declared to have been that the body of sin might be destroyed or annulled. But it may be asked how this deliverance is effected. And nothing can be added to the words of this text. The illustration employed is a most forcible one. What can be a more complete deliverance from slavery than death? If an Israelite died in Egypt he was thereby most effectually delivered from bondage to Pharaoh. The whip of the taskmaster at once became unavailing. In like manner the believer is rescued from his slavish service to sin by death. Only he has, unlike the Israelite, died unto sin in the person of Another. He is moreover alive to a new order of things entirely.

It follows therefore that the attempt to eradicate the evil principle of sin by pure self-discipline is a virtual denial of the truth before us which asserts that the believer has already died to sin in the death of Christ. Much confusion sometimes arises in this connection from not observing that the scripture does not say that sin is dead, but that we are dead to it. The two statements are totally different. Some finding evil rampant in inward activity argue from this fact against the plain declaration of God’s word. But the latter can never be wrong. The word of God is truth, and no lie is of the truth. A believer is bound to believe that we died with Christ, and, moreover that we also "live with Him," and that we live to God. Further, by His death we are freed from bondage to sin, for according to scripture this is an accomplished fact. The conclusion of this portion before us is a practical exhortation founded upon this great judicial transaction. Let us meditate upon its full significance in the light of the preceding verses: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 11). W.J.H.

Chapter 100

S. Deliverance from Law

Deliverance from Law Notes of an address on Romans 7:1-25.

W. J. Hocking.

1919 246 There are two verses in this chapter that I wish to read to you again, viz., the sixth and the last.

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held" (or rather, "being dead to that wherein we were held" as in the margin, for there is no doubt that this is the correct reading of the text), "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

There is a great deal in this chapter that bears upon the practical life of the believer — far more than we shall be able to consider in the short time at our disposal this evening. But there are two great subjects in the chapter of which we may speak briefly. In the first part the apostle brings out the relationship of the Christian to the law, that is, to the law of Moses; and in the latter part he shows that in every converted man there are two opposing forces. There is what is known as the old nature, and also the new nature; a desire to sin, and a desire to serve God. A great conflict is outlined, and then, at the close of the chapter, the way of deliverance from that conflict is indicated. Jesus Christ our Lord is declared to be the One who delivers a person from this distressing conflict within his own heart. In the first part of the chapter, the apostle, under the figure of the two husbands, refers to the law and the Christian's relationship to it. On this account you cannot help connecting the antithesis with the preceding chapter where the relationship of the believer to sin and to the power of sin within him is set forth under the figure of two masters. There it is shown that a man as an unbeliever, as he once was, was under the dominion of a great tyrant within his own breast. There was within him a power which carried him into the ways of sin irresistibly, and the question was, how could a man be delivered from this condition? The apostle shows in Romans 6:1-23 that the believer is delivered through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this remarkable way he finds that through the death of Christ he passes out of the state of bondage to sin in the person of Another, One who went down into death and rose again. Every believer is declared to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection, and therefore, by reason of this association he is delivered from the bondage to the old nature in which he was held. This deliverance is a question of faith so far as it is to be realised, because any person looking into his own heart would come to the reverse conclusion to that we find in this Epistle; but as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and followers of Him, we must by faith adopt this teaching as a fact in our Christian life, and be guided in this and other matters by the truth of Scripture. We must not go for guidance to other persons, whose hearts are the same as our own, for we shall only listen to a repetition of the thoughts of our own hearts, unless they are themselves taught by the Word of God.

If you examine your own attitude you will probably find that in reading the Scriptures your main wish is to see exactly how it fits other persons, but the essence of gaining real help is rather to see how the truth fits myself, and to realise that its teaching is addressed to me, and speaks about me. And just as this principle of deliverance through Christ is applied in the sixth chapter so it is in the seventh, where the believer's relationship with the law is developed.

Let me first say a word in connection with this subject of the law. What is to be here understood by the law? Is it the ten commandments? We read certainly in Scripture of the law of Moses. Turning to the Old Testament we read of the ten commandments engraved on two tables of stone, handed to the Israelites by Moses for them to keep. But there was a great deal more beside the ten words; there were rites and ceremonies associated with the law of Moses carried on from century to century. To some extent they were being observed in the days of our Lord, and after His resurrection and ascension to heaven the ritual was still in some respects performed until the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. But the law as it is spoken of in our chapter refers mainly to the great principle under which God acted towards His people in Old Testament times. He brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, and from Sinai He gave them His instructions. He told them what His commandments were, and He put it to the nation whether they were competent to do what He told them. They had experienced His delivering power on the paschal eve when Jehovah passed over their houses and protected them in the hour when judgment fell in Egypt. It was no question of the law of Sinai then, but the people were saved by His mercy and protected by the blood. And when they went through the Red Sea, where was the law then? Was the power of Egypt destroyed because the Israelites kept God's commandments? No, but because of His grace and mercy towards them. But when from Sinai Jehovah propounded the law and said in effect to them, Will you keep this? They said, 'We will; all that the Lord has spoken to us we will do.' They thus put themselves on that conditional ground; they said, 'Whatever God tells us to do, we will do; we sign the pledge; it is a bargain.' But how long was it before the tables were cast down and broken before their eyes? They soon had another God beside Jehovah. They worshipped the golden calf. They broke the commandments, and the penalty attached to the law was that if they did not keep the law they should die. It was a similar principle of action in the garden of Eden. God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Thus the principle of law was, Do this and thou shalt live.

Now to whom was this law given? To one people only, and that was the people of Israel. The twelve tribes of Israel alone received that law, and therefore, the law, strictly speaking, has no bearing upon Gentiles at all, and the apostle Paul in his teaching here refers to persons who were converted from amongst the Jews. They had believed in Christ. They then said, What about the Law? Are we to give that up? Cannot we keep on with the law as before? Many wanted to keep on with the law, and the apostle had to tackle them over and over again on this very point. Paul said to them, If you take up the law and try to live by the law, you are fallen from grace. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, while the law was given by Moses.

I want you to see clearly that the original ten commandments were never given to the Gentiles, and that a believer has no scriptural right to put himself under that law.

Why did God give men the law? He gave them the law to prove to them what hopeless sinners they really were. The law entered bye-the-bye, that the offence might abound. Sin was in the world

before the law, but when the law came it showed how vile men really were and how obstinately they made up their minds to do what they liked rather than what God liked. For instance, you may have a child playing at mud pies in the gutter who is not aware that it is wrong. You say, Now, my dear child, you must not do that again; it is the wrong thing to do.' if the child does it a second time, it has infringed a commandment; it is now disobedient. And on similar grounds the Jews were more guilty before God than the Gentiles.

Now the principle of law may be taken up by the believer in another way. There are a great many Christians who, although they are not definitely striving to keep the ten commandments, are still living on the principle of law. The principle of law is that I feel I must find out what God's commandments for myself are, what He wants me to do, and what He does not want me to do. I therefore go on searching the Scriptures in order to find out what God forbids me to do, and I try to escape coming under a just condemnation because of disobedience to a definite verse. Such action arises out of the principle of law-keeping. A child in a family acts on the contrasted principle of love; it yields a loving obedience. It obeys its parents, but not in the same manner as it would obey a policeman. Its action is on the principle of love because the child loves to do what the parents wish it to do. But no person loves the law of his country. I hardly suppose any person, when he pays his taxes, for instance, does so on the principle of love, that is, because he really rejoices in doing it, but because he has this duty. It is a commandment, so to speak. The demand is something enforced by the law of the country, and all have to pay. We do not love the Government for the demand. The obedience, though ready and cheerful, is not on the ground of love at all; but the Christian is called to serve God by love. A believer is expected to follow Christ who was absolutely obedient in everything. As He obeyed, so we have to obey. Love draws us to do the will of God even as He did. He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." "I delight to do Thy will, O God." It was His joy and pleasure to do the will of God. And this is the spirit we should seek to display.

You may say, How can we do that? Only in one way, by realising the goodness of our God as our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, only by realising in our hearts the grace of God toward us, and the wonderful way in which He has acted in giving His own Son to die for us. If we have our hearts so charged with the love of God and the riches of Christ in His ineffable grace, we shall then be able to do what He wishes.

Many young Christians often say, Tell me the Scripture against smoking, or against wearing feathers in one's hat, and they manufacture arguments to prove whether it is right or wrong, trying to find out some Scripture that just its the pipe or the feathers; and they cannot do it quite satisfactorily. They are working on the principle of law. They are trying to find what God tells them not to do. This is the wrong way. You have to find out what God tells you to do, and you will find out that He wishes you to be like His Son, and to follow His steps.

Well then, have we to take the exact steps that Jesus Christ did when He was here? That of course would be a foolish view. We cannot go to Palestine and put our feet into the same footprints, and go along the two thousand miles that He travelled, doing the will of God. But following His steps means that just as the Lord Jesus Christ found His joy and delight in doing His Father's will, so ought we to find our joy and delight in doing those things that we know are well-pleasing to God. But do not spend a lot of time discussing doubtful things, whether they

should be done or not.

You will find that a great deal of what I have said is embraced in this sentence of the sixth verse. "Now we are delivered from the law." The apostle is speaking directly of Christians who were converted from Judaism, though the legal principle is of general application. We are not on the ground of law at all, and for this reason — because in Christ we died to that wherein we were held. Paul, for instance, as Saul of Tarsus, was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was held in the thraldom of the law, but as a believer in Christ he was delivered; and how? Because Saul of Tarsus died; he died with Christ, and became a new man in Christ Jesus, just as he received the new name of Paul. But it will be observed that the ground of deliverance from the law is precisely the same as it is from the bondage of sin, that is, by the death of Jesus Christ. The law is not dead, how could it be? Whatever is given of God cannot die. In Zion in a future day, the people of Israel will walk before God in the spirit of the law into which His Holy Spirit will guide them. Under the blessed rule of the Anointed Lord they will be obedient, for the law will be written in their hearts and minds, and all the aspirations that we find in Romans will be their aspirations, and they will take to themselves the 119th Psalm. How that composition expresses the delight of the person in God’s law! The people of Israel will yet sing that Psalm to their Messiah and to Jehovah in the temple when it is built again in Jerusalem. The law, therefore, has not died.

Why should we serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter? God considers what is the desire, the will. What do you want to do? You know that if left to yourself you want to have your own way. When our will is in conflict with the will of God, then it is certain we are going wrong. We have, therefore, to watch that our will is in perfect unison with the will of God, and that the will of God so dwells in us that we want just to do what He would have us do. For instance, if we plan a picnic, and there comes on a fearful storm so that we cannot go, we accept the situation. We do not storm and rage and worry ourselves about it, but quietly accept the circumstances. Our will was to go, but there was another Will that we should not go, and the Higher Will is best. I subject my will to His and there is but one, for the will in me coincides with the will above. When it is like this with me I am walking in the steps of Jesus Christ. This is serving in newness of spirit.

If you want to see an example of the person who serves in the oldness of the letter, and the awful warning he is to us, go into the temple where the Pharisee and the Publican are, and listen to what the Pharisee has to say to his God, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that I possess." He was serving in the oldness of the letter, and perfectly contented with himself. But we are to serve in newness of spirit, that spirit which is ready and anxious to do anything that God tells us to do.

It behoves us to watch that our wills are brought into line with the will of God. But you say, How can I know what is the will of God? Referring again to the picnic, you might not be able to find out from the scripture whether the proposed affair was the will of God or not. But I can find out from the inspired writings that it is the will of the Lord Jesus that I should remember Him in His death by eating bread and drinking wine, and that this is the special and accredited way of remembering Him. And learning His will in this respect, if I fail to obey, how can I be serving in the newness of the spirit? I read my Bible to find what the Lord expressly desires me to do. Having learned what is His will, it rests upon me to be obedient to His word. And then again, when I come to His table,

how do I take part in the service? How do I serve Him in this respect — in newness of spirit or in oldness of letter? When the bread comes to me I take my piece, and when the wine comes I take my sip, and then go home. If there is nothing more, I have done it all in the oldness of the letter. If I have not realised the presence of Christ, I am not serving in newness of the spirit. He wants the best of me, the heart, the spirit, and so I am called to serve in that special way not in a legal formal fashion, but in newness of spirit. In the latter part of this chapter we have a very important subject. There are those who speculate as to whether the person referred to is an unbeliever or not. One thing we know without doubt — that the man is in a great predicament and cannot get out of it. He wants to do something and finds he cannot. He tries and tries, and fails every time. There is sin dwelling in him. There are two conflicting principles. He feels, I do not do the wrong thing wilfully, and yet I do do it. I dare say there are persons here who can remember such times in their histories. When I was a young Christian I certainly "went through" the seventh of Romans. I remember that shortly after my conversion a venerable person at a meeting of young believers read the verses we have read tonight, and looking over the top of his spectacles, said, "Remember now, that is a true Christian's experience." I could not understand it. It seemed to me there was something wrong about this statement; but still I was young, and knew very little.

Afterwards, however, I found the truth of this scripture produced in my own experience, for I felt that though I knew through God's grace a great deal about the love of God to me, I also knew that I was far worse than I formerly thought I was, yet in spite of that I still felt God's love was towards me, and that God's love was something far greater than it had yet entered my heart to conceive. But my misery was that there was not a sufficient response in my heart to that love, and the more I tried to amend, the worse I seemed to get.

I turned my condition over in my mind for a time, and the difficulties grew greater, and I felt that I was not fit to go to the meetings, and I did not go. I stayed at home and read my Bible, and I wrote down my miserable experience which I believe I have to this day. If I were to produce the paper, it would be my version of the seventh of Romans, that is, I felt that I was not doing what I ought to do. I felt I was not living as a Christian ought to live, and yet I was trying to do so; and this was my puzzle. This was exactly what this person expresses here, he does not know where to turn for deliverance until he prays. He says, I cannot deliver myself from this body of death, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" and then he gets the answer, "I thank God through Christ Jesus our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

I found that the same One Who died for my sins was alive to give me the very power that I had been seeking in vain to find in my own heart. I had been trying to keep myself, help myself, work myself up into a fine frame of mind, and I failed. It was trying in my own strength, and I found that I was not strong enough to combat my own heart. I wonder how many persons here tonight have proved the same thing for themselves. It is a very real experience to find that you have no strength. The person who has proved that, never fails to cry to God, and he is never disappointed. It is the person who tries to live in his own way, and by his own endeavours, that fails and becomes miserable, and it is the greatest of blessings that he does become miserable, because if he were happy in such a state as that, how could he live to the glory of God?

No, beloved friends, what we have to prove in this world is that "without Christ we can do nothing." We need Him every step of the journey and we have to find this out in some way or the other. The truth is that in the heart of the converted person there is ’begotten a new nature entirely, something which is absolutely new and of God. That new will, that new desire within him is that which loves God and desires to do the will of God, cares for the name of Christ, delights in the things that appertain to obedient service to God. At the same time there is the evil will, the disobedient heart that still loves evil and hankers after the things of this world. Thus there are two desires, two wills as it were, side by side, and if you don’t get something beside these then you will make no progress at all in your Christian career.

One danger is that when persons find themselves in circumstances where they have no christian associations, the old nature prevails, because to some extent we are helpers one of another. There is a fellow-feeling between Christians, and they exercise a certain amount of helpful influence towards one another, often by their very presence. But imagine a person taken right away from such surroundings and suddenly robbed of all outside help; then is the trying moment. Will he fight his own battles? Will he haul down the colours and sail under false ones? Then is the testing time, and once the wrong step is taken, it is so difficult to get right again, because shame comes in, and shame always carries a person away from Christ. I mean false shame. But if there is confession to God of personal weakness, and also where there is bold confession before men of the name of Christ, then Christ comes in, and by His power gives needed and effectual help fore the conflict.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He gives the necessary power and help, and all that is required to live and walk for Him in this world. And hence the apostle concludes, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

I leave these words with you. I know the subject is difficult, and we need to come to it over and over again to understand it, but it is given for our enlightenment and help in the things that appertain to our own hearts and the things that arise up within us. It is needful to watch and pray, but not necessarily always to be examining what is within us. If we look off unto Jesus the Author and Completer of faith, then we shall see the source of real power. His hand will keep and preserve us, as His heart is ever towards us. W.J.H.

Chapter 101

S. Denying Self and Taking the Cross.

Denying Self and Taking the Cross.

Notes of an address on Matthew 16:24.

W. J. Hocking.

1915 280 I should like to call your attention this evening to one of the verses we have now read (Matthew 16:13-24): "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me,let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." In considering this verse, containing, as it does, the direct words of our Lord Jesus Christ, I think it would be well for us to be clear that, so far as the Scriptures record, we never find that the Lord Jesus Christ invited men to come after Him unless they first of all had come to Him. This may seem a very small and unimportant distinction, but, in point of fact it involves a very great principle. To come after Jesus is in itself an arduous task from which any man might well shrink who knows not the Master. It is the knowledge of the gracious and glorious person of the Lord Jesus Christ which awakens the sincere and whole-hearted response that men ought to make to His call to discipleship. But there are degrees and measures in the knowledge of Christ. There are many persons who know something of our Lord Jesus, who have answered His invitation and come to Him in their distress and weariness and penitence, and have found rest in Him and peace for their conscience but yet they have never followed Him! They have been content, as it were, to know Him from afar. Such Christians, sad to say, count absolutely nothing in the world in the matter of witness, of effective testimony for the One whom they profess to love.

I heard during this past week from a Christian man what illustrates this. He is at the present moment in training in the Army. He, I know, is bold and forward to testify, when occasion offers, for his Master, but among all the recruits with whom he is associated he and one other are the only ones that take a pronounced and definite stand, firm and true for Christ. The majority are those who will listen attentively to the words of the gospel, who make a general profession of following Him, and who, if pressed to a confession, will vow that they do really believe in Him; but when it comes to standing up for Christ in the midst of a company of ungodly men, when it comes to putting on a firm front and confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their faith cannot carry them to such a pitch. Their courage fails to rise and face the jeers and persecution of the world. To such the Lord calls in the words of our text, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Why is it that men and women who have rested their souls for all eternity upon Jesus Christ, and upon His work at Calvary’s cross, and who do, in the inner recesses of their hearts, love Him — why is it that they cannot speak out for Him when His name is abused, when evil things are said against Him, in Whom they are trusting for salvation? Why is it that at such times they seem dumb? Is there nothing within their hearts that prompts them to say something, and do something for Him, that will show that they are following after Him, and are not, like the rest of men, carried

along by the world and in the ways of the world? The answer must surely be that they have not yet learned the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. But let me repeat, it is necessary first of all to come to Him. The Lord said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now we know that deep down in the hearts of men and women there is a sense of something wrong there, and that wrong cannot be set right except by Him. They come to Him in their several ways — in their feebleness, in their sorrow and in their penitence; and they find Him true to His word, ready to receive them and to speak peace to their guilt-stricken hearts. Oh, it is a great day when a man goes in his sins to the feet of the Saviour! Was it not a great day in the life of the woman of Capernaum when Jesus was sitting at the table of Simon the Pharisee and she came to Him in all her need? She came because she was sinful, and she came to the feet of Jesus seeking rest for her accusing conscience. She could find a refuge nowhere else, and she dared the power of the world, as represented by the surly Pharisee, to come to Him whom she believed to be the Saviour of sinners. She wept over His feet, feeling afresh the sin of her soul, and she waited at His feet until she had His word: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And she went away freed and forgiven. It was a great day for her soul. It was a day that could never be matched in her history. She had come to Jesus. The poor woman, in all her grief and in her inability to cleanse the fountain of evil within her heart, came to Him, the fountain of light, in order to be cleansed. And she was cleansed. This was a wonderful episode in her life, as it is in the life of every one who comes as she did but, beloved friends, let us face another fact. We must understand that conversion does not comprise the whole of a man’s Christian life. I admit it is the most important point in a man’s history when he turns from the broad way that leads to destruction into the narrow way that leads to life, but we must remember that the career of a follower of Christ is not a gate, but a way. When you enter that narrow way, having passed through the Door, which is Christ, what do you find throughout that narrow way? You find Christ who is your Master and Lord. Recollect His words to the disciples of old and to you: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

Beloved friends, the Lord Jesus Christ, in this verse I am pressing upon you, calls to those who have already come to Him, who know already something of the sweetness of His love and His grace, and He calls such to come after Him. And who is it calling for volunteers? It is the blessed Saviour and Lord come down from heaven, walking through this world. Only a few heeded His call. Multitudes of men in the world of that day scorned and despised the Nazarene. He had some followers it is true; a few women also here and there believed on Him. Crowds came to be healed, but how many were with Him as He traversed Galilee and juda? Oh, such a little company. Why was this? Because the mass did not discern the beauty that was in Him. They saw not the glory of His Person, and yet, if they would, they might have seen it. If they had only considered His wonderful deeds and utterances, they might have. learned sufficient of the glories of His Person to have renounced self and the world for His sake.

Now, by way of illustration, let us think of the man spoken of in the immediate context — Simon Peter. Why was it that he was commissioned to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven? You will remember, perhaps, the first interview Peter had with our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is given us in the first chapter of John’s Gospel. There we are told how he came to Jesus at the invitation of his brother Andrew. And he came, why? His brother said, Come to Jesus. We have found Him! He is the Messiah! He is the Christ! He is the One of whom all the prophets have spoken. He is the One

whom all the types foreshadowed and foretold. So Peter came to Jesus. Jesus knew him and welcomed him. Simon had learned something concerning the Person whom he found. The One to whom he had come was not merely Jesus of Nazareth; He was the Messiah of Israel; He was Jehovah's Anointed who should come into the world and be a king on David's throne.

Now it is clear the lessons Simon Peter learned that day prepared him to answer the subsequent call of Jesus. Some little time after, when Peter was on the shore of the lake of Galilee, a voice fell upon his ears, "Follow Me." He followed Him. Why? Because he knew it was not just an earthly voice that called to him. It was the voice of the Messiah. It was the voice of the Christ, the Son of the living God. It was the voice of One who had come down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. Heaven was in that voice. Boats and nets were not worth considering. Jesus was worth more than them all. Beloved friends, do you know what it is to have left all and to be following Jesus? In contrast with Simon Peter, there was another man whom you know from the Gospels. I mean a young ruler who came to Jesus and said: "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." That was a bargain. But the Lord added, "Come, follow me." Here was the test. The man looked at Him, the Prophet, whom all Galilee and juda despised. Leave my wealth and possessions! Leave my rites and ceremonies! Leave my religion and my friends, and follow this Nazarene! There was no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. He could inquire of Jesus as a Teacher, but he would not follow Him as Master. The call of the Lord Jesus to him was in vain: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

It is the great secret of power in Christian life, beloved friends, to love and adore the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may make the mistake most easily of slighting Him if you listen to the promptings of your own heart, if you are carried away by the formalities of religion. You may think of Jesus as only a name, just as much and no more to you than an historical name, with no living person behind it. The great secret of strength is to find out the power behind the name of Jesus.

There was a man in Jerusalem who thought that Jesus was one of those deceivers who had gone about seeking to draw away true men after him; and he did all he could to stamp out that name, to eradicate the desire from men's hearts to follow. Jesus. That man's whole life was suddenly revolutionized. How was this? How was Saul of Tarsus converted? How was he turned from being a hot-brained persecutor, to be a meek follower of the Nazarene? It was because he saw the heavenly glory of Jesus. On his way to Damascus, suddenly from heaven at noonday, shining brighter than the Syrian sun, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shone down upon this man. He was stricken to the dust. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Me, by Whom all things consist, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers! Me, before Whom all angels bow! Saul found that he, a puny man upon the earth, was persecuting the One who was in the Shekinah of glory.

Beloved friends, are there not tens of thousands of men who are turning their faces away from God? They go about their business day by day as if there was no God, and perhaps they attack the book that tells of Him, fighting in this way against Him that sits in the heavens. Perhaps there may be none such in this audience tonight. But I ask you, one and all, what is Jesus in your life? To the proud man there prone in the dust, confused and desolate, came the word, "I am Jesus,

whom thou persecutest." He who was despised on the earth was magnified in the heavens. The same appeal is made to you, my hearer. Are you on the side of earth, or on the side of heaven? Are you on the side of those that nailed Jesus of Nazareth to the cross, or are you on the side of God who has exalted Him? Will you not come after Him? He does not force you to be His disciple.

Some people say thoughtlessly, "I should like to follow Him," just as that man who said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But Jesus spoke to this man. It was as if He said, Do you know what you are saying? Do you know why it is you are so ready to come? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Will you follow the Homeless Stranger?

God in His word sets before your view the glorious Person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, once crucified on Calvary, now enthroned in glory, and He seeks the devotion of your life. He wants a complete and devoted response from your heart to the claims of His Son. If He has forgiven your sins, if He has made your future bright with the hope of His coming, is it not right that you should be for Him here in this world? The world is against Christ, and the man who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ should not stoop to serve the world. But see what the Lord asks the man to do who comes after Him. "Let him deny himself." When you have come to Christ, and have perhaps passed the first flush of the joy and rapture of knowing that all your sins are forgiven, that you have been accepted, and that, vile and sinful as you were, the Lord received you, and showered upon you the blessings of His love and His grace: I say, when the joy of this experience has for a moment subsided, then it is that many a person finds out, to his surprise, that he has a traitor within his own heart, that he has a foe within himself, and that he has within him what rises up day by day to impede his walk and service for the Lord Jesus Christ. The position then is that there is a voice within him that calls him to serve and follow Jesus Christ, and there is another voice which says, 'Take your ease. All is right with you for the heaven to come. You have eternal life. Rest on your oars. Do not struggle. What need to make such efforts? All will come right in the end. Take your ease.' Need I say what result invariably follows unwatchfulness? The man who does not watch and pray is the man who falls into temptation. He succumbs, and what a spectacle such a failure is? That is a man who has rested upon Christ, and there he is, back in the mire, so to speak.

Beloved friends, I am referring tonight to facts which come to view in the professing life of men and women on our right hand and on our left, and why is it so? Why is it? Because they do not in self-denial follow the One that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw the great need for a continuous habit of self-denial. Some people have one week a year for this purpose, and let the other weeks of the year go. If you look at the parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke, you will see that the Lord has fixed the time: "daily."

Let us then, who follow Christ, deny ourselves. The word means to say "No," to refuse. We read that when Moses came of age he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The term used is precisely the one we have here. Moses denied himself and resisted the alluring prospect. He would not sit on the throne of that despot who was crushing the people of God in horrible slavery. He would be on the side of God, and he denied himself the throne of the world's empire. He re fused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and set aside the pleasures of sin, which were for a season.

We naturally like to be on the side of popular opinion. There is many a person today who is meddling with the things of this world just because he will not deny himself. A tempting offer comes from a worldly quarter: the desire for rest and ease from Christian endeavour arises. He is unable to say 'No.' Lethargy and indifference have come over him, and Satan takes him at a disadvantage.

Remember, that when the Lord Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane Himself to pray, He told His disciples that they ought to pray, lest they entered into temptation. Separated from the apostles, you see the Blessed Lord there left alone to visions of Calvary, of the power of Satan, and of all the power of the world rising up against Him. What does He say, "Father, if Thou be willing, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." He rises strengthened. Again the supplication is repeated. But what of His disciples? No power received, for there was no intercession on their part, no denying themselves on that last night. And when those who apprehended their blessed Master came, those who had slept fled with the others. The Lord said, "Let a man deny himself," and this example illustrates the need for it.

Sometimes the Lord will put you into a place, so to speak, where you are face to face with the hostile armies of the world, and then a sense of your own utter weakness to resist such force is borne in upon you. Then it is you learn you must never take your eyes from Him.

Take up your cross daily. This direction does not imply that we are to take up the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It rather says, 'Let a man take up his cross.' What does the expression mean? We must not confound taking up the cross with being upon the cross. You find the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross of Calvary, but you also find that it was the custom of that day that the one who was sentenced to crucifixion should carry his cross to the place of execution. The man who was seen carrying his cross was therefore the man who was thereby known to be adjudged for death, and the death of the cross; and the multitude were not slow to display their feelings against such a person. There is a man, they would say, who is worthy of death: he has outraged the laws of his country, and they would mock him and show how glad they were to be rid of him. Carrying the cross was therefore the sign of an outcast. And the cross is the chosen badge of our service to Christ. It is the distinguishing mark which shows a person to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cross as a symbol in these days of ours has lost something of its original significance, because it has now been made an object of pride. When our officers distinguish themselves exceptionally in the present campaign they will be rewarded, probably, with the newly instituted military cross as a decoration. It is an official diploma, so to speak, of their bravery, of their special courage and devotion to their country. But there is its form. It is that of a cross.

There is, however, a feature of this new cross which connects it with the spiritual one. The military cross bears a crown upon each of its four ends; and so it is, beloved friends, with the cross you are asked to take up. The cross of a believer supports a crown. No cross, no crown. Each suffering one shall wear the crown. When you look at a certain man, you know by his demeanour that he is a follower of Christ. He has something about his deportment that marks him out as a follower of the meek and lowly Nazarene. He is one who does not answer back. He is one who does not mind being made the off-scouring of all things. He has taken up the cross, and upon that cross he wears, you may see it if you will, the future crown. Those that suffer with Christ shall reign with Him.

Beloved friends, I ask you whether it is not a fact that when you go into general company you find you can speak of ordinary things, politics, pleasures, nature, and even God, and men will listen to you, join in the conversation, and attend to what you say. But when you introduce the name of Jesus the Nazarene, of Him who suffered and died, you get less response than before. Many will speak of God in an abstract way, while they have no real regard for Jesus in their hearts. Have you any place for Him? I feel sure you believe that there is a Creator of this world and that you are confident that there must be an Omnipotence somewhere that controls the world with all its intricate operations; but have your sins been forgiven? If you have had your sins forgiven, have you such little love in your heart for the Saviour that you will not allow it to show itself by following Him?

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." That is the way. The way of the cross is the way of salvation. And the blessed Lord points the finger at you! No, He does not point the finger and tell you to go; He says, Come after Me, and points to the narrow way which He trod in such patience and obedience to His God, the end of it being involved in the blackness of darkness. But He who went to the cross is now enthroned in brightest glory. That is your way, it is my way, if we follow Him.

"If any man follow me." It will be a great attainment, beloved friends, when we are there in the place He has gone to prepare for us, when this world will be a thing of the past, when all the suffering for His name’s sake will be over. Is it not a fact that the sufferings of this little while are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us?

Depend upon it, there is a great future before you and me if we do but answer to these words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and deny ourselves and follow Him. He looks down, as it were, from heaven, and calls to you. He wants you to enlist for the duration of the war.’ There must be no turning aside, no resting; we are in a hostile country, and the campaign must go on until the Lord comes. It is a time of peril; and who is there upon the earth prepared to follow the a Lord Jesus Christ in loyalty and devotion? You cannot follow Him with your sins. You must come and be cleansed from your sins. You must have that black past forgiven and obliterated, and nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, can cleanse you from your sins. Having been cleansed from your former sins, let your future be to take your cross, to deny yourself, and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. W.J.H.

Chapter 102

S. Effectual Power and Imitative Effort.

Effectual Power and Imitative Effort.

W. J. Hocking.

1892 46 Divine spiritual power* is said in scripture to operate in three spheres, viz; (1 in the individual believer's life, (2) in the assemblies of the saints and (3) in the proclamation of the gospel. And in each of these relations there is found counterfeit action to which is may be profitable briefly to refer by way of warning.

{*It is not intended by the term "power" to overshadow the personality of the Spirit but to describe thereby His operation by means of human instrumentality, as in Acts 1:8. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."}

First then, it is plainly declared that God gives to believers the Spirit of power (Acts 1:8) in order that even the feeblest may boldly partake of the afflictions of the gospel in testimony for Him (2 Timothy 1:7-8). And in proof of its divine origin, this power has the peculiar property of becoming more abundant and more easily available in proportion as it is needed and drawn upon, contrary to mere human power which must of necessity lessen the more it is used. This blessed fact the apostle learned from the Lord's words, "My strength is made perfect in weakness"; and on that account he gloried in his infirmities, so that, the power of Christ might rest upon him (2 Corinthians 12:9). Not only, however, in times of difficulty but constantly, the power of God keeps (1 Peter 1:5), strengthens (Colossians 1:11), establishes (Romans 16:25) and works in us (Ephesians 3:20), bringing our self-willed hearts into the obedience of Christ, and, instead of anger, lust and malice, producing love, joy and peace. Indeed it is only as God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Php 2:13), that we can live acceptably before Him. But it is by no means impossible to imitate the more manifest fruit of the Spirit; indeed hypocrisy is recognised and most severely denounced throughout the word of God. But however good the counterfeit, it must be empty and vain, being the product of human and not divine power. For instance, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availed to shut and to open the very heavens above. James 5:16-18. But the street prayer, despite its punctiliousness and though accompanied by a disheveled beard and unwashed face, was of no value before God (Matt. vi). Although it counted much among men, it was neither heard in heaven nor answered on earth. For external imitations of love, zeal, beneficence to the poor, and the like, never deceive God Who views the motive in the heart. When the glory of God, however, is before the soul, His power works to the accomplishment of that end. But if self-glorification be the motive, the divine power ceases to act and human energy has to take its place. And often when there is a loss of real power, it is sought to remedy the defect by an increase of outward zealousness and devotion. As Samson, though shorn by Delilah, went out and shook himself even as at other times; but his strength had departed and would not return with a shake. It is always easier to pretend to power than to confess to failure; though, for all that, the latter is the real source of strength. "When I am weak, then am I strong." And as it is characteristic of these days to have a form of godliness denying the power

thereof (2 Timothy 3:5), may sincerity of motive and humility of heart be cultivated by those who desire to be faithful amid such unreality. In the second place, the power of God operates among the saints in their corporate capacity. All that believe are united by intimate and indissoluble bonds (1 Corinthians 12:11-13); and an indwelling energy is ever acting "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16). Thus at the beginning, the whole body of saints, led on by the power of the Spirit, was tilled with the reciprocating desire for the well-being of the members, to such an extent that they sold their possessions and had all things common (Acts 4:32-37). These beautiful acts of self-denial for one another's benefit were counterfeited by Ananias and Sapphira, who laid down at the apostles' feet a part of the price of their possessions as if it were the whole. This intended deception was immediately judged by the Holy Ghost as abominable in His sight; and they were both cut off as a solemn warning to all such hypocrites.

Again, the assembly from the beginning was empowered to remit sins in a governmental way (Matthew 18:18, John 20:23). This is exemplified in every case of reception at the Lord's table, wherein the saints formally declare their belief that the Lord has forgiven the sins of such and such a one; and, accordingly, they welcome him or her to a place of fellowship among those who have also been forgiven. Compare the case of Saul (Acts 9:26-27). In like manner, the assembly has the power of retaining sins. Thus if a believer persists in unrepentant sin, the assembly gathered together "with the power of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:1-13 :) are capable of casting that one without the pale of the church in order that the honour of the Lord's name and the holiness of His table may be maintained, and also that the offender himself may be thereby brought to repentance. A misuse of this power is seen in 3 John 1:8-9. There we find that malicious self-will worked in Diotrephes to such a degree that he, usurping lordship over the flock of God, forbade the assembly to receive the apostle and moreover cast out any who would. This was mere groundless pretence to the power of excommunication. And the history of the church abounds in similar examples; and even our own times are by no means destitute of instances of such unwarranted assumption. And therefore it is by no means needless to point out with what supreme care these powers of exclusion and inclusions, vested in the church, should he exercised so that the action in every case may he of God and not a human sham.

Referring to another phase of the same fact, we find 1 Corinthians 12:14 : show in detail that power has been bestowed in the assembly for worship and ministry. Now man supposes that, unless a plan or system of worship is devised and adhered to, the result will be confusion, On the contrary confusion has a human origin (1 Corinthians 14:33) and springs from a want of faith in the Spirit of God to conduct the exercises of the saints in prayer and praise and in dispensing the word of life for the nourishment of His people. Everything, in fact, apart from the divine order is confusion; and examples of this are not far to seek. In place of the unhindered movements of the Spirit of God in supplication or thanksgiving, a petrified liturgy may he seen, as unmerciful to the desires of the people as ever was Procrustes to his victims. And instead of allowing the Spirit to energize the various gifts in the assembly, "dividing to every man severally as He will," the saints themselves in other cases undertake the management of their "minister," prescribing his collegiate course, his special qualifications and his mode of ministry to their own satisfaction, expecting the poor man to he pastor, teacher, evangelist and what-not with equal facility and success. These and all other set ecclesiastical arrangements of a similar nature can only be but bad imitations of

the real thing, differing one from another, and all from the truth, and therefore (despite outward appearances) a source of permanent weakness to the saints of God. In the third place, the power of God is made manifest in the proclamation of the gospel; for it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). Naturally the Acts, which narrates the founding of the church is very full of this subject. From the sermon of Peter at Pentecost to the preaching of Paul the prisoner at Rome, we have a practical exposition of the words, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Far and near the gospel went forth, "not in word only but in power" (Acts 4:33; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). Unlike the lifeless philosophy of the day, it laid hold of men of all ranks and classes, and won them to its embrace. For though philosophy had refined eloquence, a certain knowledge of the human mind and character, a personal devotion to principle and a code of morality beyond its times, it possessed not the power of God like the gospel. And since that power has not yet departed, it is obviously of the very highest importance that it should be allowed to operate in the preaching of Christ's cross. And like all God's gifts this power seems to be readily accessible. It would appear from the Acts that it is to be had for the asking, always remembering that prayer in scripture implies a thorough sense of inability to act without God. When the apostles had prayed, we are told, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:31; Acts 4:33). And we know what mighty results followed. When the power of the apostles to cast out demons was sought to be imitated by the sons of Sceva, they signally failed. Though there were seven of them altogether, and though they used the name of Jesus as the apostle had done, the demons exposed their deceit, and they had to flee in confusion (Acts 19:13-16). Is it not possible for preachers today to fall into the error of these "vagabond Jews" and think that a mere recital, rhetorical or otherwise, of the facts of the gospel are sufficient to save the soul? The failure of such will be a striking parallel to that of the exorcists. And none will deny how easy it is to allow care for external appearance to minimise, if not obliterate, the conscious need for internal power, or even to suppose, like Jacob who planned first and prayed next, that the perfection of human arrangements is after all the best recommendation for divine aid. It may be well therefore to remind one another that the divine power does not reside either in logical analysis or vivid imagination, in the apt illustration or the striking simile, in the appropriate gesture or the rotund voice, in the novel subject or the odd treatment, in humorous remarks or in graveyard solemnity. For that which commands human attention cannot be said of necessity to command the blessing of heaven. And if God deign to use one or the other of the more worthy characteristics just named in an honoured servant of His, it is not that the rest should imitate him in this particular and thereby pretend to that which they do not possess. But as the secret of success lies in the co-operation of divine power, let that be earnestly sought above all things. Let the closet be occupied more than the study. Let the prayer-meeting be looked to as the source of blessing. For it is useless to have everything else if there is no power; it becomes in such a case no more than the affectation of a grand display. The difference between real power and outward pretence was seen on Mount Carmel ages ago (1 Kings xviii). There at the outset the cause of Baal appeared to the best advantage. He had his choice of the sacrifice, the sympathy of the court, and a numerous priesthood, zealous for his (i.e. their own) interests. Throughout the day they rent their throats, if not the heavens, with their cries, "O Baal, hear us." They madly gesticulated, leaping frantically upon the altar, and cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out upon them. But the

very exuberance of their efforts showed how ineffectual were their endeavours. There was no reply. The mountain of zeal brought forth not even a mouse-like result. But it was not so with Elijah. He, though alone, was supremely confident in Jehovah. He even took elaborate precautions to exclude every suspicion of human collaboration. The altar and sacrifice were repeatedly drenched with volumes of water. Then, in answer to his prayer, the sacred fire fell from the cloudless sky and consumed everything. God acted humanly speaking, under, the most unfavourable conditions for the glory of His name. This great lesson of God’s sovereignty is repeated in the Epistles to the Corinthians. Paul speaks of his being with them "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling:" yet, as they well knew, his preaching was "with power" (1 Corinthians 2:3-4). That weakness and power should thus coalesce seems most paradoxical to man but was a most blessed fact to the servant of God. For he could and did rejoice when the excellency of the power was thus seen to be of God and not of man.

However, leaving this subject to be pursued farther to greater advantage, the following points in connection therewith seem of sufficient importance to be briefly summarised:

(1) That since the power of God is the only efficient power in the proclamation of the gospel, this fact deserves most serious consideration;

(2) That the glory of God as our object and the sense of humble dependence in the souls of His servants seem connected with the exercise of this power;

(3) That a formal routine of gospel work denies the power of God as much as a system of worship;

(4) That the imitation of a successful evangelist ascribes the power to him and not to God;

(5) That weakness in point of numbers or the like is no bar to the working of this power, provided there is real faith and earnestness.

S. For (or In) Remembrance of Me.

For (or In) Remembrance of Me.

W. J. Hocking.

1892 144 Of the three evangelists who narrate the institution of the supper of the Lord, only one records the words of the departing Redeemer with regard to the object of that feast. Luke it is, who, after writing "This is My body which is given for you", adds the further words "This do in remembrance of Me", thereby imparting a holy and solemn character to that which otherwise might possibly appear so trivial in their eyes as to be despised. That this phrase should only appear in the third Gospel is but one of the numerous illustrations of the symmetry and true "harmony" of these inspired memoirs of our Lord. For in Luke His divine humanity is portrayed in all its matchless fulness and perfection, unexampled as it was and is in the eyes of God as well as men. In this Gospel only, therefore, the Spirit of God with unerring consistency gives the sentence before us. Amid the most affecting circumstances, He is shown as the lowly Man, Jesus of Nazareth, appealing to the love and loyalty of those who had continued with Him in His temptations. As the lonely and despised One, as the One Who had wept over the blind forgetfulness and ignorance of Jerusalem, the favoured city of God, He expresses this desire to His own, "This do in remembrance of Me." May not we who know Him ask ourselves, Which of us could resist such an appeal from such an One?

Yet it should be remembered that not only as the humbled Man, but also as the glorified Man, not only as Jesus, but also as the Lord Jesus Christ, He has so spoken. For at a later day, the apostle of the Gentiles* received from Him when on high that they were to drink the cup as well as eat the loaf in remembrance of Him (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). And if we may infer that in Luke the Lord’s words take the form of an appeal, may we not say that in Paul we have the same words in the form of a command? For in the one, He seems to claim the love and in the other the heart-obedience of His saints. In the one He speaks as being in their midst and in the other as being exalted above the heavens. Each scripture is perfect in its connection, and we shall profit much as we ponder both the love of His heart as He sat at the table and the authority of His word as given from the glory above.

{*Thus what was given in the Gospels to Jews was confirmed by the epistle to Gentiles.}

It is however also instructive to remark that this remembrance is indissolubly connected with eating the bread and drinking the cup. "This do for the recalling Me to mind" (eis ten emen anamnesin) indicates plainly enough that the "remembrance" is the result of the "doing," and implies that it cannot arise apart from the "doing." Not that saints in private cannot or do not remember the Lord. This they may do continually. His Person surely should never be absent from the thoughts of His own. We are even exhorted to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus for practical everyday purposes (2 Corinthians 4:10). But while this is so true, it ought not to he forgotten that no child of God can privately, as an individual, eat the bread and drink the cup for

a remembrance. It is essentially an act in the assembly, the very loaf setting forth the unity of the body of Christ, as the eating of it sets forth fellowship (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). And the Lord has foreseen all difficulties with regard to this and graciously provided that its character should not be lost in a day of confusion and failure like the present. He has been pleased to guarantee His own presence, which is sufficient, even among two or three gathered to His Name (Matthew 18:20). Thus the simple words which are engaging our attention closely guard against all transcendental notions of remembering Him without the bread and the wine as well as against that culpable indifference which pleads an ability (though it be never put in practice) to remember the Lord as well in the closet and in solitude as at His table and among those who call on Him out of a pure heart. The words "This do" are a sufficient rebuke to both the one and the other. Wilful negligence and virtual disobedience, though they be cloaked in a garb of superior piety, are altogether repugnant to the simple realities of scripture. This remembrance also bears an aspect towards the world. For in establishing the supper the Lord did more than afford simple means which were to be mightily used by the Spirit to concentrate the thoughts of His people upon His own blessed Person in especial relation to His work of redemption. The feast of remembrance is to announce His death till He come. So that while partaking of the emblems is full of the most sacred significance to the saints, it is moreover a public memorial to all if they will but see and believe. For thus has the Lord reared in the world a monument to His memory more imperishable than marble. His cenotaph is in the loving hearts of His obedient saints who eat bread and drink wine for a remembrance of Him. Just as the sacrifices of old, besides being types of Christ, were remembrances of unexpiated sins (Hebrews 10:3), so the Lord’s. Supper, besides its sacred import to believers, is a solemn though silent testimony to the world of the Lord’s death, of which it is guilty, and for which it must answer.

S. Gog, Prince of Rosh.

Gog, Prince of Rosh. In a former paper on, "The latter-day kings of Daniel" it was shown that "the king of fierce countenance," of Daniel 8:1-27 is no other than the person generally called by the Jewish prophets "The Assyrian," (Isaiah 10:24, Isaiah 14:25; Micah 5:5-6), and that he "appears to be the political enemy of restored Jews, and energetic leader of the confederate nations North and East of the Holy Land," who say "Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the house of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psalms 83:4). But cruel and despotic though he be, "the Assyrian" will not be a truly independent potentate. For the word declares "his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power" (Daniel 8:24). From this we may safely conclude, therefore, that his power is a delegated one. As in the case of the Beast and the false prophet, the latter is the vassal of the former and receives his support, so the king of the north is the servant of another and does his bidding.

Now the question arises, Who is this mighty monarch that is more powerful than even the king of the north, and at the same time an equally bitter enemy of God’s people the Jews? The book of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29) gives the answer to this question, and adds many interesting details on the last invasion of the land of Israel by their united foes. In the opening of chap. 38 the prophet’s attention is called to "Gog of the land of Magog," the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (A.V.). Many scholars, however, follow the Septuagint or the oldest translation of the Old Testament extant, in rendering "chief" as a proper name instead of an appellative as in the common Bible (A.V.), thus "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." Young in his version gives the same; Newcome in his translation of our prophet, over one hundred years ago, understood the verse in the same way. So did W. Lowth, who wrote one hundred and fifty years ago. Again, without mentioning the long list of names that might be adduced in favour of this rendering, one would call attention to the last revision of our English Bible which also reads "prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal."

Hence it is that many scholars taking it as a proper name, see in "Rosh" the Russian people or nation without any sound reason for doubt.

Objectors to this, however, argue that "Rosh" should not be thus translated, but rendered as in the A.V. The word, they say, occurs in scripture between four and five hundred times, and is nowhere else rendered as a proper name. But this is really of no force, for the word would not be used as a proper name where no occasion called for such use. Here no other meaning can make tolerable sense nor agree with the rest of the context.

Still it seems desirable that the earlier names mentioned in these chapters should be examined a little more fully, both historically and geographically, in order to arrive at a more definite conclusion respecting the point at issue.

First then as to Gog, Michaelis compares the name Gog with Kak or Chak, the general name of kings among the ancient Turks, Moguls, Tartars, and Chinese; just as "Pharaoh" was the title

given to the kings of Egypt in ancient time. "In our day the name is thought to have been discovered in cuneiform inscription which reads — Larisi and Pariza sons of Ga-a-gi, a chief of the Saka (Scythians) (Speaker's Comm. 6: 155)." Some writers make its origin to be Semitic, and derive it from Ga (to be high) and associate it with Gag (a roof) Joshua 2:6, (top of an upperchamber) 2 Kings 23:12, and Gog (high, a mountain). From this we may safely conclude that, when applied to a person, the word would mean an exalted and mighty one, an appellation particularly appropriate to the Autocrat of the Russias. By some the name is said to be symbolic; if so, it may be aggression and self-exaltation, in which case it would be most suitable. to the above dignity.

Magog was the second son of Japheth and is said to have given his name to a land and people of the extreme north beyond the Caucasus. Josephus says "Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians" (Ant. 1: 6, 1). Of these we have three principal tribes mentioned. The first in order and importance is Rosh. Now we are informed by an early writer that the Tauri inhabiting the Crimea were a Scythian people known by the name of Ros. Another traces this name to the Rha or Volga (some say Araxes) in the neighbourhood of which this tribe lived. Gesenius makes Rosh to be "undoubtedly the Russians who are mentioned by Byzantine writers of the tenth century, under the name of of hoi hRos dwelling to the north of the Taurus." It is generally supposed also that the Rasses mentioned in the book of Judith were the same people, with the name slightly altered. "To the north of the Tauri or Ros, between what is now the Dnieper and the Don was another tribe, the Roxolani, a mixed Sarmatian or Slavonic race called Scythians by Greek and Roman writers; and these are also said to have been progenitors of the present Russian race." Thus may be gathered that the modern Russians can be traced to tribes in eastern Sarmatia, and that their name, or resemblances to it, present themselves among these tribes from at least the second century before Christ downwards. Hence too the name may be accounted for, as used in the Septuagint.

Meshech, a word meaning "to draw out (hence possibly to be "tall of stature"), was the name of Japheth's sixth son. Coupled with this is generally found the name of Japheth's fifth son Tubal which means "flowing forth" (i.e. "increase and diffusion of a race").

These two brothers are generally admitted to have been the progenitors of the Moschi and Tibareni respectively, tribes constantly associated under the names of "Muskai and Tuplai," in the Assyrian inscriptions, just as Meshech and Tubal are in scripture. "They can, therefore, scarcely fail to belong to one and the same ethnic family: so that if we can succeed in distinctly referring either of them to a particular branch, we may assume the same of the other. Now the Muskai (or Moschoi of the Greeks) are regarded on very sufficient grounds as the ancestors of the Muscovites, who built Moscow, an d who still give name to Russia throughout the East. And these Muscovites have been lately recognized as belonging to the Tchad or Finnish family, which the Slavonic Russians conquered and which is a well-known Turanian race."* {*Rawlinson's Herodotus, Vol. I} From the above may be gathered, then, that the consensus of testimony, both Ancient and Modern, is in favour of the opinion that the present nation of Russia is composed mainly of descendants from the Japheth mentioned first in Genesis 10:1-32 and repeated in Ezekiel 38:1-23 as well as in other places in the Old Testament. The vision which the prophet records here, however, refers to the time of the end, and is connected with the judgment of the nations prior to the millennium. Now when the descendants of Noah were scattered, we read "By

these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands." And as God had His people Israel in view when He divided the nations: so will they be found in connection with that nation in the latter days. Then there will be two great confederacies of nations, that of the last under the "Assyrian" or "King of the North," and that of the West under the first Beast of Revelation 13:1-18. The former will be the sworn enemy of the Jews, but the latter their then firm ally. However, they both perish by the hand of the Lord, at different times, it is true, but previous to the invasion here mentioned. This of the Russian leader will probably take place just on the eve of the millennium. Gog (the last representative of the Assyrian policy) will gather to his standard a mighty army of infantry and calvary fully equipped with all modern weapons of destruction. There will be representatives of the various peoples that will comprise Russia at that time, or be under her influence (38). And so great will be the multitude of men and horses that they are described, by the prophet, as a cloud covering the land (ver. 9). In this invasion their leader will be but carrying out the well-known Russian system of steady aggression and acquisition, particularly in the East. Greed impels him to come up from the north quarters upon the mountains of Israel; and the plunder of an externally defenceless, but reputedly rich, people will be the object of the expedition. Their apparently unprotected condition will cause Gog to anticipate an easy victory, and a rich spoil for his armies (vers. 11, 12). But he will discover, to his dismay and utter discomfiture, that "He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." For the LORD will lead His people and go forth to fight against him and his mighty army which will be destroyed with a great destruction. The slaughter will be so vast at this time that seven months will be occupied in burying the dead. Gog himself will also find his grave in the valley of Haman-Gog, where his followers will be buried with him: a wholly different end from that of Isaiah’s Assyrian or Daniel’s king of the north. Judgment will be executed at the same time on the land of Magog [i.e. the land of Russia] and among those that dwell carelessly in the isles," and they shall know that I am the LORD." He says thus will the LORD deal in righteousness with the enemies of Israel and clear the way for His reign of peace. The dream of a millennium introduced by "pacific principles" is not based on revelation in any way. On the contrary, scripture declares, "let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." "When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9-10). At present God is dealing with man in grace, but how few comparatively profit by this favour! Soon the day of grace will close, however, and He will mete out judgment to the rejecters of His gospel and the despisers of His Son — judgment by that Son whom they will oppose. Thus they will be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence and from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Such is the doom that awaits the Prince of Rosh and his followers, the last of His enemies previous to the millennium. The Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:1-15. are judged subsequently to the thousand years of the Messiah’s reign: a symbolic N.T. designation of the multitudinous hordes in Satan’s last deception. How blessed to know the heavenly saints will be kept from the hour of trial which precedes all judicial dealings on a guilty world! W.T.H.

S. Inspiration.

Inspiration. To the Editor of the Bible Treasury. My Dear Sir, The divinely illuminated soul is convinced beyond all manner of doubt that the Holy Scriptures display the dealings of God with mankind. He sees also that they are, on their own testimony, Theopneustic; and that, as the writers recorded the (original) words, their statements expressed exactly what God intended to impart, and expressed the same exactly as He willed it, yet retaining the style of the penman. He observes, further, that every part is essential, and occupies just the necessary position in order to sustain the unity of the whole. He next inquires as to the character of the several parts; for, though all is equally inspired, it does not follow on that ground alone that all is warranted as true.

Thus erroneous acts and sayings of men may be used (as indeed they are) for our instruction. However, there is, obviously enough, no difficulty with the words of God, of the Lord Jesus, direct or through angels; none with the prophets, apostles and others "filled with the Holy Ghost "; none with the sayings of men whose errors of speech are demonstrated in the Word itself; none with the historical facts given as true. But by what criteria is the believer to try the truth of (say) the speeches of Job and his friends or (as some would add) the writings of Solomon in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes? It seems unaccountable to suppose that God has allowed parts of His word to be so vague that we are to be in doubt whether such and such a passage is absolute truth or merely an illustration of man’s liability to err. Is Job 19:1-29 : a prophetic intimation of the coming Redeemer and of the resurrection? or is it only rhetorical figures used by an excited man in self-vindication? Is Ecclesiastes to be valued only for the ability and the experience of the writer? Are the words "I said in mine heart" (Ecclesiastes 2:1; Ecclesiastes 2:15; Ecclesiastes 3:17-18; Ecclesiastes 9:1) as in any way parallel to those phrases in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 : where a plain distinction is drawn between revealed truth, 1:e. truth having a divine claim on the soul, and spiritual wisdom? It seems indeed calamitous to suppose the human alternative. Opportunity is thus given for a most arbitrary position, if they happen to oppose a pet theory. For instance, a recent writer who has broached the theory that the Hebrew word for "spirit" is restricted in its use to man, found Ecclesiastes 3:19 adverse to him. He is not however alarmed, but proceeds, "In one place only where man is questioning about things existing under the sun, is rooagh ascribed to beasts, and then it is by one who confesses his own ignorance of what he is writing about" (p. 7, "Spirit, Soul, and Body;" H. C. A., Broom). Is there not the germ, and more, of rationalism there? Is not the principle of interpretation false? But the fact also is untrue; for "rooagh" is also so used in Psalms 104:29 (compare also Genesis 6:17; Genesis 7:15; Genesis 7:22); so that, unless the Psalmist is likewise untrustworthy, Solomon is not so philologically ignorant as he is represented; and the writer’s conclusion is overthrown. But is his mode of argument sound? Does God allow men to write what is untrue without its falseness being plainly discernible to the spiritual mind? if so, our confidence in the word of God is shaken. The Spirit inspired Solomon to record infallibly his impressions of what he saw "under the sun;" but was the preacher permitted to indite a wrong impression or to employ misleading language? Was not his view of things of God from his own standpoint? And in fact has not a beast "spirit" or its own peculiar instinct, besides the living

principle which is called "soul:" in both of wholly inferior character to man’s which come from God Himself and goes upward? If so, inasmuch as varied aspects of truth are never contradictory, the class of argument adduced above is not only invalid and unintelligent, but dishonouring to scripture and dangerous to man.

If we cannot rely absolutely on Solomon’s writings how are they to be interpreted? Or to state the main question again: — Are we called upon to sit in judgment on the truth or falsehood of the statements of Solomon etc., as we do on the recorded words of inspired men? If so, by what means? W. J. Hocking.

Chapter 106

S. John's Vision of the First and the Last

John’s Vision of the First and the Last Notes of an address on Revelation 1:9-20

W. J. Hocking.

1917 349 This afternoon reference was made to the comfort afforded at the present time to God’s people by the book of Revelation, and this use of the Apocalypse is an undeniable fact, which might be better recognised than it is. The book was written for this very purpose at a time of great distress and tribulation in the history of the church.

There is much in the special features of the book of Revelation which at first sight is apt to deter people from reading it and studying it. But there is undoubted help as well as comfort to be obtained by the simplest, if they only approach it in the right manner. And indeed there is but one suitable manner in which properly to approach any part of scripture, and that manner is to have an earnest, reverent, and consuming desire to see in that particular scripture some special communication concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. The great lesson of the holy scripture and the great subject of God’s teaching by His Spirit throughout all the ages is that there is but one Person who can adequately help the youngest and oldest, the feeblest and strongest of His people, and that Person is Jesus Christ. Now it was particularly for John and for the saints who were tried like John that the vision of Jesus Christ which we have in the first chapter of the Revelation was given and recorded.

John as an Exile

Let us think for a moment of John and the circumstances in which he was found. It is fairly clear from scripture that John was the last survivor of the Apostolic band. He was a young man as a disciple of Christ in Galilee; he was an old man in Patmos. He had seen many changes in the interval, and had suffered many vicissitudes since he first saw the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us suppose that this vision was granted to John toward the end of the first century. Now think of some of the important events of the first century. Let us for simplicity’s sake take it that in the year 30 our Lord was crucified; thirty years after that would be the year 60, when the apostle Paul came to Rome as a prisoner, and all the work of the Spirit of God of which we read in the Acts had then been accomplished. During that period the gospel had gone abroad in its fulness and power all over the known world, and people came into the church of God by myriads. Ten years later, in the year 70, Jerusalem, the city of the great King, the earthly centre of Israel’s hopes, was destroyed, and was left a heap of smoking ruins by the Roman army. About the year 90, John, the old apostle, wrote those three tender letters that we still have, full of affection and truth, and applicable to the family of God everywhere and at all times.

Here, when those crowded years had all passed, we read of him as a lonely exile. He had seen so many divine wonders, seen the church of God arise, develop, and spread, seen also evil creep

into that holy church, seen men giving up, turning aside, becoming corrupted by the influence of evil doctrine, seen, moreover, the persecuting power of. Rome devastating the church of God, as it had done the Jewish nation, and now he himself in his old age is banished to the Isle of Patmos. How full that hundred years was to him of sorrow, regret and disappointment! What had looked so fair in prospect had now withered; the gospel which went out to conquer the whole world was now as it were a failure, he himself was held prisoner by the civil power of Rome, exiled from the society of his friends, and of his children in the faith, left to die alone in Patmos, forsaken of all.

John's was a sad experience for an old man of piety and of such repute in the church. When he was young and impulsive he had said to the Master, I can drink of Thy cup, Lord, I am able to be baptized with Thy baptism. The Lord had said to him in effect, Thou shalt indeed drink of My cup. As thou wilt see, I shall go to Golgotha, My service a failure, what I have laboured for producing nothing; the years of My ministry all barren to human sight; and I Myself forsaken, given up by My nation, handed over to the power of Caesar to be crucified. Thou too shalt drink of that cup, and see thy service a failure too, thyself a prisoner of Rome unable to testify for thy Master. Did John in Patmos recall the words of Jesus? (Matthew 20:22-23). But the Lord knew that when He was at Calvary, when His nation had turned away from Him, and delivered Him to the Gentiles to be crucified and spit upon, when many of His disciples feared, and forsook and even denied Him, there was one who came near Him that day; there was one that did not utterly forsake his Master; there was one found at the lonely cross, upon whom He looked, and to whom He spoke, and that disciple was John, come there to drink, if he might, of his Master's cup. The Lord does not overlook any act of faithful adherence to Himself, and so years afterwards when John was banished from Christian intercourse and society, with no earthly friend to solace and comfort, the Master, according to promise, did not leave nor forsake him. The Master came to visit His servant in the Isle of Patmos. He came, but what for? Why does He come to those who are cast down? He comes to illuminate the hearts of those who are, as it were, shrouded in darkness, those who are feeling the cruel power of the world, and the pressure of adverse circumstances. He came to John to lift up, to reveal Himself, to stand before this sorrowing disciple and to reveal afresh to him His glories, and His unchangeable Person. Beloved friends, it is so that He will come to us also in these hours of stress and sadness which have come upon the world and the church.

We are today face to face with the great ruin in the church of God. By the ruin I mean that the power of the evil one has invaded the church of God; the companies of Christians are not everywhere pure and holy; sin is present and permitted in many companies, and in the conduct of individual confessors of Christ it seems to have its sway. We know from scripture that this must be so because the terrible declension was foretold from the beginning. But there are many who are cast down because of these unhappy conditions. There are many also who even say it is now time that we let things take their course. But it is never too late to make a bold stand for Christ, and those who are cast down should remember what the Spirit of God has recorded here for our instruction, help and comfort.

Three Visions of Christ The vision given to the apostle was a glorious one. And since it was placed on record we are privileged to spend that Lord's day with John in the Isle of Patmos. We can as it were hear what he heard, and see what he saw.

It is a way of God to reveal Himself at the great epochs of man's history suitably to the occasion. You will find in the Revelation that there are three visions of Christ given in connection with the three great divisions of the book, for the Apocalypse is divided into three parts. First, there is the part which deals with present things, that is, with the church conditions which began at Pentecost, and which will continue until the rapture of the church, and in the first three chapters we have the way in which Jesus Christ is revealed in connection with these present things. Secondly, there is the considerable part relating to the providential judgments falling on men when the church is gone. Accordingly, we find in the fifth chapter the vision of Christ as the slain Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, prevailing to open the sealed roll. Thirdly, there is the part dealing with the epoch of Christ's appearing and reign. This begins with the nineteenth chapter, containing as it does the introduction of the day of the Lord's personal judgment. There you have a vision of Christ in heaven upon a white horse, displayed as coming to the world as the Warrior-Judge.

You will see on study that in each of these cases Christ is revealed in a character suitable to God's dealings with the world portrayed in the (particular vision. What we have to consider briefly for our special comfort and help at the present time is the vision of Christ as He appeared to John on that Lord's day in the Isle of Patmos. The Trumpet Voice

I think, as I said just now, that John's thoughts must have been very sad ones, as he looked across the sea, probably to the coast of Asia Minor. There he could see, with the mind's eye at any rate, that portion of the country where so great and grand a testimony had been given of Jesus Christ, and where the power of God's Holy Spirit had gathered many to worship the Father and the Son. There before him were the seven churches in Asia. John might, as was said, almost have seen them. And he thought what a difference had come about since the day when they first heard the sound of the voice of Jesus in the gospel call. How sadly different they now were in faith, in zeal, and in holiness! And while he thought in sadness of this declension, John heard a voice behind him as of a great trumpet.

There was One who had heard his thoughts; One knew what was passing in his soul; and that One had now drawn near to him and spoke with him. While John listened to what the Lord had to say, he found He had something for His servant to do. The apostle was to write; but he was first to write in a book what he saw, and send it to each of the seven churches. The first communication to the assemblies was not a matter of doctrine or exhortation, but the vision of the living Person of the Son of man in His power and glory. For we must not omit to observe that the seven epistles as contained in the second and third chapters were additional communications, one for each assembly. The first communication was concerning the vision which John saw for his own personal comfort and instruction (verse 11).

Beloved friends, I would that I might impress upon myself and you the same great fact, this vision of the Christ of God. Young men and women, old men and women should for their spiritual strength see before the soul this vision of the living Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Should we not? Is it not a fact that Christ makes Himself known, that He makes His voice to sound as a trumpet in our ears? But often it is with us as it was with John that He speaks behind us.

John heard a voice behind him. While he was looking, as we have supposed, at the seven churches, Christ was behind him. He was looking at what most depressed him. Is it not so with many of us today? When we look around, what leanness, what carelessness, and what

indifference we see! Then we begin to be sad. We say Christian effort is of no further use. Let us give it all up, for as we look at the churches and the world we see nothing but sorrow, strife and sin. But there comes a voice behind us as of a great trumpeter There is One who is speaking to us. He has a special message for us. Let us then do as John did. He turned to see the voice that spake with him; until he turned he could not see the Speaker. Are you looking in the wrong direction? Are you looking at circumstances, or at Christ? There was a man and an apostle who walked on the waves; but he looked at the waves and sank immediately. And so John, looking away from Christ had no strength, no power. He was simply a prisoner in Patmos, while decay was spreading in the Christian assemblies he loved so well. The Light and the Lampstands

It was a marvellous revelation that the Lord made here of Himself. When John turned he saw seven golden candlesticks or lampstands. They were grouped in this manner for a purpose. A lampstand is evidently for use as a light bearer. There were seven of them, and they were golden, indicative of the holy work they had to do in divine ministry. Theirs was a sacred office; they had to diffuse the light of grace and truth in this world; and John saw that there were seven. The lampstands refer, as we learn, to the seven churches of Asia, but figuratively they refer now as then to the church in this world as the medium through which the sevenfold activities of the Spirit of God are expressed in witness to Christ during the night of His absence.

1917 366 In the Epistles of Paul you have the church spoken of in its unity as being associated with Christ in heaven. This heavenly calling of the church is most important for us to know. But although in the purpose of God the church is even now in heaven, in daily practice the saints are here in this world and constitute the assembly of God. And His people are sent here and there on divine service as it pleases Him. Of course, the number seven is figurative, but still in broad significance we may be sure it represents among other things that God in His gracious purpose has taken various companies of believers, and has set them where it has pleased Him, for the express purpose that they should shine for Him in a united capacity in the darkness of an evil age. And in their representative character they are linked with the seven Spirits of God spoken of in the earlier part of the chapter (verse 4). A golden lampstand is clearly of no use whatever without its light. John saw seven candlesticks, but the light of the seven churches of Asia was dim. They did not shine well for the Master, and their faint flickering would cause the apostle sadness and grief. But he saw more in his vision. In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks there was One like unto the Son of man. The Son of Man in the Midst

It is to this central feature of John’s vision that I would direct your special attention this evening. The apostle’s eyes were opened to see who was among the lampstands. The same fact is true now. In the midst of the professing church of God on earth today, there is standing One like unto the Son of man. You may say the church is in the heavenly places, and it is true, and Jesus Christ is revealed to us there, glorified before the eyes of faith. But He is equally here also as the glorified Son of man. He is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which are all united in this respect, that they surround the adorable figure of Christ as the Son of man.

We are reminded by this title of John’s testimony in the fifth chapter of his Gospel concerning the Lord and His teaching about Himself. A great deal is revealed there, but there are two things especially prominent, to which I now refer. The Lord is there shown to be the Life-giver and the Judge. Jesus exercises divine functions. God quickens — gives life; the Son also quickeneth

whom He will. Thus the Son of man is the Life-giver. Moreover, He is the Judge of all the earth. The Father Himself judgeth no man; all judgment is given unto the Son (John 5:21-22). Now in Patmos John sees the blessed Jesus among His churches as the Son of man, as the Life-giver, the One who bestows life, and the One who sustains life. But more than this, He is also the One who marks that which is wrong, discerning and condemning all that is evil. And He appears, moreover, to the eyes of the apostle as One clothed with a garment down to the feet. This flowing vestment would indicate the grace and dignity of His person in repose rather than in active service such as would be set forth by girded robes. John might recall His active service on that last passover supper when Jesus arose from the table, and having girded Himself with a towel, took a basin, and cleansed His disciples' feet. Now He appears again in the midst of His own, not as One to cleanse their feet, but in the calm dignity of His Person who is Lord of all the saints, clothed with a garment down to the feet. As Priest and Advocate He serves on high, but in the midst of His own assemblies He is an object to look upon with wonder and delight, and an obj ect to worship and to adore with fervent and unceasing praise.

Girded for Love

Further, we are to mark that the Son of man was girt about the breasts, not the loins, with a golden girdle. This feature of the vision has an important significance, especially as we remember that the Lord is revealed in this chapter as the Judge. We learn that His repression of evil in the churches is exercised in the energy of His love. To a person who does not know the love of Christ, His aspect may seem a little forbidding.

Years ago I was speaking to a Cingalese barrister, who was a Buddhist. The subject of our conversation was the truth of scripture. He had imbibed the infidel notions which are so rife in this christian country. He had visited England and had learned them here. At the time he was returning to Ceylon fully persuaded that Great Britain was rapidly giving up its national religion. One of the objections he raised to the christian faith was the subject of this very chapter. He said with scorn, "You speak to me of your Jesus! The Bible speaks also of your Jesus, and how does it speak of Him? It presents Him as a Great and Awful Judge, as One clothed with a long garment and His eyes as fire, with a sharp two-edged sword in His mouth. This terrifies me; Buddha is so calm." I might have said to him that the same Jesus whom he feared suffered little children to come to Him, and they were not terrified. But the Buddhist had a bad conscience, and hence arose his thought that Jesus was One to terrify a man. I do not, however, see that aspect in this scripture. Jesus is in the midst to oppose evil, but He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. In the midst of His assemblies His breasts are girded for activity. He is there to exercise His love, and the energy of His love has not failed throughout the centuries. There is One still in our midst who is girded to love us, and the bond of His love is the bond of righteousness, for His is the golden girdle of Divine righteousness. We cannot exhaust the love of Him who has saved us and washed us from our sins in His precious blood.

Hoar Head and Hairs But further, His head and His hairs were white as wool, as white as snow. "The hoary head is a crown of glory." White hairs are significant of wisdom, such as was associated in Daniel's vision with the Ancient of days (Daniel 7:9). But do you ask what poor distracted churches want with One such as this? Did not the Lord say to His disciples I send you forth as sheep amongst wolves, and are we not His sheep? Weak, silly, wayward? We are fond of

our own way, we are without the wisdom we require. But when we look at the Lord Jesus we see Him endued with all power and wisdom. The hoar hairs tell us of that wisdom which comes from above and is first pure. He it is who is made unto us wisdom. James says, If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth liberally to all men. The treasures of wisdom are in Him who passed through this world as the Son of man, and suffered as no man ever did nor could suffer. Look then at Him who is in our midst full of wisdom to guide and control the assemblies.

Eyes of Flame and Feet of Brass

Moreover, His eyes are as a flame of fire, discerning and criticising our thoughts, words and actions, looking upon us and searching us through and through. Do we not need this scrutiny? There is no more necessary devotional service for us than to be at the feet of Jesus, and to ask Him to search us thoroughly, as the Psalmist did of old (Psalms 139:23-24). Let His eyes of flame search us to discover and consume every hateful motive. We are apt to deceive ourselves, but when we feel that His eyes are upon us we make no mistake, for the search-light of His presence shows us truth in the inward parts, or error. And His feet too, of what do they speak? John saw that they were like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace. Did I not say just now that the church of God at that period was passing through a furnace of affliction and persecution? There were christians shortly before who had been made into bonfires in the pleasure gardens of Rome, and where was Christ amid those horrible sufferings which His servants endured? His feet were walking with His own in the furnace, as it were. Did not the same One walk in the furnace of old with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego? When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace he said, "Did not we cast three men bound into the furnace? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the fourth is like the Son of God." As it was with the faithful witnesses in Babylon so it is true that when the church of God passes through the hour of trial, there is One who walks with the saints, His feet burning as if in a furnace.

I would ask you whether you personally believe that the Lord veritably walks in the midst of the persecuted and suffering church, and also walks with each tried and sorrowing individual. Sometimes we find we must go through the furnace of affliction. The fire is before us and we must go forward, but here we learn that there will always be One with us, sometimes behind us, sometimes before us. When He is before us, happy are we, for we know by joyful experience how His power and strength work for us.

Seven Twinkling Stars

John saw then in this vision that the church of God was not forsaken. The feet of the Master were walking with the saints in their fiery trials. But there was something further. The seven golden lampstands were there, but John’s eyes left these. His eyes were turned upon the Lord Himself, and he saw in the right hand of the Master the seven stars which are the representatives of the seven churches. The fact thus illustrated made all the difference between defeat and victory. The seven stars, despite the feeble and broken condition of the assemblies, were held and maintained in the right hand of power, in the right hand of Jesus. Was not this a comfort to the beloved apostle, grieving in that last time when there were many antichrists? Should it not be a comfort to us also? In the darkest days God will have a light to shine for Him. There is One, the glorified Son of man, who takes care that the light of testimony is shining in this world all the time. We need not, therefore, be cast down, beloved friends. The Lord Himself holds the complete testimony, the

seven stars, in His own hands, and therefore the matter of light-giving is perfectly secured. What you personally have to be careful about is that your own light is shining. If your light is not shining, the Lord will use someone else. If one man does not shine, another will be chosen to shine. Happy the man who shines for Christ in the world and the church. Sad the man who is dark and dead so far as testimony for Christ is concerned. Let us then see to it that we are letting our lights shine, while for our comfort we also see that a perfect testimony is maintained in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, where are the seven stars. The Sounding Waters The voice John heard was as the sound of many waters. In this figure I think we may have a reference to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the sound of His name going out into all the earth. As the wind blowing where it listeth represents the activities of the Spirit, so the many waters may set out the activities of the Son. We hear the sound of the Spirit of God at work testifying of Christ. The mighty waters are the multitude of those potent agencies which give eternal life. By the living water of the word men are born again. In the sound of the gospel, in the sound of the revelations of scripture spreading abroad everywhere in the earth, men hear the voice of Jesus. That voice heard by the apostle in Patmos was to him like the voice of many waters, majestic in its might, calling back to his mind perhaps that night long past when he heard the voice of Jesus rising above the roaring storm on the sea of Galilee. There was then power in His voice over the raging deep. The power is such that still the dead hear the Son of God, and they that hear live. Most certainly this is so for both body and spirit. There are dead souls now as well as then who hear the voice of the Son of God and live. The Sunshine in its Strength

1917 After observing that out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, symbol of the penetrating power of His word, John saw that His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. In this all-glorious Lord we have the glory that excelleth. Think of the golden lampstands, think of the seven stars, and then of the mid-day sun. Where is your torch-light, and where is your star at noonday? Think how everything fades in the exceeding brightness of the meridian sun. Is it not so also in the face of Jesus Christ where shines the glory of God? There, for men of faith, is the great power of testimony in this world today. There is the one thing which makes the man of God calm and peaceful in the presence of tremendous odds. In the radiant glory of the face of Jesus Christ we find a ground of confidence and assurance, while we ourselves are transformed thereby. Did not Saul of Tarsus see that glory? It shone down upon him while the madness of persecution was still filling his soul. He saw the face of Jesus, and lie was at once blinded to all else in the world. He felt himself a lost soul in the presence of the Lord of glory, whose voice like a double-edged sword, penetrated his conscience and heart. Long after, Paul wrote "Have not I seen Jesus Christ the Lord?"

Many are walking in the light of a vision of Christ today, and I think this experience worth cultivating. There is no greater power for testimony and service to be found in this world than that which emanates from the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking at Him with that earnestness which Paul enjoined upon himself and the Philippians we catch something of His glory. On reflection you will remember that this was so in Old Testament days with Moses in the mount. He came down from the mount a singular man in the eyes of the people, and his singularity was that there was heavenly glory shining in his face.

It is possible now for us to reflect the glory of the unseen Lord and Saviour. Those who in the privacy of their chambers look upon the effulgent countenance of the Son of man, shine

themselves with a glory which is unmistakable in this dark world, being changed into the same image from glory to glory. There is nothing like it in this evil age, nothing whatever to compare with it. Every child of grace can in this manner be a witness for Christ, for every child knows what it is to draw, near to the Person of the Lord Jesus, to speak with Him and to hear His word. By this means the stamp of long-suffering, meekness and grace characteristic of Jesus is imprinted upon the follower of Christ, and the men of the world say, "There is something about this man that is different from us all." They own in effect that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. May we know more of the transforming power of His presence!

John Prostrate and Powerless The effect upon John of this vision of Godhead glory was surprising, and yet as we consider further it is not surprising. The aged apostle fell down at the feet of his Master as dead, and that attitude was proper and right. It was just the posture that he ought to take under the circumstances. When John thought of the glories of Jesus as they were thus unveiled before him he said, What am I before Him?

John, no doubt, may have thought of that time at the Lord’s supper when he had reclined on the bosom of Jesus, and tasted of the sweetness of His love on that night of His betrayal. He had long known the Master’s care for him, and he remembered often those gracious words of farewell that then came from His lips. But now he was looking at the glorified Christ with the eyes of flame, and so he fell down and worshipped Him to whom belongs all power and wisdom and glory and dominion. When the apostle fell at the feet of brass as dead he acknowledged that in himself there was no life, but all life was in the Son. John took a position of utter powerlessness before the Lord. This is of the essence of true service, for when a person is in a condition to say, "I can do nothing at all," he is just the very person the Lord will use. We stand in our own light when we think something of ourselves, and forget that we can do nothing at all except He is pleased to take us up as empty vessels and make us of some service for Him. The Lord’s Hand and Word The Lord did not leave the humble and helpless servant at His feet. He had come not only to unveil His glories to the exile as of old they had been unveiled to other men of God, but to be in personal contact with the disciple whom He loved. He laid His right hand upon him. I ask you to consider what is meant by the Lord of glory laying His right hand upon John, the right hand of power that held the seven stars. It means that He conveyed power to him. He bestowed new strength upon this poor faint and weary pilgrim by laying His right hand upon him. But more than this, the Son of man spoke to the prostrate man, and the very words He uttered, "Fear not," were just those He had more than once spoken on earth. The glorified Man of the vision was Jesus, Jesus Christ who "is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

How often during the course of His ministry had the Lord said, "Fear not!" I think very little of persons who never tremble. They are bold, ignorant people, who think they are always right. We ought to feel our weakness, and to tremble because of it. And the blessing of trembling is that we shall then get the word of Jesus coming to us, saying, "Fear not," and His word in this case, as always, carried effective power with it. And then in addition to this word of comfort, He revealed Himself as the First and the Last, for He is the Self-revealer.

If you look in the prophecies of Isaiah you will find that on three occasions (Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12) God speaks of Himself in this particular way, indicating His Godhead and His sovereignty as being over all. Jehovah is the First and the Last, the all-supreme One. Jesus said

to John, "I am the First and the Last," and three times also in this book (Revelation 1:17; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:13) this phrase occurs in connection with our Lord Jesus Christ — once in the first chapter, once in the second, and once in the last.* {*This phrase is omitted from Revelation 1:11 in the critical versions.} Do not think of "First" as meaning just the commencement. The earliest is not always the most important, and the elder may serve the younger. "First" often in scripture means the chiefest. Thus it is applied in this sense to men, Mark 6:21; Luke 19:47; Acts 13:50; Acts 28:7; to Philippi, Acts 16:12; to Paul as a sinner, 1 Timothy 1:15. And when the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of Himself as being the First, He sets Himself forth as the Supreme One. There is none higher than He. He is the First-born from the dead, and of all creation, both old and new; for in all things He must, by inherent right, have the pre-eminence.

I think we may note here in passing the frequent reason of failure in christian life and testimony. The Lord is not given the first place, that is, the chiefest. You may put Him first, but not chief. There was a servant who said "I go," but went not. The Master's will to him was not predominant. You may put the Lord first, and yet give Him the second place. He must have the chiefest place, and be supreme in everything. Let Him be to you the First and the Last, as He is called in scripture.

All is the Lord's. There is none and nothing worthy beside Himself. All is summed up in Him. The beginning and the ending, first and last, all is wrapped up in the glorious and blessed Christ of God. He is the living One who became dead; He has the keys of death and of hades, and all things are in His hands.

Beloved friends, why need we fear because of the enmity of the world and the frailty of self? The Lord says to us as to John, I am He who has supreme power. I am the One who is looking after assembly and national affairs. I am the One who will see things through to the end. Every true disciple shall be brought safely home. Not one member of the body of Christ will by-and-by be missing. There will be a perfect church in glory. The Lord's Knowledge and the Lord's Reward

I have two other things to mention before closing. They arise out of the communication to the seven churches. The Lord said to John: "Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are" (verse 19). The things John saw were comprised in his personal vision. The things which "are" were in contrast with the things which should be hereafter or "after these" (verse 19). Of the latter we read in Revelation 4:1-11. The things which "are" refer to the things of that present time which are in view in the epistles which, follow, addressed to the seven churches. The messages to the seven churches present among other special features two which we may now briefly consider. The first is the revelation that the Lord is in the midst of His church as the silent Scrutator, continually surveying the works of His people.

Just read through these seven letters, and over and over again you find a recurrence of the words, "I know thy works." Individually and collectively, the glorified Son of man knows your works and mine. Our works yesterday, our works today, He knows them all. He knows them in the manner of their execution; He knows the object that we had in them. I ask, Is the plan and operation always such as would satisfy the eyes of fire? We are dealing with the living Lord, that One at whose judgment seat we have to give account. His message through John is that He knows our works already. Therefore in this sevenfold message to the assemblies the Lord calls to us to have a care as to what we say and do.

Time is short, for the Lord surely is at hand. Our testimony here cannot last much longer. Therefore let our works be such as will shine for His glory who is ever with us, and knows our works. The second predominant feature I would now mention is that the Lord in these epistles holds out the promise of a reward to those who conquer in the strife. The reward is promised to the individual victor. In every case, "he that overcometh" is addressed (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). We each have our responsibility for earnest and faithful effort, and we are each pledged to victory and not to defeat. A christian need never be defeated in his testimony. There are truly powers that seek to destroy your testimony and make you a weak thing without influence and energy for the truth, but it is for you to claim the victory. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

We have personally to overcome evil with good. It is for you to gain a victory. According to the Lord’s promise you shall have a reward in the day that is coming, but you must conquer. There is the evil one to overcome by the word of God. You have to meet him. There is also the world that is saying all manner of evil things about the name of Christ. What do you do if they are said in your hearing? Stand by and say nothing, or act as a loyal disciple? Will you deny Him by a guilty silence, or will you speak for Him? Will you in other words be the overcomer? Having an Omnipotent Saviour to strengthen us in our weakness, we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loves us. W.J.H.

S. One thing"

One thing"

Notes of an address on Luke 18:18-25 and Php 3:13-14.

W. J. Hocking. In the portion we have read from Luke’s Gospel we have an account of a man who came to the Lord and was morally very fair to look upon, but, according to the Lord’s estimation, he lacked one essential thing. The Lord, in order to convict him of his shortcoming, tested him in respect of that particular qualification, and he failed in the test. In the Philippian passage we have the utterance of a man who long before had come to the Lord and who was still following Him. He expressed the habitual attitude of his heart and spirit in the words, "This one thing I do." Excluding other minor considerations, he was pressing forward with concentrated energy "toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The first instance affords a solemn warning to all, because it is clear that a person may possess a great many moral recommendations and yet fail to possess that needful thing which makes the essential difference between a child of God and a child of this world. Therefore the personal question should arise, How do I stand in this respect? I may have many outward virtues, yet lack the very thing that is more necessary than anything else. The other person stands out as a great example of a man pressing forward to that supreme object, that is, "the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus." In Luke then, we read of this young ruler who was sufficiently interested to come to the Lord, and he was in earnest also, for another Gospel tells us he came "running." He was clearly anxious to embrace the opportunity of an interview with Christ. We are told that he came and knelt to Christ: this attitude showed an absence of pride in him. He had some regard for the "Prophet of Nazareth," and so he did Him reverence by bowing his knee to Him. He then asked Him the question of all questions, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life? This life was something the law could not give him. There was an attraction about Christ Jesus and His teaching that gave the ruler to feel that Jesus could help him to find the treasure he sought. He wanted "life," the life which is the real life. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And the Lord looking upon him, as we are told. by Mark, "loved him." That great and compassionate heart of divine love was specially moved towards the ruler because he had put the question so many people forget altogether. They pass through the world as though they were on the same level with the beasts that perish, and think nothing of the life that is beyond the grave. They utterly disregard the fact that it is within their power to bow their knees before the Holy God and to seek His face. But here was a man who had thought about the life which was the true and the eternal. He had come to the right person to learn, and the Lord loved to see such a movement in the heart of one of the rulers towards Himself. There were so many of that generation who despised Him. Simon the Pharisee, for instance, invited Jesus into his house just to see what He would do, just to take Him off, as it were, little thinking that the Lord knew all about his motives. We often forget the Lord’s omniscience. But Jesus listened to the young man’s question, and answered it in His own way, saying, "Why callest thou Me good?" The term was true, but the question gave the opportunity for the ruler to exercise his faith in the Lord and to confess His name. He was looking upon Him who was a "Man of sorrows," and yet that humble

Man was the Man whom God had anointed, who was God's Fellow, the Son of God here below. This Man before Him was God Himself in person — to believe on if he would. Jesus was good because He was God, and if the young ruler had only believed on Him, his words would have been perfectly true and proper.

Then Jesus referred the ruler to the commandments, and he said, "All these have I kept from my youth up." Here was the young man's mistake. He had come to Jesus to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. By the law righteousness could never come, nor life either. There was no person ever able to keep the commandments. The young man, however, according to his own estimation, had kept them, but he forgot that it was not a question of what he himself thought and saw, but the important question was what God saw, and God saw that he had failed.

You children here tonight know that when you do your home lessons you may think that they are written quite nicely and correctly, but when teacher marks them the next morning, she puts a large cross against some of them, which means that they are wrong. In your own eyes they were quite right, but in your teacher's eyes they were wrong. It is just the same with us: our actions may appear in our own eyes to be quite correct, but not so in God's sight. So that it is no use for any to base a hope for salvation upon what they have done or upon what they can do. And so the Lord put the test to the profession of this man, "Yet lackest thou one thing, sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." The Lord, as it were, put the test in this way, What do you think of Me? I am come down from heaven, I was rich but for your sake I became poor. I have come down to be here as a man; I have not come to be ministered unto; I am going through this world teaching My disciples to look forward to that glorious time which is not of this world; will you follow Me? will you be on My side? You will have much to put up with. Do you think I am worth following? Do you think I am worth the renunciation of all that you have in this world? Do you esteem Me to be greater riches than all your possessions? The young man broke down at this trial. He had no heart for Christ, no eyes to see that He was the "chiefest among ten thousand." He turned away very sad about it, sorry that he could not have eternal life on some other terms, more suitable in his own eyes.

Saul of Tarsus, too, at one time lacked the one thing, but that one thing could not be known. until he was broken down. His pride, his confidence in his own righteousness, was all humbled when he saw the beauty of Christ.

God in His own way applies this test to us individually. We should all ask ourselves whether we are prepared to give up all things for Christ. But the young ruler went away from the Lord. It was such a blow to Jesus when men went away from Him. The voice of the Lord Jesus calls here tonight, "Come, follow Me." Who will respond? who will be on the Lord's side, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? If you believe on Him you will never be ashamed. He will carry you through every difficulty in the face of every foe, and bring you through this world into the glory that lies beyond. In the other scripture that I read we have a word which applies particularly to those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus. There are those who say they follow Him, but their hearts are really far away. I quite understand that a person may believe in Christ, and not confess Him with his mouth. There are such curious persons to be found in the world; for it is possible that a person may have believed in his soul that the Lord Jesus is his Saviour, but never dared t0 breathe it to anyone else. This is a very improper state, for any, and there is a very solemn word in Scripture in connection

with it. There is a verse in Romans 10:1-21 which says that a person has not only to believe in his heart, but to confess with his mouth. A man may believe in his heart that Jesus is the Lord, but then there must be the other thing, the confession made with the mouth. In Php 3:13 you have a word which applies expressly to those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Just referring again to those here who go to school, you know that at the end of the term there is usually one prize offered for the best scholar, but it is not so in the Christian life; there will be a prize for all who have loved and served Christ faithfully here below. W. J. H.

Chapter 108

S. Opening the Book: in Nazareth and in Heaven

Opening the Book: in Nazareth and in Heaven Luke 4:14-22; Revelation 5:1 — 6: 8.

W. J. Hocking.

I have read these few scriptures because they bring before us our Lord Jesus Christ in two distinct and contrasted ways. We see Him in the Gospel of St. Luke opening the book, reading therefrom, and declaring to His audience the fulfilment of the prophecy read. We see Him again in the Revelation coming forward and opening the book, and the judgments of God follow. It is the same gracious Person in both instances, but executing two totally different offices. On the first occasion the Lord inaugurates the day of grace, in the second instance the day of judgment. Both the past event and the future event are equally true, and both are equally God’s ways of dealing with men here upon the earth.

It may be profitable for us this evening to consider both of them for awhile. It is good for us to recollect, that whether it be the present blessings of grace, or the coming dealings of God in righteous judgment, the same blessed and adorable Person carries them into effect. Jesus the Saviour, the Lord whom we know and whom we serve, is the appointed Agent of divine justice. It is interesting to see that these two great subjects are connected, in the scriptures read, by their association with the opening of books. The book implies that the matter written therein was settled beforehand. God’s books deal largely with the future, and in this respect they differ from human books. Man writes of the past; he writes history. God alone can write of the future; He writes prophecy. And it is, therefore, the privilege of the children of God to possess a knowledge of certain future events; though the way in which the books of which we have just read are introduced, shows us that there is only One who can adequately interpret them, and only One who can administer those divine schemes foreordained in God’s book of purpose. The prophecy of Isaiah, written as it was by that evangelical prophet of Judah and Jerusalem whom we all love, though we are Gentiles by nature, is full of Christ in grace and glory. Yet even his prophecy was sealed until the appointed day came, and then the Messiah Himself appeared in Nazareth to declare that the scripture was that day fulfilled in their ears. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The interpreter must be divine. While we have the scriptures given to us as God’s precious gift, we none the less need the help, power and illumination of God’s Holy Spirit to understand them, and this assistance He does not withhold from any diligent and dependent soul. The Prophecy of Isaiah Fulfilled. The occasion on which our Lord spoke in this Galilean synagogue was a very momentous one momentous for this reason. Communications from God had ceased for a considerable time. From the days of Malachi onwards, no prophetic voice had come from Him. This world was left alone as it were without any communications from on high. God was silent for four and a half centuries, and that is a considerable while. Look back 450 years in our own history. How far back the year 1460 seems, and what a time of darkness! People had no English Bibles to read 450 years ago. A period of similar extent passed in the history of the Jews without a voice from heaven. All the prophecies regarding Israel were completed. God had

no more to say to His people until John the Baptist appeared — a voice crying in the wilderness, announcing the coming of the Messiah.

Thereupon we have the Blessed One appearing Himself, and coming before men in that quiet, unostentatious way which is so characteristic of Him in the days of His flesh. How stupendous is His mission! He is coming to speak for God. He is coming to stand in this world as God's Spokesman. He is coming to make that announcement which shall bring everlasting life to millions of precious souls. He is coming to shed abroad the love of God in this dark and evil world. He will chase away the darkness and loosen the chains that hold men in bondage to sin. But He comes quietly to the obscure place of His upbringing, to Nazareth where He dwelt many years, where He was known as the son of Joseph the carpenter. He goes into the synagogue, as His custom was He takes the book of the scriptures from the official of the synagogue and stands up to read.

Beloved friends, let us not omit to note the practical lesson in passing. For we must always look for the lesson to be gathered when our lips essay to speak of the grace and glory of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Here we mark His humble demeanour. And we need to learn to copy this humility. Meekness is so becoming when a man is doing God's will, for when he is carrying out His purpose he needs no show. It was enough for this blessed Man that He was come to speak the words of God, and so He stood up to read in the synagogue of Nazareth. Hence the book was opened by Him not in Jerusalem but in the little town of Nazareth out of which no good thing could come, so people said — a little village by the Sea of Galilee, obscure then and now.

Reading the Prophecy concerning Himself

Jesus stood up to read the evangelical prophecies given of God. They were written ’5o years before, and now He was standing up to read these predictions concerning Himself. This indeed was a wonderful epoch in this world's history. The fulfilment of what He was about to read was to bring life and blessing, joy and peace to men everywhere, and we here tonight are recipients of the blessings which began to be proclaimed that day. The manner of the Lord's announcement was simple. Yet there was something about Him that gave Him power over His audience. He had been going about Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and it was as a Spirit-filled man that He stood up before them, "full of the Holy Ghost." Galilee and Judea had already witnessed His deeds and heard His words on the power of the Spirit. Now in the synagogue of . Nazareth, full of that same Spirit, He opened the Book of the prophet Isaiah and read from it the scriptures relating to Himself. The fulfilment of its opening clause is seen in the great fact that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him.

I think there is something of profound practical importance for us to lay hold of in this event. Consider that the Spirit of God, the word of God, and the Person of the promised Christ are all seen to meet at this particular juncture. The blessed Lord standing before the audience was holding in His hand the written word, and He Himself was filled with the Spirit of God. Depend upon it there is no power in this world which can withstand such a coalition as that. The power of Satan can never withstand the power of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and as that great power was active for evil in that day, so it is an active power now. But there is the greater power of God unto salvation which is bringing the men of this world into life and blessing through the word of the gospel. Do not let us overlook the vital things that remain in the church of God. There are many things possessed in early days that we have not, but we have the scriptures, we have the Holy

Spirit, we have, blessed be His name, the Lord Jesus Christ. And happy the Christian who in His service is content to be carried forward by these forces. They are, if I may reverently say so, at the disposal of every earnest believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God will, if you are submissive, use you for the glory of Christ, and for the blessing of your fellow Christians. He is the same Spirit who filled Christ as He spoke in Nazareth that day.

Closing the Book The Lord read the scripture, and He closed the book. I want you at your leisure to look at the prophecy of Isaiah and to observe the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ who closed the book at the right moment just as He opened the book at the right moment. And while we love to see how He opened the book and with what a beautiful passage He began, so we must love to see how He closed the book and failed to read the dreadful words that follow — "the day of vengeance of our God." The acceptable year was come the time of deliverance and of preaching the gospel to the poor; the blind were to have sight given them; but the day of vengeance was not yet. Jesus closed the book, and the day of doom is not yet. The day of grace, the day of joy and peace began with our Lord Jesus Christ here in humiliation. For He was a man come to set forth the love of God; here to pass clay by day, in and out of the places of common resort, and by His words of love and power, by His works of healing and mercy show men God’s love for this world. The Lord was the light shining in the darkness. Can you conceive for a moment what the awful condition of this world would be if the revelation made by Christ were suddenly withdrawn from us?

There would then be a reversion to the time before the Lord read these scriptures when all was dark and obscure. Noon would become midnight. Now the light of full salvation shines, and we know that God is full of love to men on earth and that He finds a joy when men repent. We know that in infinite grace He sends forth the words of everlasting life to all men upon earth, drawing them thereby to our Lord Jesus Christ. We know these things from the New Testament. But here at Nazareth was the beginning of this day of grace. It began then, and it has been going on for nineteen hundred years. Think what a considerable section of human history this is. Go back nineteen centuries before Christ, and Abraham was just leaving Mesopotamia. Nearly all the events recorded in the Old Testament history happened during that period, but when you come to the New Testament we find the record of a much briefer space. There you have the account of a comparatively few events which occurred during some fifty years or so. Then the inspired communications of God ceased; but all the while from that day to this the invisible power of God’s Spirit has been bringing men to God and Christ by His word. There has been a power, a great power working in all directions leading men into the joy of the gospel. Would that we might know more deeply the value of the day in which we live, the spiritual freedom we have, the valuable and precious things revealed to us as ours through grace! The Limits of the Day of Grace But this day of grace must have its end. We are not in eternity; we have not passed into that majestic glory where there will be no change, but here in this world’s history there is still a greater event to be accomplished. Now grace reigns. Sin is not rebuked openly by God. There are the silent rebukes of the Spirit through the word, but there are no striking providential events which show God’s specific displeasure with the evil ways of men. Has He not already said enough? is His word not sufficient? most surely it is, beloved friends. God has said all that need be said to show the men of this world what His will is and what His feelings are with regard to their ways before Him. Moreover, the same word declares there is a time of retributive judgment for men upon the earth. There is a time coming when the Righteous Governor of this universe will assert His rights over

rebellious man in an unmistakable manner.

God fashioned this world that men might inhabit it. He has peopled it with intelligent beings. They stand in definite relation with Him as distinct from the beasts that perish, Men were to govern the world they were to do the will of God and are responsible to Him. The day is coming when God will insist upon those rights being respected, when He will bring into this world of ours order, righteousness and peace, when this world and its inhabitants shall all move together in one harmonious whole and in one united constitution, as it were, giving their glory. to God above. Then the earth will present that unusual spectacle in its history of being in perfect harmony with the heavens above. Such a day is coming God has written it in His word, and He will bring it to pass. Who can be Trusted to Rule?

1917 317 Who is there competent to undertake to rule and govern the world in this manner? Empires spring up, and empires decay. Great rulers sit on the throne, but their rule is often other than glorious, and far from effective. But there is one Man who fills God's mind and purposes of perfect government. There is one Man who distinguished Himself above all others on earth, one Man that has thoroughly proved His perfection. He was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He walked through this world to the good pleasure of God; He suffered in this world; He tasted of every cup of trial that this world has to give; He suffered every form of suffering man is liable to endure; He Himself on the cross bore our sins in His own body, and thus tasted the full judgment of God against sins that were not His own. This Man, by His perfect bearing amid unparalleled vicissitudes, has acquired for Himself the right to rule and govern in this world, and, therefore, the Man who opened the book in the synagogue of Nazareth will also open the book in the day to come. The Apocalypse is singular as everyone knows — singular in this respect, that it is so full of what was a strange, word in the Old Testament, and stranger still in the New, that is, the judgment of God. This judgment is varied in form, and is displayed in visions. God is a God of infinite love and grace, and judgment is His last resource. The Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is the book which unfolds God's coming judgments on this world of ours. It has an analogy with the book of Daniel which was written especially for the people of Israel and concerning the Gentiles. John was commissioned to write what had particular reference to the churches and also what concerned the political and religious powers of the earth. Therefore it is of interest to us. Why of interest, do you ask? The greatest reason why this book should be of special interest to us is not because it satisfies a natural curiosity as to the future, but because it brings before us the glory of Christ as God's future ruler in the world. If you love the Lord you most surely will love to think that a day is coming when He will have His rights, and when He will be owned and adored by all men. Do you not long that everyone would bow at His feet now? I know you do, and the Book of the Revelation shows how in God's own time all will be brought under His peaceful sway.

Christ First Coming for the Church

It is well to observe that the opening of the seven-sealed book and the visions which follow refer to what is coming on this earth when the members of the body of Christ are no longer here. The second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation apply, as we are definitely told, (Revelation 1:19; Revelation 4:1) to the things that exist during the present time while the assembly of God is upon the earth. There are seven churches in Asia to which the Lord addresses His epistles. And in those seven churches you see a general succession and declension until you come to the last,

and this is so corrupt that it is spued out of the mouth of the Lord Himself. This rejection is not true in fact yet. Its accomplishment may be very near, but it is not yet come about, and therefore we have not reached the events we find depicted in the fourth and following chapters.

We are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to come, and the result of His coming will be the removal of all those who are His Own. They will be removed into heavenly association with Himself in the Father's house, and you see them in the fourth chapter under the figure of the twenty-four elders. I just say this by the way so that we may understand just whereabouts this section begins, wherein the Lamb is seen to break the seals of the roll of mystery. The fulfilment of the visions will commence to take place upon the earth subsequent to the rapture of the church of Christ. But I want especially to draw your attention now, not to the prophetic events, but to the striking contrast presented by the circumstances shown in Revelation as compared with the circumstances in Luke. The Throne and the Rainbow

There you have the man Christ Jesus teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth with no outward glory, with no attendant signs of dignity and pomp and excellence such as the world would acknowledge. But when you come to the Apocalyptic visions everything is seen to be totally different. The apostle John is taken away from the world. A door is opened, and he is called up into heaven, and what he sees is heavenly in nature. He sees One upon the throne, and the throne is not the throne of grace, for there are lightnings and thunderings and voices which all tend to keep men in their proper place of distance from it. Such a character is not one of invitation to draw near. When the Lord spoke at Nazareth all men wondered at the gracious words that fell from His lips; they were gentle and kindly, they were attractive and drew out the love of men's hearts to the Speaker. But in heaven as at Sinai there are thunderings and lightnings and terrifyings, and He that is upon the throne is glorious to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius.

John saw the throne of judgment, yet even there he saw the symbol of God's promise to His people of old the rainbow. God has not forgotten His ancient promise, and although we are immediately to read of devastating judgments on earth, still God is slow in executing these judgments to the full. They are partial at the first, for the rainbow is there — a type of God's abiding mercy (Genesis 9:16). The Sealed Roll

What next did the prophet see? In the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne was a book or roll, sealed with seven seals, written within and without. It was full to overflowing as it were with woes and lamentations. Think how many centuries full of sins have passed since Adam's day, how the judgments of God have accumulated, how man's guilt has been deepening as the ages have gone by. Do you imagine man has become better during this day of grace? Has man's heart changed? Are men today more like Christ than in His own day? Is there less bloodshed, less murder, less oppression today than there was two thousand years ago? The answer must be that there is no change. The guilt of man today is greater than ever, and man's heart is harder. There is nothing that can purify men's hearts. They must be born again.

Now in the vision John saw this seven-sealed book, written full of God's judgments, held back for so long through God's long-suffering mercy, in the hand of Him who sat upon the Creatorial throne of government. The Lion of Judah The question now arising in the heavenly courts is, who is competent to execute these deferred judgments? Who shall let them loose upon this guilty earth? There must be no mistake; they must not be sent upon the earth too soon; there must be unerring

wisdom in the exercise of this function, and who is competent to do it? And John, as he looked and listened, realized that there was no one found competent to undertake this fearful task of breaking the seals and letting loose the consuming judgments of God upon men. There was no created being in heaven, no one on earth, no one under the earth, as we can well understand, who could undertake this responsibility. John wept much, but one of the elders came and said, "Weep not; behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book." He, the Root of David, He is the One, the only One who can do it. He is the One because, being the Son of man, the Father gave Him the authority to execute judgment also. The Father will not execute judgment, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honour the Son even as they honour the Father (John 5:22-23; John 5:27). The Lamb Once Slain

Then John looked for the Lion. He would expect to see a Being of might and majesty and dominion, but when he looked he saw the Lamb. I think this is a beautiful feature of the heavenly picture. All power is seen to be given to the all meek and humble One. No one came down so low as our Lord Jesus, and, therefore, no one was fit to be exalted as He has been exalted. He could and did glorify God in the lowest part of the earth, and He is the One who can and will glorify God in the highest. So also if we glorify Him in the hour of trial, we shall glorify Him in the day that is yet to come (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

We remember the submission of the Lord when the kings of the earth stood up in persecuting power, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lamb. He was then before His shearers as dumb. All were that day against Him. They smote Him; they spat upon Him. But He did the will of Him that sent Him, and He opened not His mouth. Was ever meekness such as His?

Now the prophet sees the Lord in heaven as a Lamb, and he sees Him too as a slain Lamb. It was at His death He went down lowest, and this deep humiliation is recorded in heaven, for the time is near when His glory will be manifested. Hence it is as a Lamb slain that He is seen in heaven. It is the same Jesus, at Nazareth, at Calvary, in heaven — Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever.

Surely we love to read these words. We love to think of the Lamb of God in heaven as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, all heaven proclaiming Him to be worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof. You and I know that if He undertakes it, there will be no mistake; He will do it well.

We sometimes wonder as to the mystery of God’s judgments. There are those whom we love even now under judgment (John 3:18). Our hearts weep for them, and we pray for them that they may be brought out of the sphere of judgment into the grace and mercy of God. But we can only pray for them, and leave the result to the One who was slain. The Worshipping Hosts The Lamb was the one who took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, and it is well to note the effect of this act in heaven. It must be something momentous to. move the heavenly host. We here on earth are moved by very small events perhaps, but in heaven, in the place of glory where everything is perfect, it needs to be something vast to command widespread interest. But when the Lamb took the book all heaven was moved to worship. Think what the sight must be to the millions of redeemed souls, to those who have tasted of His grace, walked, worked, and waited for Him in this world, and are now brought into the fulness of His love on high. When they see the loving One who died for them thus honoured they can do nothing but praise and worship Him. They are so

glad that He has come into His own. They are so glad that He has the chief place in heaven, that no one else is found worthy to undertake this work. The spirit of worship always is to make much of Christ, to have our hearts full of Christ. God looks down from heaven to see men and women so enamoured of Christ that they feel they must worship Him, and what can be better employment than that? It is the anticipation of what will be our chief occupation in heaven. Elders, angels, and all creation united to worship the Lamb. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. All join in praise and worship that the day is now about to come when the Lamb will break oppression, and set all crooked things right in this world.

Nearly nineteen centuries have gone by since the cross, since Jesus died, since that great sacrifice was offered. Myriads have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and have been brought into possession of the privileges of grace. Yet sin has not disappeared from this world; death is still here; sorrow abounds. And are these sad facts nothing to the One who died? They are surely ever before the Lamb of God "who taketh away the sin of the world." We know the tenderness of His heart because He still says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He delivers from sin by His work of redemption and His word of forgiveness. The Lamb Opens the Seals but does not Appear on Earth But the Lamb who puts away sin by the sacrifice of Himself will also put away sin by the power of His irresistible might. And the hour may be close at hand when the Lamb will open the seals, and the judgments break forth in succession upon the earth like the plagues upon guilty Egypt. They are of the nature of providential judgments famines, wars, pestilences, and death. They fall upon this world as the seals are opened in series, but it is to be observed that these judgments are not exercised by the Lamb in person. He opens the seals, and the judgments follow. They are clearly the result of the breaking of the seals by the Lamb, but He Himself does not come forth from heaven to carry them out.

You have to wait for His appearance until you get to the nineteenth chapter of this book when He is seen in the opened heaven with a sharp two-edged sword going out of His mouth; He comes in person to put down unrighteousness in this world. But at the opening of the seals, judgments are inflicted upon the earth at His bidding. And they are types of that judgment of wider scope which is to follow. But in the limitations of the woes of the seal period, we see a mark of the lingering mercy of our Lord over this world, who is not willing that any should perish.

During those dark and cloudy days there will be messengers of "the gospel of the kingdom" travelling far and near, calling men to repent quickly. But men's hearts in that day will be still unrepentant. They will still refuse to confess their sins, although the mercy of God is set before them in loving entreaty. The Alpha and the Omega The unchanging character of the Lamb is what I want, in closing, to point out especially. There will be no change in Christ Himself, though His office may differ. He is still the same blessed person, whether testifying of grace in Nazareth, or of judgment in heaven above. In whatever He undertakes He cannot change Himself. And we know the Lamb and love Him, and we wait for His coming from heaven. There are many things that cause us anxiety here, particularly at such a crisis as the present, but there is always One to whom we can turn with confidence. We may be but poorly instructed in the details of prophecy, but the Christian is not bound up necessarily with a knowledge of the details of prophecy for the peace of his heart. The one thing that he rests his every peace and joy upon is this, that whether it is a question of grace or judgment, the Person in whose hands the matter is placed is the Person

whose hands were pierced. Therefore, we have every confidence in Him. This as truly applies to national matters as it applies to personal matters. Our affairs altogether are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the gist of my message to you tonight. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Lord; He is our Saviour; He is the One in whom we have placed our trust, and He is the One in whom we must place trust continually. The Lord has prepared our path for us. He has at Calvary's cross borne the burden of our sins in His body. He is now shaping the daily matters of our life to the accomplishment of His own gracious purpose, and He is the One with whom our future lies. Our future is with Him, and we wait for His coming that this hope may be realised. His coming means that we shall then be where He is, and once with Him we shall never leave Him, for "we shall be for ever with the Lord." W. J. H.

Chapter 109

S. Our Advocate with the Father

Our Advocate with the Father Notes of an address on 1 John 1:4 — 2: 2.

W. J. Hocking. Our subject this evening is Jesus Christ, our Advocate with the Father; and it may be as well at the outset for us to be clear as to what is meant in the Scripture by this word "Advocate." What are we to understand by the Advocate with the Father? Clearly it is here closely associated with the question of sin: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And the thought comes to us at once that in the hour of our fall there is One acting for us on high, One that takes our place and pleads on our behalf, and restores that communion which was taken away. And this thought is perfectly just. The Lord so serves in our interest in the presence of the Father above. The word, however, has a wider meaning than this, and you may see that it has a wider meaning by referring to the Lord's own use of it. When He was leaving the world we find that He spoke in view of His departure of sending them another Advocate or Comforter (for the words are the same). Now if the Lord on His departure promised to send another Comforter, who we know was the Holy Spirit, and who is referred to in those discourses, on more than one occasion, as the Comforter, then He Himself was a Comforter while He was here (John 14:16; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-13). The Lord had been continually in the midst of His disciples, and had acted towards them as their Advocate or Comforter. Now He was going away, and it looked as if they were about to lose what they had so constantly enjoyed by His presence. But He said, "If I go away, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter."

What is an Advocate? The meaning of the word is this. An Advocate (Paraclete) is one who undertakes the case of another, a strong person, for instance, who undertakes the case of a weak one. In the case of our Lord, it was One who was Almighty, taking up the case of those who followed Him.

If you look in the second of Luke you will find a reference to those pious Jews who were in Jerusalem, waiting for the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25; Luke 2:38), that promised One, that gracious and glorious Person who was to come according to promise, and to be to Israel all that the nation needed. Well, the Lord came to be the expected Comforter, and He was such especially to the little company that gathered around Him. So that if you want to read what an Advocate or a Comforter really is, read the doings of our Lord as given in the four Gospels. See what the Lord did for His own. See how He gave everything to them that was requisite. There was not a thing that they wanted but what He supplied to them. At no time did they lack anything (Luke 22:35). The Master was one to whom they could come under any circumstances, and always find Him ready to help. Are we not expected to learn that the same blessed feature is in our Lord now? He is surely the same now; and the Lord prepared His disciples to learn that lesson before His departure, as He would have us learn it now. Why do I say 'now'? because, however brief or long your Christian career may be, you know right well that your great lack is that you think too little of our Lord Jesus Christ. You must be continuously finding out that you might have made more use of Him than you

have done. It is because of your neglect of Him, of your forgetfulness of Him that you have missed so much, and that you have done so little. Remember therefore, that the Lord is all that we need, though He is absent from us.

Now I should like to draw your attention to two or three instances in the Gospel of John which illustrate our subject. The Lord educated the disciples to think of Him in this way — that although they might not be able to see Him, although He was not visibly in their midst, yet still He was thinking of them. He was serving them, and devoting Himself to their interests, and to their well-being, and, moreover, He was able to work things out in a super-human way for their blessing and benefit. They were slow to learn this truth, and so are we. Not Forgotten in the Storm

Now take the account we have in the sixth of John of the disciples on the lake. After the feeding of the multitudes they were told by the Lord to embark in the boat, and to cross the sea, but the Lord did not return in the boat with them. They put out from the shore and sailed across the sea, but two unexpected things happened before they had reached their destination. Darkness came on, and coupled with the darkness a storm arose. The darkness by itself was enough, but when the stOrm came, and the wind began to blow, then their difficulties were multiplied. They did not know where they were; and the fury of the sea and the wind was threatening their destruction, and Jesus was not present. He kept away from them. He had left them to fight the battle alone. Why did the Master leave them in that way? They struggled with all their energy to keep the boat straight, but how could they? They had no landmark, everywhere was black night, and the wind and waves were howling.

Now we read that at this juncture Jesus came to them walking on the sea, and they so little expected Him, that when they saw Him they were alarmed. They were filled with fear; they did not recognize Him; they were so busy with their danger that they even shrank from Him who loved them so much, and had come to their rescue. They did not recognize Him in the storm. Depend upon it, beloved friends, we have been in similar straits ourselves. The darkness has been around us in our lives. Storms have come, and the sea has been in confusion. Dangers and death have threatened us. But we must not forget that the tempest also brought the Master to our side. Let not our hearts be so filled with fear that we fail to recognize Him in the midst of the storm. He is there, and He is working for our ultimate peace and safety. It has no terror for Him. He is the sovereign power above and over all.

He came to His disciples, and they received Him into the ship; they heard His word; and His word stayed the storm so that there was peace at once. What threatened their destruction was taken away from them. More than that, you will read that He brought them to their ’desired haven. When Jesus came to them, they found they were exactly where they wanted to go. How did all this come about? Through His power, that Almighty power that resides in the person of Jesus. His disciples were slow to believe it was so then, and they have always been slow to believe it from that day to this. The blessed work of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of everyone here tonight is a service that we often forget. At any rate we are not as conscious of it as we should be. The Lord is always active for our sake. Difficulties and trials may be about us, but He is among them. He is supreme over them all, and He will bring us to our haven of rest in His own good time. The Lord’s Absence from Bethany

Take another case; you know these incidents very well, but I remind you of them to illustrate this faithful character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is impossible for Him to leave one of His own. He would not forsake one of His own whom He has cleansed by His precious blood. What more beautiful instance of loving interest could you have than that recorded in John 11:1-57? You have death coming into a pious household. What is there that is so terrible as death in its power to destroy all happiness? Death had come into the house of Mary and Martha, and death had taken the beloved Lazarus. The sisters Mary and Martha had no resource in their sorrow just then, because Jesus was not with them. He was about twenty miles away, and they had previously sent a messenger, not with some importunate request, but just with the quiet announcement of what was the trouble: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They did not ask Him to come or to interfere, or to stay the sickness. They probably felt somehow that He would come, but He did not. The messenger came back, and the Lord was not with him, but the Lord sent them a message: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." And when the messenger arrived Lazarus was dead. This sickness unto death, how was the sickness for the glory of God? This poor stricken man taken away from his dependent sisters, and from the coming kingdom, was that for the glory of God? Their hearts were torn with doubt; Jesus was not there. They were inclined to distrust and doubt the love of the Master, for the Master did not come to them in time, they thought. Was it because He did not care? Beloved friends, when He did come, remember how He groaned, how He burst into tears; He did care most surely. There was, however, a right moment in which His work was to be done, and He could not come until that moment. If they had only the faith to trust Him and had been able to lay hold of the truth and to say, "He does all things well," even in them the glory of God would have come out. Still they were not full of faith, and yet He was thinking of them all the while. He came, and as we know, at the graveside He said, "Lazarus, come forth" and restored the brother to the sorrowing sisters. It all came out for the glory of God after all; it was not death. He gave life, and you see the blessed Jesus was full of care, love and sympathetic power for these two sisters in the hours of their sorrow. He is the same now. At Bethany the Lord was preparing the hearts of His own for the time when He should be in heaven, and they upon earth. There would be no change in the manner of His love, whether present or absent. The Self-Appointed Task

Another instance you have in the twenty-first of John. There you have seven of the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus. They were in Galilee, and they started out on an enterprise of their own. Peter said, "I go a fishing." I think we may fairly gather that it was just a scheme originated by themselves. They thought it was about time they did something. Peter was a man that could not sit still. He said, "I go a fishing"; and the answer was, "We will all go a fishing." It was entirely an idea of their own. The Lord was away, and they thought they must manage their own affairs. That is how we often think, is it not so? If the Lord was in the house, well, we could come to Him, but as He is in the heavens it does not signify I can do this, and that, and the Lord does not come into the matter at all, so far as my thoughts are concerned.

Well, they started off on their expedition; they worked hard but caught nothing. They did not ask the divine blessing upon their project, and they did not succeed. They toiled all night and got nothing. Now, what did the Lord do? He was away from them, but He knew their purpose. He had heard the words that fell from Peter’s lips, "I go a fishing." The Master did not forsake them in their disappointment, but He went and stood on the shore. When the morning broke His voice came to

them across the waves, "Children, have ye any.meat? what is your success? what sort of fishing?" They had to confess they had nothing at all, and his words to them were, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." There was the very thing they had been seeking for all night in their own way, but which they had failed to find. And they came ashore, dragging the net full of great fishes, and the Lord was there to receive them, and more than that, He had made provision for their immediate needs. They were cold through the night's exposure, and there was a fire of coals. They were hungry, and the Lord had prepared refreshments for them. The Lord's care for His own, though absent from them, is strikingly illustrated. Do not these incidents tell us what sort of an Advocate we have with the Father. Though on high, He takes this kind of loving interest in all that we do. I wish we could have it in our very souls that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ there is not a thing we need to do apart from Him. Indeed, why should we ever act independently? It is because we forget that our Lord is that great One in heaven, who is our Advocate, our Comforter, the One who said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Well, now you will probably say that I have been a long time coming to this first of John, but I had it on my heart to lay first before you that our Blessed Lord as Advocate takes a tender interest and compassionate regard for us in all our ways, and more than that, He is the One who supplies the strength, wisdom, and blessings that we require, and in these things He will never fail us. We may fail Him, but He will never fail us, and that is something to know.

Fellowship in the Family of God

We now come to a greater matter — one of the greatest matters in the life of a child of God — the matter of sin in relation to fellowship. You will notice that in the verses I read, the subject of fellowship several times comes in. "Fellowship with us," says the apostle (ver. 3), "Fellowship one with another" (ver. 7), and that is spoken of the children of God generally. Again, "We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (ver. 3). What does this mean? The idea of fellowship is of common interests, common thoughts, common affections and devotions. In these things believers have fellowship with the Father. Why? because the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hands. And is there one here tonight who does not love Christ? We love Him because He first loved us, and there is the essence of fellowship, which is developed in the power of the Spirit by whom we are sealed. The love of the Father for the Son, my love for the Son, and your love fixed also upon that same One, and there is our fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Son loves the Father, and He loves to reveal the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" He said, and do we not also love the Father by the Spirit of the Son sent forth into our hearts? Love which is the expression of the eternal life given to us is the energy of true fellowship.

We have fellowship with the Son and the Father, and we have fellowship one with another. And I hope everyone in this room tonight is a child of God. All then possess this common love, having believed on Christ and received eternal life through His name, so that there is a bond between all. This bond is not the result of fleshly descent. It is not nationality. It is nothing but the result of the new birth, that work of the Holy Spirit within our hearts. Our new nature loves God, who has given us of His Spirit; and, beloved friends, in these times it is of greater importance than ever that we should lay hold of this abiding truth. This Epistle of John has a general character, and applies to Christians everywhere. It was not written to a particular assembly. Throughout it, there is no one

named. It is addressed to the whole family of God from the time of Pentecost till now. The family of God is one, and none of the outward changes can sever the link between and child of God and the Son. It is of great importance to remember this love, arising out of relationship which we have in Christ Jesus which is the foundation of our fellowship. But I do not now want to speak about our fellowship one with another so much as our fellowship with the Father and with the Son. In the Light

1917 285 You will observe that the apostle, after referring to the normal condition of the family life, speaks of sin. He speaks first of Light: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and as children of God we are in this light.

It is difficult to explain what light means. We can easily think of it. We can imagine it better than explain it. In a pious home there is always light. People say there is no place like home, and if when they are at home they are in the place they like best in all the world, there is something in the saying. There is a feeling at home that they do not find anywhere else, and so it is in the family of God. There is that holy character which becomes the whole family of God, because God is light. Light reveals, light shows us what displeases God: "In him is no darkness at all."

Light does not, however, remove defilement. It shows it, if it is there, but it is not the function of light to cleanse. There may be all sorts of dust and dirt and cobwebs in a darkened room; these are not seen. Throw open the shutters and its condition is revealed. But the light shining in will not rid the room of the unwholesome accumulations.

John speaks here of this. He says that God is light, and he speaks of us as walking in the light. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" are his words. People say that is just the difficulty. "I have been troubled over that verse for months — years. I cannot walk in the light, sometimes I think I am, but I cannot always be sure that I am, walking in the light." Now, if this is your thought you are making a mistake, and your mistake is that you are confounding two things. Walking in the light does not necessarily mean walking according to the light. There are two statements: one states where you are walking, and the other how you are walking.

If you are a Christian you are walking in the light, or else you would not be a Christian: "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12). The question is, are you following Christ? How you are walking in the light is a different matter, but every Christian is walking in the light. "Ye are the light of the world" is said of the followers of Jesus.

Once we were sons of darkness, but we have now been brought into the light; some may not be walking according to the light, and that is why they are so uncomfortable. Just because you are in the light it brings before you the mistake you made. There may be an evil thought you have allowed, an improper word, an action that is not beautiful, and you feel troubled about these things. Once you did not mind. What makes you mind now? Because you are in the light. The light of God shines into your heart and you feel unhappy because you have done something contrary to Him.

I would speak very gravely to my friends this evening and implore them to be careful not to injure the sensitiveness of their conscience and heart. Let in the full light of God and His holy word, and if you feel within your own soul that things are not right in your life, do not listen to any false adviser who says it does not matter. You must get right in your personal communion with God. There are

remedies for failure, and the remedies are stated in these verses.

Sin Working Despair

There are those who, when they have sinned, feel that they must give up everything. They say, "Well, it was easy enough for me to expect forgiveness when I was an unbeliever, but having known the love of God and then to have sinned, my responsibility is so much greater. What can I do? A sinner can come to seek forgiveness, but I have sinned against the light. I must give it all up, for I am the more to blame."

I know this state of mind to be a fact, my friends. Christian men at the Front write and say, "We can keep straight at home, but out here a man cannot live a Christian life. It is a dog's life here. I have gone under and have now given it up. I will turn over a fresh leaf when I come home." They forget, poor men, that they may never come home; But the feeling is there, and it is what we have in some cases in London as well as in the Forces.

Beloved friends, these men know they have sinned, yet they go on sinning. Why? because they are afraid to come to the Father. They feel that the fellowship with the Father and Son is broken, and they know not what to do for restoration. Sometimes there is not a Christian friend to tell them what to do, but the Bible explains it all. Only they neglect the Bible and listen to the evil suggestions of their own hearts. This danger, beloved friends, is not only for those in France, or in Mesopotamia, but the danger is also here. It is indeed everywhere, for we are all liable to fall into the serious error. The Power for Cleansing

You have here in John the great foundation of Christian fellowship. You have things that never change — the blood of Jesus Christ and its cleansing power. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin. This does not imply that I, as a failing Christian, have to come and be washed again in the blood of Christ, but the phrase means that the blood of Jesu s Christ was shed for a definite purpose. Has it cleansed you? If it has cleansed you it has cleansed you for ever. It removes every defilement, and makes the soul whiter than snow. One application is sufficient. And when the apostle says "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth" he means that this character never alters through the ages. As light reveals, so blood cleanses. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from every sin, and this is therefore the great immutable foundation of my walk in the light. The apostle goes on to write, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The truth shows that we have a root within us from which evil springs. You know perfectly well that without any effort on your part evil thoughts will arise within you when you wake up in the night. You may go along the streets, and evil thoughts may come, for there may be suggestions in the street. But in the darkness and quiet of your own chamber, how do these evil suggestions arise? There is but one answer, namely, that which the Lord Himself supplied: "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." And this character of the old nature within never changes, so that the man who says he has no sin, deceives himself. It is a terrible delusion for a person to look into his heart where sin is, and to say "I am holy." He, in effect, calls an unclean thing a clean thing. Can anything be more deceitful? The heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Confession of Sins

We need the warning word therefore: "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness." Herein lies our responsibility: "If we confess our sins." Is there a day passes without some sin? Shall we not own it with shame? I do not say that we should always be thinking of our sins, or our liability to sin, but on the other hand, there is no portion of Scripture to tell us that we should never think of our sins. But we are also to think of the personal interest of the One against whom we have sinned. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. What is there that shows more beautifully the gracious and loving care of the Father and Son? Jesus Christ the righteous is faithful and just not only to forgive our sins, but to clear them away. We have therefore His work of blood-shedding, which is the basis of cleansing, and we have all the personal activities which rest on that basis for our cleansing wherein we have erred.

Now there is a practical difficulty which comes into the lives of a great many young Christians in this matter. They feel that although they may ask forgiveness, things are not as they were before they had fallen.

One describing this feeling, says, "It is like this: if you wrong your mother and ask her forgiveness, you cannot go to her just the same as before." But that is just the mistake; you can go; you ought to go to her. And it is also true in divine intercourse. If ever you need to go to God it is when you have sinned. And when He forgives, the whole thing is cleared away. All His heart is towards you in love, and He restores your soul. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, etc." So that defilement which was on your conscience is, cleansed by His word of assurance. It is one of the subtleties of the devil to seek to keep a Christian from his knees, and from the presence of God his Father, and of Jesus Christ the Advocate. The Personal Provision for Failure The great desire and hope of the apostle was that the children of God should be kept from the defilements of their nature, and that they should in no way get themselves entangled in the snares of the world, but should keep themselves pure and holy. If, however, any man sin he has an Advocate with the Father. There is great need for this, because a Christian either might not feel his sin, or feeling his sins might not confess them, and what a sad state would this be? what would become of us if we had not the Advocate with the Father? You know how proud and stubborn the will is, and how you like to turn the wrong way, and having taken the false step you still go on. And where would you go if there was not One to look after you? It is very comforting to think of Jesus coming to us in our troubles and conflicts, or in the hour of bereavement, or when we engage in an enterprise which ends in failure and distress. But this is not a question of trouble, or bereavement, or business methods. This is a question of sin, allowed and indulged. But we here learn that even in such conditions He does not leave us or forsake us. He is prepared to do everything needful to bring us back to God and to communion with the Father. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father."

Now we see this advocacy beautifully illustrated in the case of Peter. He sinned deeply against his Master, he denied his Master in a terrible fashion, though he did not think he would. But Jesus, who loved him, said, "Satan desires to have thee to sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee." The Master made intercession on his behalf. And at a given moment, the Lord looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the words of the Lord, and he went out and wept bitterly. Apart from the Advocate, where would he have gone? We know where Judas went, but Peter had an Advocate. He went out in contrition and wept bitterly. Tears, the tears of the strong man, were fitting. It was good for him to feel his sin, to learn what there was in that wicked heart of his, so that he might

prove the abounding love of the Father and the Son.

Jesus Christ is just the same today, and we, you and I, have Him as an Advocate with the Father. His eye is upon us, He is watching us, and we do not know where we might have been tonight, if it had not been for the Lord’s advocacy with the Father.

I am speaking now, of course, of our Christian career. There has ever been an unseen hand helping us, holding and bringing us back into safety. This work of our Lord is not always recognized; there is a danger that we overlook and forget that the blessed Master has been thinking and caring for us. We know not how, but in some way or the other He has been preserving us from sin. He has gently drawn us back from slippery ways. He has seen to it that our communion should not be destroyed for ever, but restored again. Remembering this, our hearts should be quickened in love towards the One who is so faithful to us, and Who will not leave us nor forsake us. The Lord is our Advocate with the Father to bring us to a confession of sins, and to restore our souls to the joy of communion. A Word on Communion

Many persons have an idea that communion is something exclusively for old Christians. They say, "I suppose you mean that we have to think about the Lord all day long. But I have other things to attend to. I have correspondence, ledgers, housework, etc., to think about. I could not do my work faithfully if I had other things upon my mind." But this all arises from a misapprehension as to communion. Take a familiar incident, by way of illustration: suppose you are sitting down at home writing a letter, and your wife or someone you love is also in the room. They are reading or doing something else. Now you are writing your letter, but you are conscious all the time that the person or persons is there. It is not necessary to converse. There is the joyous sense of the loved one being there. If that one was not present there would be quite a different feeling. Now this is a feeble illustration of divine communion. There is a sense of the Lord’s presence which I may have throughout the day. There is a feeling that His eye is upon me, His hand guides me and that He is preparing everything for my ultimate good, and when strange, unexpected things come along I am not disturbed. So that the feeling of communion in this sense may be enjoyed by the youngest Christian, and that is what I am trying to convey.

If you are a son or a daughter, you have the sense of your duty to your parents, and of their loving interest and regard for you. You have the consciousness of all that without directly thinking of them all day long. They do not engage your thoughts definitely, but still there is the sense that they are about you. It is quite different if they should be removed from this world, but while they are here there is the sense of their presence, even if there is local separation.

Now, beloved friends, the great theme of my text is that we have Jesus Christ the righteous there with the Father, who has undertaken to see that all is well with us, to keep us right, to keep us in the joy of God’s love throughout all the difficulties of this world, and more than that, if it should be that we drift into sin, even then He will not forsake us, but by His intercession and His power, He will bring us back to the enjoyment of God’s own gracious law. W.J.H.

Chapter 110

S. Our Compassionate High Priest

Our Compassionate High Priest

W. J. Hocking.

One of the chief features of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the very explicit way in which it shows how the believer benefits through the absence of Christ on high. The Jewish saints were accustomed to expect the fulness of their blessing only in connection with the Messiah's presence upon earth. But, contrary to this expectation, Christ had ascended up to where He was before; and His followers needed to be taught in what manner it was expedient for them that He should go away. It was a puzzle to many how it could be possible for the Lord's absence to be better for them than His presence. They knew that when the Lord reigned in mount Zion He would subdue every foe, and give His people peace and joy in all their borders. But what could He do for them on high, before "that day" of power and glory dawns on the earth? This they had to learn, and the Spirit of God, in this Epistle, introduces the subject of the present work of the Lord on high. Let us glance at the bearing of the early chapters from this point of view.

It was first necessary that the Hebrew Christians should have a clear testimony as to the glories of the Person of the Apostle and High Priest of their confession. Such a testimony is rendered in the first two chapters of the Epistle. Therein they are shown that the One in whom they trusted differed immensely from any and all of the servants of God in past ages. The apostle, however, does not proceed to compare Christ feature by feature with Moses and Aaron; but he demonstrates Him to be God, become Man for the suffering of death. Such a fact concerning the Lord Jesus, without making any formal statement of comparison, proves Him to be immeasurably above and beyond all the Old Testament persons and institutions. This superiority is displayed in detail throughout Hebrews 1:1-14; Hebrews 2:1-18. So that the saints might learn from thence that the One who had gone into heaven was, in contrast with former leaders and commanders, an ever-living and unchanging Person. Aaron had died on Mount Hur; and Moses, on Mount Pisgah, closed his connection with the people of God. But Jesus was not such a one as they. Received up in glory, He had taken His seat at the right hand Of the Majesty on high, crowned with glory and honour. His interest and relationship with this world had not ceased; on the contrary, He is the appointed Heir of all things, and, though we see it not in actual accomplishment, all things are put into subjection under His feet.

Here, then we discover a supreme reason why the death of Jesus was in no wise a bar to present help and blessing from Him. It was undoubtedly so in the cases of Aaron and Moses. The people of Israel on their decease were taught to look to Eleazar and Joshua. But the glorified Jesus, though He had tasted death, was still the object of faith and the source of blessing for the saints in an enhanced degree, proportionate to His glorification above. This followed necessarily from the intrinsic worth of His person and the efficacy of His work. As pilgrims through the wilderness, as followers of the despised Nazarene, as sufferers of persecution for Christ's sake, the saints needed continual supplies of grace and strength. Who was their Captain and Guide? Who could

rightly understand their peculiar and trying circumstances, and sympathize with them in the sorrows that came upon them because they were the disciples of Christ? Those to whom they had been accustomed to apply for sympathy, and advice and assistance the Jewish priests and elders — turned from them with that scornful and loathing hatred with which they had regarded their Master. Was there no one who cared for them, and could help them in their weakness and trials) The Epistle answers that there is One, and it bids the holy brethren to consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of their confession (Hebrews 3:1). In Him the suffering saints would find an inexhaustible store of compassion and strength for their succour. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted He is able to help those that are tempted." From this point, the apostle — having introduced the fact that the absent Christ, so far from forgetting them in all their trials and sorrows, is there in heaven to serve them still by such effectual sympathy and succour as none but He can render, at once proceeds to enlarge on their wilderness way and its dangers during their passage to the rest beyond (chapters 3. and 4). The verses in which this is done have caused many a godly soul to shudder in the sense of its Own inherent weakness, and in the dread lest it should after all fail to enter into the rest of God. The scripture is intended to produce such a distrust of self, The province of the word of God is stated in this very connection (Hebrews 4:16.) to be for the manifestation of the workings of the heart and what is within. It is good for us to be laid bare in this fashion. But the error often consists in stopping at the discovery of one’s own inability to go forward in one’s own strength, in being overcome by the sense of the severity of the trials and the power of the enemies, and, as a consequence, in feeling ready to give up in despair. The truth is, however, as the apostle declares, that there is a divine provision for this infirmity of ours. He points to the Christ no longer on earth, but in heaven. He was there for them. They were not to give up, but, on the contrary, to hold fast. "Having then a great high priest passed, as he is, through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not a high priest unable to sympathize with our infirmities, but having been tempted in all things, in like manner apart from sin. Let us then approach with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help" (Hebrews 4:14-16. New Transl.).

Weakness, however excessive, was therefore no occasion for despair. It was rather an occasion for proving divine sympathy and the fulness there is in Christ to supply suitable grace and strength for every sorrow throughout the pilgrimage. Moreover, He has qualified Himself for such priestly ministration by the trials He endured in the days of His flesh. The Lord suffered by reason of His faithfulness to God amid a sinful world. He met the power of Satan. Hence the compassion of our great High Priest in whatever befalls us by the way. He is still the same as when He wept with the sisters of Bethany before He gave them back their dead brother. He enters into our sorrows ere He delivers us out of them.

Without dwelling further on this point, it is evident that this compassionate regard for the suffering saints and the ministry of effectual aid in the hour of weakness and trial form a special feature of the Lord’s priesthood in its present exercise. The question of our sins is entirely another matter. Here it is one of infirmity. As to sins, the saints were reminded that Christ made purification for them before He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). The propitiation once made for sins (Hebrews 2:17) is the foundation of His priestly action now going on. But atonement did not strictly fall within the functions of the high priest as such a fact indicated in that Aaron fulfilled his solemn duties not in his high-priestly robes, but attired as an ordinary

priest (Leviticus 16:3-4). It was in fact a special occasion on which Aaron represented the people in their sins. This Christ did on the cross. And not until His ascension did He enter upon His priestly, work in connection with our encompassing infirmities. It is this work which is the particular subject of the former part of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Chapter 111

S. Our Living Lord

Our Living Lord An Address on Revelation 1:17-18 (W. J. Hocking. June 1st, 1914)

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dad. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not: I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (R.V.).

We have had before us the great hope of the New Testament — the blessed anticipation of our Lord's return; and it is unnecessary for me now to remark how essential it is that we should keep this hope before our hearts. There is, however, another truth connected with it, which will have its due weight and help for us if we keep it before our souls. I refer to that aspect of the truth which assures us of the present concern of our adorable Lord and Master with our own particular welfare individually, as well as with the welfare of the whole of His church collectively.

We are sometimes so borne down with our own crosses and difficulties, and by the distractions that we find coming upon others personally and ecclesiastically, that to a certain extent the spirit of despair takes hold of us; and, looking at things within, and our own inefficiency, our own lack of competency, our own inability to clear away the things that oppose our onward march, and then again, counting the foes that encounter us, and the strength of the difficulties which surround us, we feel that all these things which are against us are too many for us. We bow our heads and think that we must give up. And so we might well give up if we had to fight the battle in our own strength, if we had to hold fast by our own energy, if there was none to stand by us, if there was none to impart to us the needed grace for the moment. But the scripture shows that the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, Whom we know was at the cross for us, and Who we believe and know also left this earth and ascended up in glory, and Who is coming again to receive us into that place which He has gone to prepare for us — this blessed person never relaxes in His present interest in us, and in His continual and sufficient supplies of what we require. The Lord Jesus Christ never forsakes His saints; and He never forsakes His church. We cannot count up the members of that body, but He knows them every one. We do not know all that are His, but he knows every one, and they are all in His hands, and His love is upon each of them. is this not something to lift up our hearts, and to enable us to go forward with increased confidence, assured that we shall reach that goal to which we are hastening, and having gained that goal, we shall then look back and praise the grace that has brought us safely through. The apostle John received this revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Isle of Patmos. I am not about to say anything as to the prophecies recorded in this book, but I wish to draw your attention mainly to the fact that in this island of Patmos, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto the apostle John, and He appeared to him as to a follower of His — one in tribulation — one who had been and was a faithful witness to His name. And I think that if we could transport ourselves to that island, and if we could in any degree enter into the feelings of that holy man, we should find that he had abundant reason to be depressed and cast down because of the circumstances of his time,

Consider the great changes John had witnessed since the departure of the Lord. You know that when the church commenced at Pentecost there was a glorious work here on. the earth. There was a power that gathered men and women together to a new centre, united them as one, bound them up closer together, and, as such, they were all moving along the path of discipleship to their Lord and Master, and the world. looked upon them with distrust.

And, at first, it seemed as if that new power in the earth, a power which spread itself by preaching, would revolutionise the whole world, and that men everywhere would quickly be brought to call on the name of the Lord.

Men in high places received the gospel as little children; they abandoned their former pursuits and occupations, and confessed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. it looked as if the world as a system without God, was to be overthrown by the gospel, and that the millennium, to use the word in the common sense, would be seen very soon upon the earth. But Scripture history shows us that a change came over this aspect of things very rapidly. It shows us that the power of the world which seemed paralysed at first, awoke to a spirit of energy of persecution against the gospel and those that followed Christ. The world arose in its might, determined to stand out against the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Persecution began, and that was evil enough to bear. But there was more than this. There was within the church itself that which corrupted. There was the shameful fall of sonic men from the truth of the earliest days. Do you realise what this meant to the apostles? Oh, how they loved to see men receiving the gospel, to see them walking in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then — to see the same men divided, turned aside, abandoning the very name of the Lord Jesus Christ! It was a trial to these men, to see the leaven of evil doctrine working for the corruption of the saints, while at the same time the power of the world was such that the mouths of the apostles were stopped, and they could not testify when we might think the truth most needed such testimony. It was possible for wicked men to take holy servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and put them to a shameful and ignominious death!

These apostolic men were surely following Christ: where, then, was their Christ? He had gone away and left them, and they were fighting in a losing battle, and dropping out of the ranks one by one; and here is John, the last of them, a prisoner in Patmos, his mouth closed to all intents and purposes. How much he would long to see His Master as of old; but there he was, alone. Had the ascended Christ forgotten? Was He there, and had He forgotten His struggling saints here upon the earth? Was He leaving them alone to battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil?

Perhaps John’s thoughts went back to that night long before on the sea of Galilee. He would remember how the Lord Jesus Christ, in a strange way, hurried them from the shore, after He had fed the multitudes, and constrained them to get in the boat. He bade them push off, and He was left alone on the shore. They rowed out on the waters, and the storm gathered, and they were tossed and buffeted with the waves. They wanted to go in one direction, but the winds and the waves drove them in the other direction. All this while their Master was absent. Once before they had experience of a storm on the lake, but He was there. He was in the boat; He was asleep, but still He was there. Now the question arose, why did He command them to go away from Him? The long hours crept by; the watches passed s the first watch, the second watch, and the third watch, found them bending to the oars. Everything seemed to be against them that night went by, and Jesus was not there. How refreshed their hearts were when, in the fourth watch of the night, they

beheld Him walking on the waves, making His pathway over those circumstances which were so adverse to them, and against which they were fighting and struggling in vain!

Oh, how they reproached themselves for their mistrust; but no, their hearts at first were filled with fear. They thought they saw a phantom, but they were brought to recognise His power and His love which they had never seen before just in that way. And perhaps it was at this point in His recollection that a voice fell upon John’s ear It was a familiar trumpet sound, but it came from an unexpected quarter. He had to turn to see the vision that was behind him. His eyes were directed away from his beloved Master. Oh, beloved friends, is this not a lesson to us? Do we not so often look at the storms, the billows, the trials, perplexities; and we say, where can He be? Where is the One that has told us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" The world seems so strong against us, and we are so weak.

Why do we feel like this? Why cannot we be certain of the One that loves us? We are then, surely, looking in the wrong direction. Yet He never fails to come to us. The disciples were downcast and in despair, but the Lord came to them on the waves — the very thing that was so distressing to them — to their relief. Amid those tangles in which we find ourselves, and those foes that are with us day by day, we too shall not fail to see the Beloved coming to us across the waves of trouble.

It is also true that He comes in the way that we do not: always expect, and often it is to our shame that we have to turn and seek the voice of that One Who speaks for our comfort. He will never fail; He is faithful, draw ye nigh; let it be written on our hearts — the glory of our Master that He provides a faithful and true witness — a faithful and true one to those whom He loves, and we passing through this world to the home above. But the vision before our eyes of the apostle John was a vision of the Lord in His glory, and I wish to draw your attention especially to this feature. We have brought before us very vividly, the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ in His exit, as it were, from this world, left it in the attitude of benediction. lie was dispensing a parting blessing to those left here, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Luke 24:50-51).

Let it not be thought that there is ever a cloud between us and Him. Be comes to us, He who is the pre-eminently glorified One comes to us. He who is the brightest and supremest in the heaven of heavens comes even now.

He comes to us here. You in the 14th chapter of John, that the Lord first speaks of coming personally to receive unto Himself those whom He is loving in the world. He said, I go away, I am coming again. "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself.", But if you continue the reading of that chapter, you will find. that He speaks again of His coming. He then says, "I will not leave you orphans in this world; I will come to you" (John 14:18). Does this refer to His coming in the day for which we are all waiting when He will receive us unto Himself? No. There He had been speaking about the advent of the Holy Spirit, and it was in connection with His advent that the Lord said, "will come to you," "I will be with you." And the Spirit who was sent, is the one given for the very purpose of making the presence of the Son known and felt here in this world. just as no man knew the Father but the Son, who was here upon the earth and who spoke those illuminating words that set forth the Father Himself, so the Holy Ghost is here at the present time to give every believer to know the close companionship of the One in the glory. Do we not remember that other promise of the Lord before His departure, Lo, I am with you alway, every day, all the days, all the bright days and all the dark days, the days of happiness and the days of

sadness? "Always" means that in an uninterrupted way He is with us. Beloved friends„ we often speak about the Lord Jesus as if He was an absent friend. It is good to talk of one whom we love but who is far away. It is good to hold intercourse concerning such a one. It is good to receive communications from him, but much better when he is present with us. And the Lord Jesus is equally dear, whether. He is with us or not, but if we can see Him and hear Him, by faith, — if we are conscious of His presence all the day, it is blessed indeed. Is it too much to expect that when the Lord Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway" that you and I in the experience of our souls day by day may be enabled to realise that He is with us? Did He not mean this when He said "Lo, I am with you alway? Did He not mean also that we should delight to have the experience of it? and that we should see to it that we are standing in the light and power of His promise? But how often the Lord's voice has to come to us like the voice of a trumpeter. Now, a trumpet is to awaken the dead. The trumpet is used in Scripture as an indication of authority and summons; and the Lord had to speak to the beloved apostle, the one whom He loved, with a voice like thunder. And John turned and saw Him. Boanerges saw His love, His matchless pity, but He also saw that wondrous Person transfigured now. Once he beheld a glorious vision on the holy mount; but that was for a moment only. John was not prepared for it, he was afraid of it then; but now it was the Lord's day in Patmos, and He was in the Spirit. The Spirit gave him to witness the glory of his absent Master, and as he looked on Him, he saw His power. He also saw the dignity with which He was invested, His purity, His holiness. He saw that everything bespoke power, and administrative strength, and that the living Lord was in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The whole church of God was represented by this symbol of the candlesticks, and Jesus was seen in the midst, the place that He must always have. If there are but two or three gathered to His name, He will come to be in the midst. So there He was seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Had He forsaken them? Was He up there in the glory, and was He in unconcern suffering His church to be buffeted by the winds and waves of persecution? No, He was in the midst. And look in His right hand — there are seven stars. There is a star for every church, and a star for Laodicea. He will not be content with six, He will have seven. He holds in His hand of power the seven stars.

Beloved friends, do not let us lose heart, do not let us lack courage, do not let us be overborne with despair by the distracting things. Look at that glorious Man of power and what He has in His right hand. He will maintain the seven stars to the very end. And in this manner the apostle saw Him. The effect upon the exile was remarkable. It was what might not have been expected from John, who was so attached in heart to his Master. When he beheld Him he fell at His feet as one dead. Why was this prostration? We may rather ask how could he keep himself in an erect position in the presence of such glory? He must go down.

Beloved friends, it is always when in the power of the Spirit of God we by faith have a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we assume a right attitude of worship. There is many a person, both old and young, who strives in vain to work himself up to a frame of worship. Worship is not forced, but spontaneous. It springs up like a well. What causes it to spring up? The power behind it, of course. You gather together, two or three of you, and there is an unseen Person present there. Ii is for you to see His glory. Do not let any distractions annoy you. Do not let the noise disturb your heart. No, see to it that all these things are lost upon you, and that when you are together you have vividly before you the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All will be well then, because you are in line with the operations of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is here to display the perfections of the Person

of Christ, and I cannot see Him unless the Holy Spirit so works in my heart that I do see Him by faith: then I must worship Him. Hence there arises worship in spirit and in truth, and there is a needful preparedness of heart for this, which is expressed in this way.

1914 125 John tells us he fell at His feet "as one dead." I do not know whether it was so, but perhaps he had been too self-confident. Perhaps he had been thinking, like Elijah, that everyone else had gone wrong, and he was the only one right. It was I, I, I, with him. He says, "Here am I in the Isle of Patmos, and what is the church going to do without me? It will go to rack and ruin because I, the last of the apostles, am not there to care for it." And the Lord says, "You have forgotten Me you have left Me out." John felt what a blunder he had made, and felt himself to be no more than a helpless corpse, so far as life and power were concerned.

It is in the posture of dependence that we know what it is to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is then that the love of the Lord Jesus Christ is manifestly in us. John took his right place before the Lord. Had he wronged Him? Who has not done so in his heart? Who has not thought unholily and improperly of Him? How often we approach His person, and even discuss what He is, and what He became; and how little we know of these things and of the wondrous mystery of His death! Who shall understand them? Let us walk softly in the presence of His glory. The Spirit has spoken of Him in His word, and we must regard that word, but let us beware of inquisitive thoughts which would seek to penetrate beyond the revealed word. One day we shall be in the Father’s house, and better able then to comprehend the glory of that One whom we, now believe. But we here see that the Lord laid His right hand upon that recumbent one before Him, and He spoke definite words to him. It was not now with a voice of a trumpet, nor as the sound of many waters, but it was the same voice that he had heard so long ago, the voice of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. But we may also recall again that night on the Sea of Galilee, when the disciples were so weary and worn, just before the morning broke, and the bright and morning star appeared. The first thing that the apostles heard was the voice of the Lord speaking to them, but fear took possession of their hearts, and the Master knew this. Fear often misleads us, as it misled them, so that they mistook the Lord for a phantom. But love casts out fear.

We ought to have the spirit of trust continually, but, if we have not, He still comes. He does not forsake us, but He comes, and, with His right hand upon us, dispels the gloom of our hearts. This loving action was characteristic of Him when He was down here. It was not a matter of the mere exercise of power with our Lord. He took hold of the weak and suffering ones. He lifted them up, putting Himself in touch, as it were, with them in their circumstances. And so it was with the shrinking fear-stricken apostle. The Lord came to him, laying His right hand upon him, and I think there must have been a power which then thrilled through. John at the touch of his Master. I think the helpless man felt at that moment transformed with power. The touch of the loving One was upon him, and the word in his ear was, "Fear not."

I think it is not an exaggeration to suppose that we ourselves may be sometimes afraid of Him, particularly if we have done Him some slight wrong, if we have abused His grace to us, and if we have failed in our responsibilities to Him. There is then just a little feeling of fear, a distrust, an anxiety lest His heart may be turned away from us, and that when He opens His mouth that sharp sword will smite us. We feel we shall be judged and doomed. He does not, however, come to us in

this way. He comes truly as the all-powerful One, but His words are, "Fear not." "You need not fear Me. I am still the One who cares for you. I am still the One who stands by you. I am still the One that will never leave nor forsake you."

Here is comfort for us, beloved friends. We may be fearing the world. We may be fearing the powers that are against us. This word, "fear not," comes to us with soothing power again. If He is for us, who can be against us? And the Lord went on to amplify this to John, setting Himself before him in the power of His Person and of His resurrection. "Fear not," He said to the apostle, "I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. And I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Now the Lord here speaks of Himself as "the First and the Last," expressions which we shall find several times in Isaiah, and there the phrase is connected with the being of God, Himself. He only is the First and the Last. Who else is there that could be the Beginning and the End? While this term applies to the Son, may we not look at it here in connection with the church of God? With whom did the church begin? The church began with a risen and glorified Saviour; so the apostle Peter explained the wonderful things that happened in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. He explained very clearly that God had made Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, both Lord and Christ. He was invested on high with dignity and glory beyond all heavenly principalities and powers, and so mighty things were done. Men and women were convicted of their sins, and when they locked away in faith to Him they found peace for their consciences and hearts.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost possessed their souls, and they were thus united to Him on high. He is the first so far as the church is concerned, and He is the last. It is He that binds that church into one invisible and indivisible unity. He it is that makes the centre and the circumference of the church of God. In view of the security afforded by the Lord Himself, we need not be over-anxious to prevent the apparent downfall of the church of God. There is One in the midst of the church who will care for it. The power of Christ shall never be lost, never be lessened nor destroyed. The unity of the church especially shall be made plain, and its beauties shall shine through the endless ages of eternity to the praise of Him that loved the church and who roved its, and who gave Himself for it and for us. Its final perfection and glory do not depend upon us, but upon Him who is the "First and the Last." Of course, we have our responsibilities; but my subject is this, that the Lord has pledged Himself to present us before God without spot and blemish, He can and will do this, for He has said, "I am the First and the Last."

Then He speaks of Himself as the living One. "I am He that liveth," and again, "I am alive for evermore."

Put this truth in an abstract way. We believe in the living Christ. Of course we believe that Christ died also. We know that He came forth from the tomb in the power of the Spirit of God, and by the glory of the Father, and rose up as the One who had vanquished death. We know that He arose. Death has no more dominion over Him who is alive for evermore.

Put it now practically. He is continually and constantly watching over us, and is interested in our welfare. He is with us always. The living Christ can never die. My eye may be set upon earthly things, but my Christ can never die. "I am He that liveth and was dead. And behold, I am alive for evermore." Here we are to walk in the power of this truth day by day. The living Christ, where is

He? is here to keep us continually, and to carry us safely through. Do not let us doubt or distrust Him. He will not fail us. He lives; and when He speaks of living, this means activity. It does not imply that He has not died, but it means that He is living on our behalf, that He lives for us in glory, that He claims us for Himself, and that He carries us through, supplying everything that we require.

You will say that I am speaking of things that you know perfectly well, and I am aware of this. But we may know the power of them still more, if we can only in our hearts see and know and realise something of the value of the living Lord to us. You may say, "I have proved that for many a year," and it may seem a long time as you look back. But think of the long-lived apostle John. The Lord appeared in Patmos to him. It was necessary that His right hand should be laid upon him, and that the familiar word should come again to that aged disciple of Christ, "Fear not," and that he should receive the reminder, "I am He that liveth and was dead, and am alive again, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

What was it that the Lord promised when He spoke of building His church? Was it not that the gates of Hades should never prevail against this church. Here was the strong assurance, "I have the keys of Hades." The continuance of the church of God is therefore the proof of the power and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us then remember that while the Lord is living, for us there, He is also with us here. Did not the apostle Paul confess, that when he was in grave peril and had to stand before his enemies at Jerusalem, the Lord stood by him? He felt that glorious Person was by his side, and he felt strong in His strength, and confident in His word. The Lord stood by Paul. Let us see that we do not miss the unseen presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This marvellous revelation of His word is needed, that we may think of that One who has passed up through the heavens and into whose hands all the power in heaven and earth has been committed, of that One before whom the celestial hosts do homage. Yet from that resplendent glory, where He orders the government of innumerable worlds, He comes to bear the sorrows of His saints. He singles out an individual from some sixteen hundred million inhabitants of the earth, and lays His right hand upon one lonely exile in Patmos Beloved friend, you may know and feel something of this fine Christian experience. It is within the reach of each one of us. We may have in our apprehension day by day, and hour by hour, the immediate presence of the Lord and Master for whom we wait. It will be good for us if this is so. It will be good for us if the mists can be removed, as it were, and our dim eyes of faith be strengthened to see Who is with us continually. Let us therefore ponder this revelation of Himself that the Lord made. See how the Lord is endeavouring to impress upon those who are still in the world that He will not leave them alone. He is going to be with us just as really as when He was walking here, that is, in the world. When He went away He said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." And, beloved friends, I ask "Do we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as we believe in God"? He is the One who is ever present with us; and if we have Him whom need we fear?

S. Our Standing in Grace.

Our Standing in Grace.

Romans 5:1-2.

1907 247 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Through our own partialities for those scriptural truths which we assume concern us the more intimately, we frequently allow ourselves to pass over with scant attention many weighty words of scripture. The familiar text quoted above contains a brief summary of the attendant blessings of justification in which we are entitled to participate as those who have the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16).

Peace with God. — The passage speaks first of the peace of a purged conscience; the comfort of which we realise as we think of what preceded faith within our hearts — the dark forebodings of a spirit wounded by sin, the despair wrought by the sense of our guilt before God, the inward conviction of an inevitable outpouring of divine wrath upon our deserving heads — and then of the assurance that this condition has passed for ever: "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The God against whom we sinned has Himself justified us freely by His grace, and we who were enemies in our minds by wicked works are now at peace with Him. And while we regard this great deliverance we say, and we say rightly, as we lift our eyes to our God and reiterate our grateful. praise, "It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The glory of God. — Further, as we think of Him who "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification," the heart within us leaps with desire, and our new-born affections crave that we may behold Him who loved us and died for us. Like the cleansed Samaritan leper, like the renewed Gadarene, we would be with Him, at His feet, and behold some gleams of that glory of God which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. But why think such vain thoughts? Who are we to indulge such bold aspiration? How dare mortal man think to approach Him who sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens? Ah, it would indeed be becoming on our part to chide ourselves unsparingly for such presumption, had we not God’s own sanction in His word for the longings of the new nature within us. We are permitted to expect "a bright tomorrow." Every justified one is authorised, because he is justified, to hope for the glory of God, not with the feeble vagueness which necessarily accompanies every human effort to peer beyond the present instant, but with the serene confidence that springs alone from the knowledge that the eternal God has spoken as to our future, and has irradiated the dark beyond with His coming glory. No wonder that in consequence we are filled with holy exuberance we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are transported with the prospect of it, and we love to let our very souls be flooded in anticipation with the life-giving beams of Christ in His coming glory.

Present grace or favour. — Hence it is often brought about that, having our hearts sensible of that peace as to a guilty past which otherwise we could never know, and also of a future gorgeous with visions beyond the dreams of poets and artists of every age, we are apt to pass quickly over that sweet interposition of the Spirit in the passage at the head of this paper, dealing with our present standing before God in this work-a-day world" by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." We cannot, without personal loss, neglect this bountiful accommodation made for our pilgrim journey from the state of guilt to the state of glory. The person who is justified is entitled, and is entitled because he is justified, to regard himself as standing in the grace or favour of God. Such an elevating and assuring description of the present state of guilty sinners who have been pardoned and justified demands more than a passing consideration. The person securing this favour. — Let us then first note how the gracious and adorable Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is introduced as the One by whom and in whom this present privilege is. secured to us — "by whom also we have access, etc. His name and titles had been just mentioned in connection with the peace which He made "by the blood of His cross." It is the "same Jesus" whom we are taught by the next phrase to regard as the One who has given us a present position of signal favour before God, and, moreover, who maintains us in that standing. Clearly, it is of the highest importance for the practical enjoyment of our souls that this fact should by faith be continuously before us. And were it not for our natural pride and self-complacency we should the more readily admit the necessity for such a reminder as is here and else where made. But we shrink from allowing to ourselves that we are prone to be callous as to the present real worth of Christ, and therefore to fail in appropriating to ourselves what in scripture is intended to brace up our affections for Christ. This unreadiness to accept an unpalatable truth about oneself is no new feature in man. The prophet Elisha drew a lurid picture of Hazael’s future violence. "Is thy servant a dog," said the astonished man, "that he should do this thing?" But, as a commentator pithily remarks, "The dog went and did it." Truly, Hazael was an ambitious and unscrupulous worldling. But a similar disposition is also to be seen in the pious and the devoted Simon Peter, for instance. Zealous courageous, and passionate in his esteem and devotion to his Master, he would not admit for a moment the truth of the Lord’s declaration concerning him, "This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Ignorant of his own inherent weakness, he exclaimed hotly, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." The sad sequel proved how true the Lord’s words were. How much better if the self-confident man had heeded the gracious warning. "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident." "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 14:16; Proverbs 22:3).

We may take it, therefore, that when we are directed to regard the Lord Jesus Christ as the One by whom we have obtained admission into the present favour of God, it is of the first importance that we should set Him before us continuously as the source, the means, and the guarantor of the grace in which we stand. And the caution will be of greater effect upon us if we recollect that the reminder would not have been made were we not liable to allow anything, even the blessing itself, to obscure the person of the Blesser before our hearts. "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Genesis 11:23).

Access. — "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." The right of admittance to this favour we have by Christ Jesus. What we could not possess inherently He has

secured to us inalienably. The form of the phrase used implies that the access is ours abidingly, not intermittently, as it well might be if dependent on ourselves. In ourselves we can offer no claim to such favour, but in Christ what claims are found! How great is the favour of God in which Christ Jesus stands! Is He not the One whom God delights to honour? And He is our Introducer. But He does not bring us just to the outskirts of the place of favour — "some low place within the door" — as might be if our Patron had but limited influence there. We can scarcely suppose that John the son of Zebedee, though known to the high priest, was particularly intimate with him. His influence was just sufficient to procure admittance for his friend, Simon Peter, to the high priest's palace. "Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door and brought in Peter" (John 18:16). Through the instrumentality of John, Peter obtained access into the palace of the high priest, but not into his favour. This, John was unable to do, and the illustration falls short of our subject. The way into the presence-chamber of king Ahasuerus was hedged about by the irrevocable law that whosoever approached uncalled should be put to death. Esther drew near with her petition and stood in the inner court of the king's house. "When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and, what is thy request? it shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom" (Esther 5:2-3). She had access into the favour of the king, and so obtained the lives of her countrymen. Those justified by faith have access into the favour of God, the Lord Jesus Christ being infinitely more to such undeserving ones as we are, than the golden sceptre stretched out to Esther. The word "access" only occurs in two other passages in the New Testament, both being found in the Epistle to the Ephesians. "For through him [Christ Jesus] we both [Jews and Gentiles who believe] have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "In whom [Christ Jesus our Lord] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12). The verbal form of the same word is used in other instances having the sense of bringing into the presence of another. Jesus said to the father of him possessed with an evil spirit, "Bring thy son hither" (Luke 9:41). Peter also speaks of the work of Christ as introducing us to the presence of God: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). In the Lord Jesus therefore we have our access As He Himself said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). He is the door of faith for Gentile as for Jew (Acts 14:27). Moreover, He is the way: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). And this is so both now when we realise it by faith, and shortly when He comes. Even as Isaac met Rebekah and brought her himself into his mother Sarah's tent, so will the Lord Jesus meet His bride in the air, and usher her into the rapturous intimacies, and the beatified delights, of the Father's house.

Grace or favour. — "By whom also we have access into this grace." We are "justified freely by his grace (Romans 3:24 : Titus 3:7). This is our initial blessing, but we are here assured that we also have a permanent standing in this grace, subsequent to our justification. The word grace (charis) is one of those employed by the Spirit of God to convey a truth which is exclusively divine, and in consequence all human language is inadequate to express its meaning; to seek to define it is to seek to set bounds to the infinite. We may only by assiduous comparison of its varied usage in Holy Scripture obtain some glimmerings of the vast truth communicated by the word "grace." In its many occurrences it has many shades of significations, as indeed we may gather from Peter's

expressive phrase — "the manifold (poikiles) grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

It must suffice to note here how grace takes a dual character viz. — (1) from its source, God, and (2) from its object, sinful man. The frequently recurring words, "the grace of God," are sufficient to show that it has no earthly origin. The correlated phrase, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" reminds us that the grace of God came by Him (John 1:17). Flowing down from heaven where there exists no need for its exercise, let us rather say, emanating from the heart of God Himself, what an immeasurable character is given by its origin to "this grace wherein we stand." Like Him from whom it springs, grace is infinite in its freeness, its fulness, its spontaneity, its "exceeding riches" (Ephesians 2:1-22, also 2 Corinthians 9:14). But the second characteristic of God's grace, to which allusion has been made, arises from the nature of those towards whom this grace is exercised. Grace. is for sinners. Thus Paul, speaking of himself as "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," says, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:13-15). It was in the very habitat of sin that grace was displayed. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Hence in this brief consideration of the manward aspect of grace we see that not only were its activities uncaused and unmerited by its objects, but these objects were in a state of positive enmity against God and amenable to His just judgment. Herein perhaps lies one of the distinctions between the allied words, grace and mercy. Mercy is awakened into exercise by the infirmities of its objects, their ignorance, their sorrows, their sufferings, and their needs: but grace flows towards those who are altogether undeserving, and who have by their sins forfeited every claim. We who were "dead in trespasses have been saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5; Ephesians 2:8), But being justified by faith," having "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7) we abide in that grace. It becomes the atmosphere, the home of our souls. If we received the grace of God when we were ungodly, sinners, enemies, what favour is ours now that we are justified and reconciled! This is indeed an unspeakable privilege to know oneself standing in the unclouded favour of God. How feeble and fickle in comparison is the favour of earthly potentates for which men of the world so fiercely compete. Joseph "found grace" in the sight of Potiphar which he speedily lost through no fault of his own (Genesis 39:4). Again, he rose from the obscurity of the prison-house to the "favour" of Pharaoh, so that he was set over the land of Egypt, and the king's house (Acts 7:9-10). But after all, this was but the favour of man, not to be compared with that favour of God to which the justified believer has acquired an inalienable right through our Lord Jesus Christ.

David the icing found favour in the sight of God (Acts 7:46) and so did Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28; Luke 1:30). But these were exceptional instances. The standing in the favour of God is not, as revealed in the New Testament, peculiar to e few, but possessed equally by all the justified. Let us consider it well "for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace" (Hebrews 13:9). The standing. — By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand. As the form of the phrase referring to our access implies permanence, so does it in reference to our standing. We stand stedfastly, without intermission, in the favour of God. The same term is used for the immutable foundation of God in contrast with the fluctuating character of what has been committed to man's responsibility — "nevertheless, the sure foundation of God standeth" (2 Timothy 2:19). It is also used negatively by the Lord referring to Satan, "He is a

murderer from the beginning and standeth not in the truth" (John 8:44, New Trans.). So also the apostle Paul described the Corinthian saints as standing in the gospel. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand" (1 Corinthians 15:1). In all cases an unvarying stedfastness is implied. What a comfort to learn that we have not only the entrée to such a place of choice privilege, but that we stand there upon an unalterable basis and in an unchanging acceptance. Is there any personal responsibility? — While the word of God guarantees to each believer this standing in grace without any qualification, it nevertheless cautions against a false assurance founded only upon unconcern. There is no warrant for assuming that this standing is compatible with indifference to sin, the indulgence of selfishness, and a course of practical unrighteousness. The justified believer is called upon to gird up his renewed energies and see to it that there is a correspondence between his life and conduct and the privileged position in which he is set. It is the over-confident that needs to beware. Hence we have the exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Speaking of Gentiles being grafted into the olive tree of promise, while Jewish branches were broken off, the apostle writes, "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 11:19-20). Again, Peter exhorts the saints to maintain in practice their standing in grace. "I have written unto you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein" (1 Peter 5:12, RV.). We shall do well to heed the word, and to hold fast the immense privilege secured to us by Him who was "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." W. J. Hocking.

Chapter 113

S. Salvation Possessed and Known

Salvation Possessed and Known Notes of an address on Acts 10:42-43

W. J. Hocking.

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:42-43).

These words form the conclusion of the address of Peter to Cornelius the centurion, and to those assembled in his house. They were the special words in the Apostle's discourse which seem to have been for the centurion's personal benefit, though others show the blessing that ensued. They particularly suited his case. They brought him deliverance and enjoyment and peace in the Holy Ghost.

I want you to look this evening at the words as those addressed to a man who was seeking to know from God that which would settle, once and for ever, the great question of his own personal responsibility to his God. Cornelius was not a godless man. He was not a heathen man, in the sense of being a worshipper of false gods. He was a man who recognised that there was one God over all, and that He was the God of the Jews, and that God he most earnestly desired to know. We are told of him, in the commencement of this chapter, that he prayed to God alway, and gave alms to the people of God. This is a striking witness to the character of the man. Cornelius was a Roman soldier, an officer, a man used to command, accustomed to enforce the strict military discipline which characterised the Roman army; but, in spite of the stern habits of his military life, he was a man who had been touched in his heart and conscience. He had seen and felt the follies and abominations of idol worship. He had been stationed in Palestine, the favoured land of Jehovah, where prophets had testified of God and His worship. He had been serving in that same land so recently trodden, as it had been, by the feet of the Son of God. And will it be too great a stretch of our imagination to suppose that he learned from that other fellow-soldier of his, that centurion of Capernaum, who loved the nation of the Jews, and had himself come to the lowly Prophet of Nazareth, and besought Him, with faith, such faith in his heart as had never before been known in Israel, that he might receive the words that would heal his sick one — would Cornelius have learned something of Jesus of Nazareth from him? And may he not also have heard some report from that other centurion whose duty it was to attend the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and see that all was done according to the law of that mighty Gentile empire which was holding God's people in a grip of iron at that time? This man was a personal witness of the extraordinary events of that day. He saw a meek and patient Sufferer, lifted up between two malefactors, and yet so different from them. He was indeed always so different from all men, but with what distinction did the Holy Son of man stand apart from those two robbers. This centurion was a witness to the supernatural darkness that covered the land at noonday. He heard, too, that bitter cry of anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and the officer was smitten in his conscience, and confessed at the close that Jesus was a righteous man the Son of God.

Cornelius must have heard something of these things. What he believed brought him on his knees to the living and true God. It caused him to love that people whom it was his business to govern in accordance with the exacting laws of his Emperor. For the centurion felt that the Jews were God's people, and he cared for their poor in a conspicuous manner; and yet the man was not at rest inwardly. There was that which was good and beneficent about him. There was that which showed that he had a care for holy things, and for holy persons, and yet the man kept on praying, being in need of "something to satisfy the conscience within him, which told him that he had sinned against God, and that he could not escape the judgment of sin; and he craved to know how sins, his sins, the sins of a Gentile, might be forgiven. He knew God's word, and that lie himself was not a lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom the Messiah came. He might well have said: 'What part have I with the house of Israel? The Messiah is for them, but, alas! not for me.'

Yet Cornelius desired the blessing of God's forgiveness.; he was a sinful man, but he prayed always, and he was heard.

Beloved friends, there are many persons in this country, no doubt there are some in this hall tonight, who have a sense that they, too, have sinned against the holy God. They feel that the past, with all its sins, is not quite extinct, but that it will be brought forth again to their condemnation, and they do not as yet see how that pasta will be dealt with otherwise than to their extreme ruin. They feel that they have sinned against God, and they cannot rest because they believe they must answer for sins In their bodies in the day which is to come. They love to hear of Jesus. They love to hear of the Christ of God. They confess that there is no other Saviour among men save Jesus of Nazareth, and yet they are not confident that He is their own Saviour; they do not know that their sins are forgiven. They resort to religious ceremonies — and yet they find no rest; the conscience within them will not be quiet. It accuses them again and again of their guilt before God.

Beloved friends, I honour a man who, in this matter, refuses to acquiesce in an authority not duly accredited. How can we rest the eternal destiny of our own souls upon our own feelings, or upon mere fancy? Shall we go to a mortal, failing man like ourselves, and rest upon his word for it? No; in our responsibility to God, we want the word of God as a valid ground of assurance.

There are, perhaps, many here seeking rest and finding none. There is a memory before me of a sight that I witnessed many years ago, which I shall never forget. I was in a well-known "place of worship," one of the most famous in our great Metropolis, and I was inadvertently the witness of an early morning service. But what still lives before me is the figure of a man who was one of the communicants. He was a tall man, evidently in a state of physical weakness; but there was more than bodily infirmity: there was mental pain, there was a storm of sorrow and anguish depicted on the man's face as he left his pew with others and fell upon his knees. He received the bread and the wine. He then rose and went back to his place; and, dear friends, I shall never forget the look of unrest, of unhappiness and of intense agony of spirit written upon his face as he returned to his pew, threw himself upon the bench with his hands spread out, and his head bent upon his arms. He had evidently come there that morning to find in the ceremony something that would satisfy his heart. He had been through it, and, at the close, there was the sense that it was all of no use. The ceremony did not give him a solid basis on which to rest his soul. The man was, no doubt, true, sincere and right in motive, but there was no need for his vain search after peace. The blessed

Jesus was ready to speak the word of peace to him, only he was looking manward, to the outward ceremonial, to something that he could see and hear. All the while the gracious Saviour was saying to him, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Saviour gives rest by His word, and it is only when you have His word coming to you personally that you can afford to dismiss the great question of your guilt, once and for ever, as a settled matter.

What was it that the blessed Master said to the woman who sought forgiveness of sins? "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "Thy" The same forgiveness was for everyone who was in Capernaum to find, if they sought it. The sinful woman sought it. And to her the Lord said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Beloved friends, there is no other way of settling the great question. There is no other way of obtaining peace of soul, save by coming to the Lord. Jesus Christ, and hearing His word to you.

Now, how was this man, Cornelius, to get such a word from Jesus? Jesus was gone. He had been here. He had left memories behind Him, sweet memories of His ministry, throughout Judaea and Galilee. The savour of the Presence that had been was not lost. What could Cornelius do but pray to God? And his prayer rose up as a memorial to God, a sweet sacrifice, as it were, to Him. He was one anxious and desiring to know for himself the fulness of the salvation of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and the man who seeks such knowledge shall not be disappointed. The Lord Himself was no longer in Palestine; but His ambassadors were. As He was sent into the world, so He sent His emissaries — the apostles — into the world to represent Him (John 17:18).

Accordingly, God sent His word to this man who was a Gentile, a Gentile soldier, one of the conquerors of God’s ancient people. He sent the apostle Peter to speak the word to him that should clear his soul in its anxiety, and settle every doubt. Now, we know that Cornelius understood very definitely that Peter was coming to speak to him, that Peter was God’s messenger to him, that he was directed to deliver God’s word to him. Peter would be only the channel. The much-desired word was coming through him, and it would not be the word of a mere man. When the centurion met Peter, and had gathered together his friends, he said: "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Dear friends, in the great question of the sin of a man’s soul there are two persons concerned the man himself and God. It is one of the cardinal truths of the gospel that in His grace the Saviour God comes down to meet this individual need. It is a device of Satan to adulterate and corrupt the gospel, and to introduce some medium between God and the sinner. No, beloved friends, there is but one Mediator between God and man; the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. He sought the individual where he was, and now God is sending His word through the Scriptures to the individual.

There may be a word in my text tonight for some hearer personally. You may have a similar difficulty to Cornelius upon your heart. You know you have sinned, and want your sins forgiven, and you are asking, How am I to know that they are forgiven? On what ground? I do not know any possible trustworthy ground but God’s holy word, and, having this, you need not fear all the powers of Satan. There is no power in this world, or under this world, which can destroy the imperishable word of God. The Lord said: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall

not pass away."

Here is the Bible. Here is God’s word, but, beloved friends, you must receive it for yourself. You must be able to open this word and say: ’I know that, if there is no other person in the wide world, God is speaking to me.’ It is comforting to that extent to know that God is speaking to others, and a person may well be rejoicing in this fact, but it is a different matter if I feel He may leave me out of the blessing, and while other persons have their sins forgiven, I am not included in the company. What a loss for me! The case of the new blessing which others had recently received must have been known to Cornelius, for Caesarea was not so far from Jerusalem, and the news spread rapidly of the people who were receiving the gospel. They had come into the town in the fulness of their joy, and spoken of the joys of their salvation. The sight of their ecstasy led Cornelius to pray, Oh, that* I knew my sins were forgiven Oh, that I might have the remission of my sins! And God sent Peter to speak to him this particular point of anxiety.

We have not much time to look into details of the apostolic visit, but will pass on to the particular moment when the word met Cornelius. Peter is referring, in the two verses I have read, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he speaks first of all of Him risen from the dead, and ordained of God to be Judge of quick and dead. What is the special relation of this fact to the anxious man? What did this mean to the soul of Cornelius? Jesus ordained to be the Judge Of quick and dead! Have you ever thought seriously of this, beloved friends? It is admittedly a commonly received truth. We know that Jesus Christ is the One who is coming to judge the quick and the dead, but have you ever considered what the prediction involves? The One who was once on this earth, stretched out upon the cross, in the place of shame (so far as this world’s judgment is concerned), is He who not only rose from the dead, but into whose hand is placed the responsibility of the eternal judgment of men and women, whether they be alive or dead.

Friends, in the interests of eternal justice there is before us the great work of examining the lives of men and women, and adjudicating upon their words and deeds, and administrating due punishment, and the Person into whose hands this work is committed is that Holy Man who suffered on Calvary’s cross. Is it not wonderful to contemplate that He will sit on His throne, and that the nations of the earth shall be gathered before Him, and that out of His mouth shall proceed the sentence of judgment? It is so. The Man whom the world despises is the One into whose hands is committed all judgment. Man regenerate or unregenerate has never paid adequate regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is many a person who is losing his way in the things that pertain to spiritual life, because he is seeking joy and rest apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. No man can neglect the veneration of Christ without serious loss. And the gospel of the grace of God is the one that exalts Jesus, and puts Him in the highest heavenly glory a present Saviour, a coming Judge. Would you not, then, like to be on the side of that Judge? Would you not like to have Him for you? If He is for you, oh! how good and blessed! If He assures you now concerning the forgiveness of your sins, oh! how safe must you be in the day of wrath which is to come!

There are persons — possibly Cornelius was one of them — who have that great day of judgment ever before their minds. They think of that time so awful, when all the world will be assembled before the throne, and will be there to be judged. They dread lest they shall then hear the word, "Depart from me"; and they say, ’I can never rest until that day is past.’

I am considering the case of those who are really in earnest, and seeking the salvation of their souls, and who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but are fearful of what is to come. But, beloved friends, think that it is Jesus who will be there, and that He speaks to you now! What does He say to you now? Does He not say unto you, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish"? Does He not say unto you, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life"? If the Judge Himself says to you, You shall not come into judgment! you have this word for your reliance. If there is anyone who can speak to you about the time of judgment, surely it is the One who is ordained to judge the quick and the dead. And He says that the believer shall never come into judgment. Is this sufficient? Is this a word for you? Can you suppose for a moment that the robber on the cross, to whom the Lord said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"— can you believe that this one shall yet be brought before the Lord as the Judge of quick and dead, to be judged, to decide whether heaven or hell shall be his eternal lot, he having been in the paradise of God now for some two thousand years? He had the Lord's word to him; and He said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." It was to comfort and assure him in the last hours of his agony. And he passed in peace of heart into the presence of his Lord and Saviour. And so we just come back to this concise test. Have you received the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving unto you assurance for the future, as well as the forgiveness of your past sins? But it was not only the fact that Jesus was ordained to be the Judge that Peter advanced. The apostle unfolded a further truth which Cornelius needed to know. He went on to say, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Jesus, risen from the dead, is Lord of all, not merely of the Jews. He is the Lord of all men and all things, for all things are put under His feet; and this too was meant to enlighten the centurion. Jesus, walking through this world, was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but, risen from the dead, there are for the Saviour no national limits. There is no Gentile or Jew beyond the grave. There are here geographical distinctions that mark men off from one another, but beyond the grave there are none, and that is where the Lord of glory is. The risen Christ spoke through Peter as the One who had come out from among the dead; and His grace was flowing out to all men, as the prophets of old had given witness, that whosoever believeth in Him should receive remission of sins.

Cornelius found himself within the scope of this message. That is where I come in. That is exactly the word that addresses me.' Such clearly was his belief. The force of this word of God is such that wherever a man is, whatever a man is, should he believe, he will receive remission of his sins. It is not a question of his bowing to some ceremony. A man is not required to be circumcised, to keep the law of Moses and thus be saved; such is not the truth of God in the gospel. The truth of God is that, whatever a sinner may be, let him come to the Saviour as a sinner, and let him receive the remission of sins.

Then and there the word of the gospel entered Cornelius' heart, and he appropriated that word to himself. He said, 'It is for me,' and there were others with him, his household, his servants, all desirous to know the truth of God, and they found the same truth of God offered to them. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Beloved friends, I do earnestly beseech of you to consider upon what ground you are resting this night in this matter. Is it upon the word of God spoken directly to yourself? Have you at some point

in your past history come to this position — that if God did not speak to you, if He did not clear away the doubts from your heart, no one else could, and then God in His word did come to you? Some particular text, some particular truth has flashed like a light from heaven to your soul, and you have known that God is for you. This knowledge God gives through His word. "We know" is the sincere language of faith. The man who believes the word of God is the man who knows it.

There are persons who affirm that it is presumption on man's part to say that his sins are forgiven. How can he know? Such knowledge would be impossible if God had not spoken. I do not think that we, who rejoice in God's word, rejoice sufficiently in this fact, that God has spoken to us in this Book. Amid all the uncertainties of this time, and the great national struggle, causing men to wonder what lies beyond, oh! how we ought to thank God for that which never fails, His blessed, holy word! Here it is, as it was spoken of old. We have it now, in all its perfection, unchanged and unchangeable. It is for you and for me, but each heart must take hold of it.

I know that there are men who are proud of this book, that is, the book that is printed. They say there is no other book like it in the world. This is true. They say that it has made national history; but, beloved friends, there is another question, a deeper question than this, which it solves. Here am I, a responsible person, and where God has put me I have failed most miserably. I have despised God's precepts, and what is going to be the result of it? Is there not a word there for me, the erring and disobedient? It is very easy to speak of a Bible which is being sent forth to help and bless nations, and to bring men out of barbarism and into civilisation. But, a man may say, How about the sins of which I am guilty? God knows that I have despised His Son, and there are many sins I have committed, and I am responsible for them.'

Now this book speaks to the individual as the apostle Peter spoke to Cornelius. The word was for him, and, when received by him, the clouds dispersed, the doubts disappeared, and the man, gladdened by the sunshine of God's word, was a saved man in the full sense of the Scriptural term. To be saved, beloved friends, is not only to have the benefits procured by our Lord Jesus Christ, but to know that we have passed from death into life, and that whatever may come upon us, whatever may betide us in the future, all is well. Have you observed the sequel to this preaching? The Spirit of God fell upon every person who was there, every man, every woman was sealed by the Holy Spirit. God thereby marked them out as His own, and they were subsequently baptised, and received into the company of God's people. This was not the admission of Gentile believers into the place of God's ancient people here upon earth. On the contrary, it was a new thing; Jews and Gentiles are now one — equally believing in Him, equally accepted by Him, equally rejoicing in His name, and equally possessed of His great salvation.

Oh, beloved friends, I ask you whether you know for yourself the salvation of God. In order to do so you have to come, personally, individually, with your sins, to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not sufficient, however, to come to Him. It is necessary that you should continue in the attitude of expectation and entreaty until you meet God, and learn the truth about yourself on the authority of God's holy word. Do not trust a man like yourself. Do not trust a fellow mortal. Do not let anyone deceive you. Lay hold of God's word for yourself. A man, wittingly or unwittingly, may lead you astray. You can only trust One; that One is the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks through this holy Book to you, and He who died for your sins, He who suffered for you on the tree, He is the One who says to you, "Thy sins are forgiven."

Let me say just one further word before parting. Some may have this difficulty which I will specify. And it is a difficulty which the more earnest Christian is not unlikely to have. There are many who start with a fervent determination that henceforward they will please Him at all costs, live for Him, shine for Him, be His good soldiers in this world. They seek to find from the Scripture what they must do, and everything seems joyous and happy and bright, and they can hardly believe the truth about themselves, They are so full of joy, and they are full of desire that everybody may be like them, just resting and trusting on the Lord Jesus Christ; and then something untoward happens. One day there is a disaster. From their mouths something comes which is so unexpectedly evil. They say, 'Surely, I cannot be a true disciple of Christ, or I should not have said or done this.' However, they try again, and find that a similar thing occurs before long, and they become very sorrowful and downcast, after vainly struggling again and again, and they have to confess themselves more prone to fall than they could have conceived. They know that they have done wrong. They say, 'Well, it is worse for me now than when I knew nothing of Christ. I know there is no love like His; He died for me, and, knowing that He died for me, I still go contrary to His will, and I do really what I do not want to do. I cannot seem to help myself.' And then they think they are lost after all, and are plunged into a gulf of darkness and despair. They felt when they came to the Lord, that their sins, and all the past, were obliterated, but now, after receiving the forgiveness of sins, they have gone wrong. What about that terrible disaster in their Christian pilgrimage? How about these sins? Satan says, 'Your sins are now very different from what they were once, for you now know His love and yet you have sinned against Him.' Satan says, 'There is no hope for you. The salvation is for the sinner who does not know God's will.'

Beloved friends, such a state is true of thousands. They are clear as daylight as to the sins they committed before their conversion, but stumbled because of present failure. But, remember, there is one Person who will deal with all your sins. This is the One who died for your sins. You will have to come to Him and confess your sins to Him. You will have to own, with shame, that, having known His love, you have despised it. And you will find that His love and forgiveness will come to you sweeter than ever. You will find that another word of His will come to you, and say that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Dear friends, the remission of sins is the Divine act which covers everything. 'Oh, but,' you say, 'my sin is after my conversion.' That is true, but when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, God knew, not only what you would commit up to the time of your conversion, but He also knew what you would be after your conversion. It is a sad thing that you should be so weak and wilful, and that after knowing His love, and tasting something of the sweetness of His salvation, such a grievous failure should be true of you "but there is the grave fact, which God knew before He sent out the sweet invitation of His love to you.

Therefore, beloved friends, if you are on the way to God, to that bright place above, and if your face is towards Him who died upon the cross, who is now there, the Lord Jesus Christ will receive you and forgive you in spite of all your failure, if you will but come to Him and believe in Him. The truth is just this. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." It does not mean that we just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ one day in our history. There was a day when we first looked to the Lord Jesus Christ, a day of days in our history; but His gospel that we believe is to put away all doubts, once and for ever. The terms are "Whosoever believeth," that is, yesterday,

today, and throughout life. You have to continue to believe. You have to look in faith, and not to take your eyes away from Him, who is the Source of strength to those who conquer, and of forgiveness to those who fail.

I just leave this passage with you. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Is that word for you personally? Take it home to yourself, and in the light of God’s holy presence, do you know, and are you certain, positive, within your own soul, that God therein speaks to you? It is no use looking at the matter from any other than a personal standpoint in order to get peace for your heart. You can rejoice over the conversion of other people, but first of all it must be realised in your own soul, and then, standing on redemption ground for yourself, you can rejoice with a deeper joy in the blessing, as it goes out to others. May God bless His word. W.J.H.

S. Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

W. J. Hocking.

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1. — "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

(Mark 1:1)

1909 266 It is both interesting and instructive to observe what guards are set in holy Scripture to prevent our misapprehension of its main object. For while all divine communications are didactic and disciplinary (2 Timothy 3:16-17) in a general sense, their supreme characteristic, in the New Testament at any rate, is that they constitute the revelation of the Father and the Son, and on this account such precautions are rendered the more necessary. In that sacred monologue to which we are graciously made privy in the Fourth Gospel, the eternal Son, speaking to the holy Father concerning His followers, said, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). How shall we not then prize such utterances, given by the

Father to Jesus, given by the Son to us, that we might know both the Sender and the Sent One! But then we are in danger of missing the lofty nature of these communications. Do we on all occasions realise the personality of the Author, speaking Himself and of Himself to us as we read the Bible? This, however, is the aim of our spiritual education — that we should, above the din of controversy and the bustle of the marts, hear habitually the voice of Him who saw us "under the fig-tree." We shall find an abundance of smooth stones in the stream, with which our Goliaths may be smitten down. But we cannot slake the thirst of our spirits with pebbles. We need to drink "of the brook in the way," of the water of the well in Bethlehem. Truly, the power of God can make such stones bread; but we are not entitled to expect that Christian vigour will be maintained by perpetual miracle, and in order to live we need "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," as our Lord Himself said. And the construction of the phrase just quoted is highly significant. This vivifying power of the word of God is here intimately associated with its reception direct from "the mouth of God." It was the breath of the Almighty that infused the spirit of life into Adam’s inanimate clay at the beginning. Through grace we have been created afresh in Christ Jesus, and it is the theopneustic scriptures which sustain the new man. And their special value in this respect lies in the fact that in them we receive a personal communication from Him who is the Life.

Men labour zealously, but fruitlessly, to invent a definition of the inspiration of the Scriptures which shall be alike agreeable to the "honest doubter" and to the simple believer. But light and darkness may be as readily reconciled as doubt and faith. And after all, the definition of a fact is of negligible importance in comparison with the fact itself. And while few are qualified to judge of the adequacy or otherwise of a proposed definition of inspiration, it is within the power of the humblest saint to hold to the invincible authority and the incorruptible truth of God inherent in the Scriptures, both being qualities which are inseparable from a communication made by God to man. The foregoing remarks have been necessarily somewhat abstract in character. It is proposed, therefore, to illustrate their general drift by examples from the Bible itself — one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

Abraham was a man who understood what it was to receive personal communications from God. One such instance in his career of faith is recorded in Genesis 15:1-21, and this will suffice to indicate the principle involved. Abram had arrived at a critical epoch in his history. For nearly ten years he had now been wandering as a pilgrim and a stranger in a land definitely promised to his seed, he himself to become the channel of blessing to all the families of the earth. After all those years of patience, these promises still seemed but a mirage of the desert. Abram was a childless man of eighty-five, the apparent heir to his possessions being Dammesek Eliezer.

It is at this juncture that the word of Jehovah comes to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." But this reassurance only awakens a fretful plaint from the man of deferred hopes as though he had failed to judge Him faithful who had promised. And how is this flickering flame of faith rekindled? It is significant to note that again we read, "The word of Jehovah came unto him [but not in a vision this time], saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." This, however, was not an impersonal word, but such a communication as brought Abram into personal intercourse with Jehovah Himself; for it is added immediately, "And HE brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and HE said unto him, So shall thy seed be." This was a confirmation in amplified terms, though not yet with the oath given

on mount Moriah (Genesis 22:16-18; Hebrews 6:13-18), of the initial promise to Abram, whose faith and hope now needed "encouragement." How it would revive and strengthen his faith to hear the voice of Him who had promised, and to be assured that though long years had passed He had not forgotten! Moreover, to accomplish this result the more thoroughly, the Lord Himself conveyed this reassurance to His patient but not perfect servant. Accordingly we gather that the desired end was attained. The faith of Abram, impressed by the authority and faithfulness of Him who was speaking, laid hold of the living God, so that we find it written, "He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." And here we have the cardinal principle, which must ever underlie the life of the just, as the New Testament fully shows, wrought in the heart of this ancient saint by the word as it proceeded out of the mouth of God. In Mary of Bethany we have a New Testament instance of one whose inner life received sustenance and nourishment by personal communications from the lips of the Lord Himself. On a memorable occasion she sat at His feet, and heard His word (Luke 10:39), selecting this attitude of her own free choice, impelled thereto no doubt by some sense within her of the real personality of the lowly Prophet of Nazareth. She received His words at first hand, choosing in this "the good part"; and they were not received in vain. Living, as we thus see her, by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God's Spokesman, she learned what most seemed to have missed, that the way of the Lord to the hill of glory lay through the valley of death. Six days before the Passover Mary came to the house of Simon the leper to anoint His body beforehand for the burial. Neither did she undertake the vain errand of seeking that body at Joseph's tomb on the first of the following week. She knew He was not there, but risen as He had told her and many besides. But was not her superior intelligence due in great part, if not entirely, to the fact that her teaching was viva voce, while she, realising in some degree who the august Person her teacher was, received His instruction in all faith and reverence?

Only in like manner can the maximum value be obtained from the Scriptures today. Those alone who humbly and prayerfully seek Him who is the Author and Subject of the Bible will hear His voice. To seek Him apart from the word is to be cheated by the vain imaginings of our deceitful nature. To read the word apart from Him is to expose ourselves to a similar cheat. He who is the Truth is to be found only in the word which is truth.

These reflections have been awakened by the phrase standing at the commencement of Mark's Gospel — "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Its abruptness has occasioned much divergent opinion as to its exact meaning, though in this particular it accords perfectly with the terse and staccato style of Mark. The simplest and most acceptable view seems to be to regard it as forming the inspired title to the whole book that follows. For what is the object of an inscription to a given volume? Is it not to prepare the reader for what is to be found therein? And this divine title to the Second Gospel is preparatory, informing the reader of its sacred contents, that with reverence and godly fear he may receive the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is easy to forget that it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came forth from Nazareth in Galilee, who ate with publicans and sinners, who was accused by the scribes of blasphemy and of casting out demons by Beelzebub, who was mocked, scourged, and crucified. But can any believer doubt the deeper significance these facts assume to us as we read them in the remembrance of the eternal Godhead of the holy Sufferer, and even more so when in the communion of the Holy Spirit we receive them as it were from His very lips?

Jesus Christ is presented in this Gospel as the Servant of Jehovah, who, according to the ancient prophecies, was to come into the world. How fitting before we read an account of His ways in lowly service that we should be reminded of His Deity, lest we should in heart detract from His glory! He who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, learning obedience by the things He suffered, was Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Php 2:6-9; Hebrews 5:8). But adequate testimony to His Sonship is recorded in other parts of this Gospel. There is a double witness from on high. At the baptism in Jordan a voice out of the heavens declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11), a testimony repeated from the "excellent glory" on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:7). There was also a double witness from beneath. Unclean spirits fell down before Him, saying, "Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:11). So also Legion says, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7).

We may also refer to His own recorded witness before the high priest. When the latter asked Him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" and received the reply, "I am," he understood the nature of the claim thus made. "The high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death" (Mark 14:61-64). The remarkable expression of the Roman centurion at the crucifixion is also given in this Gospel. "When the centurion which stood over against him saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). There has been some discussion as to the exact sense in which the soldier used these words, and whether he is to be regarded as a confessor of Christ like Simon Peter (Matthew 16:16). But it is sufficient to see that he rebutted the charge of the Jews who said to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). After witnessing the portentous signs of His death, the centurion was constrained, impartially if not unwillingly, to declare, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Thus we see that in this Gospel which portrays the Servant of Jehovah in His ways of perfect obedience, His eternal Sonship is jealously guarded, and that this character is given Him from its opening sentence. Incidentally, we also gather that there is cogent internal evidence for the retention here of the phrase, "the Son of God," which some critical editors of the text have rejected on insufficient external grounds.

2. — The Quotations from the Old Testament

1909 283 "Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet,* Behold, I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way.** The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready*** the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mark 1:2-3, R.V.).

{*A.V. in the prophets." **A.V, adds, "before thee," ***A.V. "prepare ye,"} In the abrupt manner characteristic of this Gospel a citation from the ancient prophecies is placed as a preface without any such introductory phrase as is used, for instance, by Matthew: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet," etc.; and again, speaking of John the Baptist, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice," etc. (Matthew 1:22; Matthew 3:3). Luke also, like Matthew, places the historical fulfilment before the prediction itself. He records that John came preaching the baptism of repentance, "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, The voice," etc. (Luke 3:3-4). Mark, in

contra-distinction from these two, first quotes the written prophecy and then relates the historical fact of John’s preaching and baptism. Why is this inversion of the usual order which we find in John’s Gospel (John 19:24; John 19:28; John 19:36), as well as in the two Synoptists? Believing as we do in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, we believe this reversed order is designedly so arranged.

Before, however, seeking to discover the purpose of this arrangement, another noteworthy circumstance must be mentioned which can hardly escape the diligent student of this Gospel. The quotation is singular in this respect, viz., that it is the only reference made by Mark, in the course of his narrative, to the Old Testament as prophecy, or authority. The other Evangelists, especially Matthew and Luke, make more frequent reference. Mark’s first word almost is the recital of an inspired utterance, but it is the only instance. Many examples occur in which this Evangelist gives the words of our Lord Himself containing His quotation of the scriptures (see Mark 4:12; Mark 10:6-8; Mark 10:19; Mark 12:1; Mark 12:10; Mark 12:19; Mark 12:26; Mark 12:29; Mark 12:31; Mark 12:36, et al.), while he also in the course of the narrative makes more or less evident allusion to Old Testament phrases (see Mark 1:44; Mark 2:26; Mark 4:29; Mark 4:32; Mark 6:34; Mark 11:9; Mark 11:19; Mark 15:24; Mark 15:29; Mark 15:36; Mark 16:19); but in the latter instances the fact that the phrases occur elsewhere is not mentioned.*

{*The quotation from Isaiah 53:12, "He was numbered with the transgressors," prefaced by "and the scripture was fulfilled" (Mark 15:28), is omitted in the critical texts, and therefore, does not affect the statement above.}

Here, however, the quotation is made by Mark himself, and is introduced impressively by the statement, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet," showing (1) that it is a written record, not an oral tradition, and (2) that it is an ancient prediction by a prophet of God. Then the terms of the prophecy having been recited, its historical fulfilment in the preaching of John the Baptist is duly stated.

Let us now consider why this Old Testament scripture is brought before us here, and why it is placed before, rather than after, the notice of the event to which it is shown to relate. And the first general consideration is that this passage, so strikingly emphatic by its singularity, establishes before the history begins an unmistakable connection between this "gospel of Jesus Christ" and the burden of ancient prediction concerning the coming One. It is true that here in Mark "there is no blowing of trumpets to usher in the King in due style and title" as in Matthew. Neither have we the fulness of detail concerning the birth and early days of the Son of man amid circumstances of lowly Jewish piety such as are given by Luke. In John, human genealogy would obviously be out of place in the Gospel that treats of. Him as the Word who was God, as it would equally be, for contrasted reasons, in Mark’s Gospel, where He is portrayed as the Servant. As another has said, "Mark is devoted to the details of His service, especially His service in the gospel, accompanied by suited power and signs. . . . Hence as the Lord was the perfect Servant, so the perfect account of it says nothing here of a genealogy; for who would ask the pedigree of a servant?" But if the genealogy of a servant is not an essential preface to an account of his labours, is it not fitting that his credentials should be stated? Here was the One from God, even "as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70). God, "having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless the people in accordance with the testimony of the prophets of

Israel (Acts 3:26, R.V.). Jehovah's guarantee that Jesus was the promised Servant should have ensured His acceptance by the people who were the chosen guardians of the prophetic oracles. And the gravamen of Peter's charges against the Jews for their guilt in delivering up and denying in the presence of Pilate God's Servant Jesus was that they did so in face of the united testimony of the prophets, who had, moreover, testified of this particular guilt of theirs (Acts 3:13; Acts 3:18; Acts 3:21-26). Here, in Mark, a couple of pregnant sentences are sufficient to indicate that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Jehovah's Servant, is the One whose coming had been long foretold, and these should be ample to awaken our adoring contemplation of Jesus Christ come in flesh.

But, in the second place, as we consider the position of this citation in relation to its context, are we not entitled to ask whether it may not be connected with the antecedent verse as well as with the subsequent one? The words of the prophecy quoted have certainly a general reference to One whose advent was imminent as well as to one who was to herald that advent. This coming One is referred to in the first verse, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"; and His forerunner is introduced in vers. 3-8. In this view the Gospel opens not only with the assertion of the deity of the Servant by the Evangelist himself (ver. 1), but with the confirmatory prophetic testimony that He was Jehovah (vers. 2, 3).

Let us now examine this passage more closely, and in our further consideration notice:—

1. The phrase, "as it is written";

2. The phrase, "in Isaiah the prophet" (substituted by the Revisers for "in the prophets");

3. The quotation (ver. 2) from Malachi;

4. The quotation (ver. 3) from Isaiah.

(1) The phrase, "as it is written" (kathos geg. Rev. Text), is that occurring frequently in the N.T. as an introduction to scriptural quotations, and it is found about fourteen times in the Epistle to the Romans alone. The general sense in which it is used seems to be that the written words cited have a direct bearing upon the person or event named in the context. The historical event is thus authoritatively declared to be in accordance with what had been prophesied of old, while it is not thereby necessarily implied that the prophecy has received its complete fulfilment. It may, or it may not, have done so, but this is to be determined apart from grounds afforded by the words "as it is written." On examination of the various occurrences of this phrase, it will be found that this is not the only instance in which it precedes a composite quotation. In Romans 9:33, Isaiah 8:14 is combined with Isaiah 28:16; in Romans 11:8-10 we find Isaiah 29:10, Deuteronomy 29:4, Psalms 69:22-23; and in Romans 3:10-18 several passages are united. Here in Mark, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 are conjoined.

(2) "In Isaiah the prophet" is the accepted reading in place of "in the prophets." It may be mentioned that this is the only case in which the name of a prophet is given after the phrase "as it is written." In Luke 2:23 we have, "As it is written in the law of the Lord," and in Acts 7:42; "As it is written in the book of the prophets"; but in all other places no personal reference is made. The amended reading obviously creates a difficulty, as the passage is cited partly from Malachi and partly from Isaiah. Scriptural difficulties, however, only call for patient waiting upon God for light, which when given reveals the hidden beauty and subtle perfections of Holy Writ. To regard the

words as a blunder on the part of the Evangelist is unthinkable. In the words of another, "Even on human ground it is absurd to suppose that the writer did not know that the first words quoted were from Malachi 3:1, and, if inspiration be allowed, the only question is as to the principle of thus merging a secondary in a primary quotation. Compare the somewhat different use of Jeremiah (from that of Isaiah 40:3) in Matthew 27:9-10. There is purpose in both, which cursory readers have not seen, and so they have been as quick to impute a slip as the later copyists were to eliminate it. But it is as irreverent as unwise and evil to obscure or deny the truth even in such points as these, because the modes of scripture application differ from those of ordinary men, and we may not at a first glance be able to appreciate or clear up the profound wisdom of inspiration." The author goes on to say: "Küster's conjecture that the reading was originally in the prophet seems a mere effort to get rid of what he did not understand, which really, like such attempts generally, leaves the chief point where it was." Dr. William Lee's suggested explanation is also inadequate. He assumes that Malachi's prophecy is no more than a quotation from Isaiah. He says, "Malachi is merely the auctor secundarius; and the Evangelist points out that this is the case by ascribing both commentary and text to Isaiah, whom he thus represents as the auctor primarius, the commentary being placed first, as it serves to elucidate the text."* Whether Malachi only echoes Isaiah's prediction, as here stated, we will now proceed to inquire.

{*The Inspiration, of Holy Scripture, by W. Lee, D.D., 9th ed. p. 399, note.}

(3) The quotation from Malachi. "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way." (The words, "before thee," are here omitted, though they are quoted in Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27.)

Now there are two very striking features prominent in this prophecy — (1) the personality of Jehovah's messenger, who is honoured and dignified by being such; and (2) the personality of the coming One who is declared to be Jehovah Himself. In regard to the first of these points, it will be remembered that the passage from Malachi occurs in Matt. and Luke, not in connection with John's preaching, as is Isaiah's prophecy (Matthew 3:3, Luke 3:4), but with John himself. When the Baptist's testimony was past and he was in prison, and to outward appearance he and his work had failed, the Lord said definitely, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:10-11; Luke 7:27-28). He was the "prophet of the Highest," and indeed much more than a prophet — the immediate forerunner of the Lord, going before His face to prepare His way. But it is well to see that while he abased himself in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah (John 1:23), the Lord exalted him in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi. In the second place we have here Jehovah speaking, and Jehovah sending — "Behold, I send my messenger." And as it is Jehovah sending, so it is Jehovah who is coming. In Malachi the language is precise as to this, "Behold, I send my messenger before my face." The pronoun in Mark is changed from the first person to the second "before thy face" because of the incarnation. He who sends had taken the place of the sent One, but the Sender and the Sent are one. "I and my Father are one." Thus He who is before us in this Gospel as Jehovah's Servant is the One who sends the greatest of all servants beside Himself. Elsewhere we read John was a "man sent from God," while the Servant-Son was God.

It is further to be observed that the prophecy of Malachi is in particular connection with the day of Jehovah. The One predicted is the coming Judge, for the prophet continues, "Behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." This looks forward to a day of judgment yet future; but the same Person who is then to come as supreme Arbiter came to John to be baptised of him in Jordan.

(4) The quotation from Isaiah. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." A scrutiny of this passage in comparison with the previous verse makes it plain that there are such differences as forbid the thought that the later prophecy is a repetition of the earlier. In the first place, while Malachi foretells the messenger who was to usher in the promised One, Isaiah prophesies of the message which should be proclaimed in anticipation of Messiah's advent by a nameless and obscure "voice" crying in the wilderness. In Malachi the messenger prepares the way; in Isaiah the voice calls upon the audience to make ready the way. The later prophet looks on to coming judgment, the earlier to corning salvation — "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). Each prophet has therefore a distinct point of view; and Dr. Lee's theory of one being an echo of the other is not tenable. Neither can Malachi be regarded as amplifying the prophecy of Isaiah, though it is clear from the coupling of the two passages by Mark that there is a connection, but surely not that of commentary and text, as has been alleged. Such an explanation is confessedly a weak one, since it states that the Evangelist names Isaiah because the quotation from Malachi which is prefixed "only serves to elucidate the text." But is not the true connection between the two passages to be traced in the manner and measure of the fulfilment of the prophecies in question? What was the preparation made for the coming Jesus Christ? John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Those who confessed their guilt were those who were most truly ready for the coming of Him who had power on earth to forgive sins. This moral preparedness therefore as the result of the strenuous call to repentance by the voice crying in the wilderness is the burden of Isaiah's prophecy. And this prediction was actually fulfilled before the coming of the Lord. And because it was accomplished, a specific reference is made to Isaiah by this Evangelist, as also in a similar connection by Matthew and Luke. But Malachi's prophecy, on the other hand, only received a partial accomplishment. John was the messenger to prepare Jehovah's way, but not yet as the Judge of Israel. And the very omission of the prophet's name to this prophecy, making it appear to be an interpolation, becomes significant of some special sense in which it is quoted. And this sense is, it is submitted, that of its partial accomplishment in John the Baptist, somewhat in the same way that Malachi's other prophecy (Malachi 4:5) concerning the coming of Elijah the prophet received an anticipatory fulfilment in the same person (Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:11-12) so far as relates to the inward effects of his testimony for God. The application of the two prophecies quoted by Mark to the Baptist is also seen in the words of the angel to Zacharias, "He shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient [to walk] in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared [for him]" (Luke 1:17, R.V.). In the last clause we have the words of both Malachi and Isaiah, as given by Mark. John was to prepare the way; the people were to prepare their hearts; even as those holy men of old foresaw and snake accordingly, being moved by the Holy Spirit. To sum up: the moral preparation which was the result of John's preaching being the subject of the Evangelist's history, the prophetic

reference is accordingly made, by name, to Isaiah who prophesied of this rather than of the future day of judgment which will be heralded by a messenger of Jehovah even as the present day of salvation. And from this point of view, the deliberate and evident exclusion of Malachi's name, although his words are quoted, becomes as strikingly emphatic as the Lord's abrupt closing of the roll of Isaiah's prophecies in the synagogue at Nazareth. Most, if not all, of His hearers must have known that He had suddenly ceased in the middle of a sentence. He would thus impress upon them that He had not come to introduce "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21). Similarly the omission of Malachi's name here is eloquent of the truth that "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," is in accordance with the prophecies of mercy rather than with the prophecies of retribution.

3. — The Baptism of Jesus and the Witness from Heaven

1909 296 "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway coming* up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder,** and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him; and there came a voice out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased***" (Mark 1:9-11, R.V.).

{*"going up," J.N.D.; W.K., **"parting asunder," J.N.D.; "cleaving asunder," W.K. ***"have found my delight," J.N.D.; W.K.}

All three of the Synoptical Gospels record the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, and also the heavenly testimony which accompanied it. The Fourth Gospel refers only to the descent of the Spirit which attested His divine Sonship, this being the main theme of this Evangelist, rather than the Lord's coming in accordance with prophecy, as is so carefully shown in the first three Gospels. The testimony of John the Baptist to the Lord is divided chronologically into two distinct sections by the baptism of Jesus; the first being his announcement that the Messiah was about to come, as Paul said — John "first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts 13:24); and the second being his declaration that the promised One had now come "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me." "I saw and bare record that this was the Son of God" (John 1:29-30; John 1:34). The first part of this testimony is recorded exclusively by Matthew, Mark and Luke; the second part by John only.

It is evident therefore that the event of Christ's baptism coincided with the conclusion of prophetic (that is, predictive) testimony to Him. And it will be remembered that the prophecy of John was singular in respect of the entire absence of any accompanying miraculous voucher. Moses' rod becoming a serpent, the long drought at the word of Elijah, the brackish springs at Jericho purified by Elisha, Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream recalled and interpreted by Daniel, are all instances of signs given to show that the men so acting were servants of the most high God. But John's testimony lacked support of this nature, and was attested by its immediate fulfilment and verification. Thus it was said, "John indeed did no sign, but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true" (John 10:41). Those who heard his prophecy also saw its accomplishment.

John was divinely instructed to look for the specific fulfilment of his own prediction. He said, "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." "I

knew him not; but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33). This descent of the Spirit was therefore the appointed sign to John that the promised One was come, and that He was moreover the Son of God, for none beside could baptise with the Holy Spirit. As soon as John the Baptist had witnessed this sign from heaven he was thereby qualified to commence the second part of his ministry. This he did, pointing so definitely and effectively to the Lamb of God in their midst that his own disciples left him for his Master (John 1:35-37). But John based this testimony upon what he himself saw at the Jordan. Apart from this, speaking officially no doubt, he says, "I knew him not." He does not hereby deny any previous acquaintance with Jesus, but he does deny that his declaration that Jesus was the Jehovah, whose way he was sent to prepare, was grounded upon any deductions he himself had drawn, or upon any estimate of His personality he himself had formed. * It rested upon a heavenly revelation he had personally received, just as Saul’s preaching of Christ as the Son of God (Acts 9:20) was founded upon the heavenly voice and vision that came to him on the road to Damascus. In neither case was the testimony humanly derived; and this the Baptist implied, when he said, "I knew him not."

{*Compare "whom ye know not," and "I knew him not" (John 1:26; John 1:31; John 1:33); that is, Jesus, previously to His baptism in Jordan, was not known as the "Spirit-Baptist."} But while the divine seal was set upon John’s ministry at the baptism of Jesus, it must not be supposed that his preaching was previously without effect upon men. The fiery words of the Baptist penetrated the consciences of many, so that they not only repented, but reasoned in their hearts concerning John himself, whether haply he were not the Christ (Luke 3:15); while all the people held him to be a prophet (Matthew 21:26). Can one number the publicans and sinners who were baptised of John in Jordan, confessing their sins, and were afterwards received by the Lord, so that they said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*"? These were they who "justified" God, being baptised with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him (Luke 7:29-30). Though he came unto them in the way of righteousness, they believed him not, but said, "He hath a demon" (Matthew 21:32). And as the leaders of the people rejected the prophet of righteousness, and refused to own that his baptism was "from heaven" (Matthew 21:25), so they rejected a greater than he Him by whom grace and truth had come (John 1:17).

{*See also John 10:40-42; the Lord went away "beyond Jordan" where John had baptised, and many of the baptised came to Him to hear for themselves, and "believed on him there."}

It is well to see, however, that scripture shows that a great moral work of preparation was wrought by John’s preaching, and in consequence a company gathered around him, who exhibited deeds "worthy of repentance," mainly in their confession of sins and submission to baptism. The ploughing had been done; it was time for the Sower to come forth to sow. A little flock of straying sheep had been collected in the sheepfold. Accordingly the Shepherd of the sheep appeared at the door of the sheep-fold, and to him the porter opened (John 10:1-42).*

{*He did not stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), or appear suddenly in His temple (Malachi 3:1), as He will do in a day yet to come; but He presented Himself outside the favoured land.} This formal act was not undertaken, however, without remonstrance on the part of the

Baptist, when Jesus "came from Nazareth of Galilee" to be baptised of him in Jordan. "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? exclaimed the astonished prophet, seeking in his ignorant impulse to oppose the divine will by his notions of human propriety. But whatever John might think, the way of Jehovah lay through Jordan. Jehovah-Jesus was looking towards those who were poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembled at His word through His messenger (Isaiah 66:2). The way of righteousness was that by which John had come to the people (Matthew 21:32). And the Lord meant by a public and unmistakable act to own that way, and, graciously answering the one who sought to hinder Him, said, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This was indeed a gracious reply, and in it the Lord at once maintained His authority and illustrated His grace. There was the gentle insistence that His will must be done, while at the same time with peculiar grace He yoked John with Himself in that submission which godly service ever involves. "It becometh us"* are His words, for He was now stepping forth into the public eye, as the Servant of Jehovah, and this initial act was proper both to the baptiser and to the Baptised.**

{*It was a strange notion of Bengel's that by the pronoun, the Lord meant the Father and Himself. The baptism was the point in question, and in this Jesus and John were the actors.

**In this connection readers are counselled to peruse carefully pp. 34-47 of J. N. Darby's "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," Vol. 3.}

1909 313 We now come to the testimony rendered to Jesus from heaven in the hour of His baptism. This witness was of a double character, viz. (1) the visible descent of the Spirit upon Him, and (2) the audible voice out of the heavens acknowledging Him. And in this character the witness was to be considered as valid and adequate from a legal standpoint, since, as the Lord reminded the Jews on a subsequent occasion, it was a written axiom of their law that the testimony of two persons is true (John 8:17). Here then the Father and the Spirit attest the Son.* Can such witness be exceeded? The Spirit witnessed to the unblemished and impeccable humanity of Jesus, and anointed Him for service. The Father acknowledged the Man, Christ Jesus, to be His dearly-loved Son. Thus we see in this context the Evangelist establishing on divine testimony the titles given to Jesus in the opening sentence of the Gospel, viz. (1) Christ (the "Anointed"), and (2) the Son of God (1: 1).

{*Compare Isaiah 48:16 : "And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and his Spirit."}

Considering then first of all the outpouring of the Spirit upon Jesus, we may remark how it witnessed (1) to His holy humanity, and (2) to His anointing for service. In lowly grace He submitted to the baptism of repentance, but with no need for repentance. He publicly joined those who had confessed their sins, having no sins Himself to confess. Will unbelieving and carnal hearts think otherwise of Him, misconstruing the act of grace? To check such a hateful imputation, immediately as He emerged from the water the heavens were rent asunder, and the Father, jealous for the glory of the Son, gave the Holy Spirit to abide upon Him. Of all others baptised, though sins were confessed, their consciences were still unpurged from dead works and sinful stains, and must remain so until He came who had power on earth to forgive sins. But Jesus was the Anti-type of the meal-offering of fine flour mingled, and anointed, with oil, apart from the cleansing and atoning blood, and was thus in contrast with the Aaronic priests who received the anointing oil subsequent to an application of the blood. Here was a holy temple in which God the

Holy Spirit could and would dwell. He was the Second man, the Lord from heaven, and on Him alone in this polluted earth the dove-like Spirit found a resting-place, as God the Father's seal (John 6:27), altogether apart from atonement. But the descent of the Spirit had an official as well as a personal significance. The formal induction of kings, priests, and prophets into office was by anointing with oil, and prophecy as well as type indicated that the promised One would be so distinguished. Indeed He was expected in that character. Accordingly, when Andrew heard the testimony of the Baptist that the Holy Spirit had descended upon Jesus, he communicated the good news straightway to Simon, his brother, saying, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ*" (John 1:32; John 1:41). The Samaritans had a similar hope, hence the woman said of Jesus, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? (John 4:29).

{*"Messiah" is from the Hebrew, and "Christ" from the Greek word, both of which signify "the officially anointed one."} The "Anointed" was the burden of the oracle of prophecy. Hannah looked forward to the day when the horn of Jehovah's anointed would be exalted (1 Samuel 2:10). The royal Psalmist foresaw a dark day when the rulers of Israel and Gentile kings would enter into an unholy alliance against Jehovah and His Anointed (Psalms 2:2; Acts 4:25-27). Daniel predicted the date of the corning of Messiah the Prince, and its result (Daniel 9:25-26). According to another Psalm, God would anoint Him "with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9). As the "Rod out of the stem of Jesse," it was predicted that "the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah" (Isaiah 11:1-2). It was also stated specifically that Jehovah's Servant should receive the Spirit. In words fulfilled at the Jordan, Jehovah said, "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18). The dove-like form symbolised the meekness, lowliness, and absence of self-assertion, which were the particular characteristics in which the energy of the Spirit would manifest itself in Jesus. And all this came about. God "anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38). And the Lord made allusion to the unimpeachable credentials furnished by this unction, when He announced at Nazareth the fulfilment of another prophecy concerning Himself — "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek [poor]," etc. (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). The Servant of Jehovah therefore entered upon His ministry in the full consciousness that everything was in due order according to the scriptures. This is indicated here, so far as the anointing is concerned, by a statement peculiar to this Gospel. Jesus Himself is said to have seen the Spirit given: "Coming up out of the water, he [Jesus] saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him." John the Baptist also saw (though we know of none besides), as we find in John 1:32; John 1:34, and Matthew 3:16, no witness being named in Luke 3:22. John bare record of what he saw, and others believed because of his testimony. But let us pass on to consider the testimony of the heavenly voice out of the opened heavens, succeeding and silencing the voice crying in the wilderness. The heavens were not opened to disclose an object there, as in the case of Stephen. On the contrary, heaven had found an object upon earth — the sinless and obedient Jesus. To Him came the voice, not of an angelic choir as to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, but of the Father Himself, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." As Man He was hereby assured of the divine complacency in Himself, and thus He commenced His ministry as the Servant of Jehovah in the full personal

consciousness of His own Sonship. "Though he was Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8), and He continued to abide in the sense of His Sonship throughout (John 10:33). He said to the Pharisees, "I know whence I come, and whither I go," and, again, speaking of His Father He said, "I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me (John 8:14; John 7:29). So that the whole of His multifarious service was ennobled and enriched by His divine nature as Son of God, which gave it a character absolutely unique. The voice from heaven was, in Old Testament times, familiar as a vehicle of direct communication from Jehovah. That voice was known in Eden, and is there associated with the presence of the Lord God Himself (Genesis 3:8). Moses reminded the Israelites of the manner in which Jehovah promulgated His law; "the LORD spoke unto you," he says, "out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of words, but saw no form; only ye heard a voice" (Deuteronomy 4:12, R.V.). The glory and majesty of this voice is the subject of Psalms 29:1-11. It came to Elijah and Isaiah as servants of Jehovah (1 Kings 19:9-18; Isaiah 6:8). Now it is heard saluting the newly-baptised Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God.

It will be observed, that as it is here stated that Jesus saw the descent of the Spirit, so it is also stated, as in Luke, that the voice was addressed to Him. On the mount of transfiguration, the voice which then came forth from the cloud, the "excellent glory" (2 Peter 1:17), spoke of Him to the auditors — "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is so also in the account in Matthew of His baptism (Matthew 3:17). But in Mark and Luke the words recorded are, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." This personal address was in accordance with Messianic prediction in the Second Psalm: "I will declare the decree; Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (ver. 7). Paul, in his discourse at Antioch, applied the passage to the "raising up"* of Jesus (Acts 13:33), as he did again in his Epistle to the Hebrews in two connections (Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5). The divine Sonship is therefore predicated of Him at His birth in time (Luke 1:32; Luke 1:35), throughout His service, and also in resurrection.

{*Not the raising up from the dead, or the resurrection. This is the subject of verse 34. But in verse 33 the sense is that of preparing, providing, commissioning, sending. God raised up deliverers and prophets of old to Israel (Judges 2:16; Judges 2:18; Judges 3:9; Judges 3:15). See also Acts 3:22; Acts 3:26; Acts 7:37.} But in Mark an addendum is made to the declaration, "Thou art my Son." He is also styled "the dearly-loved"; "in thee," says the voice, "I have found my delight." God had found His good pleasure (eudokia) in man, according to the angels' song (Luke 2:14, R.V.). And who shall measure this ineffable joy between the Father and the Son, from which the Spirit was not excluded? No wonder we read, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35; John 5:20). The words of another, by way of brief summary, may well conclude our meditations on this passage. "Though truly God, He was man; though a Son, He became a servant, and was now about to enter on His ministry. He receives the Spirit as well as the recognition of His Sonship. He had justified God's sentence on, and call to, Israel yea, He had in grace joined the souls who had bowed to it in the waters of Jordan; but this could not be without the answer of the Father for His heart's joy in the path He was about to tread. The one was the fulfilment of every kind of righteousness, and not legal only (this in grace, for there was no necessity of evil in His case); the other was His recognition thereon by the Father in the nearest personal relationship, over which His submission to baptism might have cast a cloud to carnal eyes."

{*Exposition of the Gospel of Mark," by W. Kelly, p, 18.} 4. — The Wild Beasts and the Angels

1909 325 "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth* into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13, R.V.).

{*"out," instead of "forth," J.N.D. and W.K.} The real nature of the sin-stricken world into which the Servant of Jehovah had entered to do in public the will of Him that sent Him is thus briefly indicated by the Evangelist. And emphasis is given to his concise statement by the dark contrast in which it stands with the verses that precede. There we read of the effulgent glory emanating from the rent heavens upon the lowly Jesus come forth from Nazareth of Galilee, of the dove-like Spirit of God anointing and sealing the Servant of Jehovah, and of the Father's voice declaring His complacency in the Baptized One, His beloved Son. Here we read of Him hurried by the Spirit into the wilderness, tempted there of Satan forty days, and with the wild beasts. From the scene of heavenly light Jesus passed immediately to encounter the power of darkness, for this He had come to do. As yet the heavens could open thus upon but One Man here below, though this transient gleam afforded an earnest of the coming day of glory for the whole earth, when the service of Jesus, which was then beginning, should be fully accomplished.

It is thus impressed upon us by the brief reference in the verses before us that Jesus was anointed to serve, not as angels do in the purity of heaven, but in a world of sin, where all creation is groaning together and travailing in pain because of present evil (Romans 8:22). The wilderness was there; the wild beasts were there; Satan was there. The whole world was in subjection to that wicked one, that arch-rebel against God and arch-enemy of man (1 John 5:19). But the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

It is to be noted that in each of the three Synoptical Gospels the temptation in the wilderness is recorded immediately after the baptism and the anointing. For forty days Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of men, was alone in the wilds with Satan, who is Apollyon,* the destroyer of men. He who had entered the strong man's house to spoil his goods must first bind the strong man (Matthew 12:29). Accordingly Jesus, marked out of old as the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, met the ancient adversary of man alone in the solitudes of the wilderness. Soon He would effectually annul the power of Satan, but now He withstands his subtleties, and is victorious.

{*If the angel of the abyss (Revelation 9:2) is not Satan himself but his representative, Apollyon is not an unapt title for him who comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy (John 10:10).} In the preceding, and the succeeding, Gospels the three final efforts of the enemy at the close of the forty days' temptations are narrated in detail, Matthew placing the three in strict chronological sequence, while Luke reverses the second and third for moral reasons, consonant with the purpose of that Gospel. Mark, however, states simply, "He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan." He records the fact of the temptation, but states nothing regarding its nature, nor the manner in which the obedient and dependent Man overcame the wiles of the wicked one. It was sufficient here to let it be known that at the outset the Servant of Jehovah, apart from human view or aid or interference, joined issue with the enemy of God and man. The struggle was upon the question of His own personal allegiance to the One who had sent Him. But this character of the temptation is not mentioned here, nor even His victory and Satan's departure at the close. Two

figures loom upon the sombre canvas — the elect Servant and Satan, with the wilderness and wild beasts in the background, while ministering angels shed light upon a scene otherwise of darkness.

Any further remarks that may occur on this passage may, for convenience' sake, be grouped under one of the following heads: —

(1) The energy of the Spirit.

(2) The temptation by Satan.

(3) The company of the wild beasts.

(4) The ministry of the angels.

(1) "Immediately the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness." The phrase is one expressive of intense energy and instant action. The Father had bestowed the Holy Spirit upon Him "without measure," and Jesus, in the plenitude of that Spirit,* took the pathway which led into the wilderness. In that He was driven forth, it is proved how perfectly and fully He was possessed of the Spirit; in that this was done immediately, it is proved how swift was the Lord's response to Him by whom He had been anointed for service. There are two marks of perfection in service — complete, unrestricted obedience, and also ready, unhesitating obedience. They both characterise the Lord at the beginning of His service; they are not less conspicuous at its close.

{*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4:1, R.V.).} But such a quality as obedience is not appreciated in a world where all naturally are the sons of disobedience. Submission in the eyes of men is only weakness, a lack of fibre and force. Yet with what moral magnificence was the obedience of Christ invested as He, the dearly loved Son of the Father, is pleased to yield Himself up in the fullest degree to be led of the Spirit into the wilderness, as later to Calvary. It is a fruitful and practical subject for our meditation, since we are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ, and exhorted to be filled with the Spirit. And what is inculcated by precept and doctrine in the Epistles is enforced by illustration and example in the divine biography of the Gospels, where the moral glory and beauty of the subjection of Christ shine forth at every step. The life itself was for the glory of God; the record of that life is for the comfort and joy and emulation of His people. But this driving forth of Jesus recalls, by way of sad contrast, the history of Eden and the expulsion of our first parents. Of them we read, after the fall, "Jehovah God sent him [Adam] forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:23-24). This ejection was the penalty of Adam's disobedience; the passage from Jordan to the wilderness was the obedient act of Him who was the incomparable Servant of God, because He was His Son.

(2) The way of service for John the Baptist brought him into the wilderness to cry to guilty Israel to repent, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The way of Jesus, the Servant of Jehovah, led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan forty days. Misguided men have sought the wilderness to evade the power of evil. Jesus sought it with the express intention of meeting the evil one. He alone was perfect within, and while He Himself was led up to meet the tempter, He taught His disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one]"

(Matthew 6:13). And when a self-confident apostle of His was about to venture into the midst of the temptations of the foe He made supplication for him. "Simon, Simon," He said, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32).

Man always underrates the power and subtlety of Satan, but the Lord, who fully knew, and also measured by experience the strength of the "strong man," went forth to meet him and to endure from him every form of temptation* (Luke 4:13, R.V.). Though "in the likeness of sinful flesh" He was "without sin," and "knew no sin." The temptations, therefore, came to the Lord exclusively from without, as was also the case with unfallen Adam, though true of none on earth besides.

{*Compare Hebrews 4:15, "For we have not a high priest unable to sympathise with our infirmities, but having been tempted in all things in like manner apart from sin" (W. Kelly's translation).}

It was made known at the beginning that the manifestation of the Son of God would be for the destruction of the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Jehovah said to the serpent in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). In the Gospels we are shown historically that this was so. We find that when Jesus was born, Satan, using Herod as his tool, attempted to destroy Him (Matthew 2:16; Revelation 12:4-5). Satan also sought, through Simon Peter, to stumble the Lord in the way to the cross (Matthew 16:23). For His betrayal Satan himself, not a demon or unclean spirit, took possession of Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). "This is your hour," said the Lord to the chief priests, "and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). And though Satan seemed for a moment to triumph in the death of the Lord, thereby bruising His heel, by that same act his own head was bruised, according to the saying of old. For the power of Satan was annulled not by incarnation, but by death, as the Scripture declares. He became flesh "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

It is clear, from these scriptural references, that the Servant-Prophet whom Mark delineates would have in His service to meet the devil, the adversary of man, and especially the foe of Him who had come to be the deliverer of man, and to heal those who "were oppressed of the devil." Accordingly the Evangelist records that immediately upon His baptism Jesus encountered the prince of this world, being subjected to his temptations for forty days in the wilderness. It was not consonant with the special object of his Gospel to specify in detail the three final assaults of the evil one. It sufficed to state the fact of the encounter, while the personality of the tempter is emphasised here by the use of the name, Satan, rather than the more general term, "the devil" (diabolos), as in Matthew and Luke.

(3) "He was with the wild beasts." While Mark omits many details of the Lord's temptation which are found in Matthew and Luke, this circumstance is peculiar to the account by the Second Evangelist. Its mention here is the more noteworthy because of the succinctness of the whole paragraph. The theorists on the subject of the origin of the Gospels find it difficult to invent a plausible theory to fit this awkward phrase on the assumption that the Gospel of Mark is an abridgment or précis of those of Matthew and Luke. Besides this phrase, there are miracles, a parable, and some incidents also, peculiar to this Gospel, and to account for the presence of these it is imagined by others that all the Evangelists compiled their accounts from an "original" or "primitive" Gospel, or that Mark's Gospel was the earliest; for when it is a question of the

imagination, "historic" or otherwise, you cannot expect general agreement among the various theories advanced. To illustrate how these various hypotheses leave one still groping in the dark, I quote from a writer of much acumen, whose remarks are based on extensive research into the subject in hand. He says "I believe, therefore, that the compiler of the Second Gospel could not but have been acquainted with the tradition [of the temptation] recorded by Matthew and Luke, of which I look on Mark 1:13 as an abridgment. Yet the mention of wild beasts leads me to thinks that in the case of the opening, as well as of the concluding verses the abridgment was made by one who wrote so early as to be in independent possession of traditions."*

{*"Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament," by G. Salmon, D.D., F.R.S., 8th ed. 1897, p. 143.}

Without here discussing this theory of abridgment, it may be pointed out that Dr. Salmon admits that the presence of this phrase requires a special explanation. He suggests feebly that Mark acquired it from some independent source. How does such a supposition help us? To regard the phrase as one supplied by Mark, either from memory or from some special source of information, and that it was added here just because it is not mentioned in the other Gospels, is virtually to rob the Holy Record of all aim and purpose, and to suggest that the Evangelist was most inefficient even as a compiler! Besides, if he added the circumstance of the wild beasts, because it is not recorded elsewhere, why does he mention along with it the ministry of the angels, which occurs also in Matthew 4:11? The truth is that in this account, as we have it, the Evangelist wrote as "moved by the Holy Spirit," and it is to be feared that this fact is overlooked in discussions as to "Petrine tradition" and "double" or "triple tradition." The question of the origin of a given phrase in the narrative is altogether a subordinate and unimportant detail, when the Holy Spirit has been pleased to weave it into the fabric of the Gospel. It is possible that we may be slow to perceive its exact bearing in the scheme of the Evangelist. It is, in any case, becoming on our part to seek to learn this by patient inquiry, and by diligent waiting upon the Spirit for His illumination.

Jesus "with the wild beasts" is a graphic touch of the inspired penman to indicate the fallen world which was the sphere of service for Jehovah’s Servant. Adam was created to rule for God over the terrestrial works of His hand. All beasts of the field were subject to him, not in fear and dread as afterwards was the case (Genesis 9:2). They were brought to him in the garden of Eden, and by him named (Genesis 2:19-20). In the wilderness of Juda, however, they were wild, needing to be tamed by the power of man, and formed in themselves so many witnesses of the desolateness of a sinful earth, utterly devoid as the whole scene was of any of those alleviating circumstances known as human comforts.

Man, by his departure from the knowledge of God, has brought himself morally to the level of the beasts that perish (Psalms 73:22; 2 Peter 2:12); and, in prophetic imagery, a wild beast is employed as the symbol of worldly power and kingdom. This is so notably in references to Gentile rule, for when dominion was taken from Israel and placed into the hands of the kings of the earth, none of them ruled in the fear of God. Nebuchadnezzar, as an example and warning to others, who, like him should, in the vanity of their hearts, forget God, was driven from men to dwell with the beasts of the field, until his understanding returned and he blessed the Most High (Daniel 4:1-37). In Daniel’s vision of the four great world-empires he saw them as wild beasts (Daniel 7:1-28), and John beheld the revived Roman Empire of a future day under the figure of a beast

(Revelation 13:1-18); for, like wild creatures, none of these kingdoms carry out the will of God except under His direct coercion. The wild beast is one that has shaken off the yoke and bondage of man. It is not, therefore, a stretch of imagination to see in the picture of Jesus among the wild beasts a shadow of the perfectly obedient Servant of Jehovah come into a world of fallen men, who owned no authority higher than the strongest or the most cunning among themselves.

(4) "The angels ministered unto Him." Here we have a lovely contrast with the dark desolations of earth, amid which the Son of man is displayed to us in the wilderness. The ministering spirits of heaven attend upon Jesus in the scene of His temptation. Though surrounded by the darkness of this world, the light of the glory above is seen still to shine upon Him. Jesus had come as the Servant of Jehovah to serve the lowliest and the wickedest of men, but the highest celestial being would find it a joy to seek Him out in His solitude to do Him homage, and to serve the One who was learning what need was, though He possessed all things. In His subsequent pathway, others gathered round Him to wait on Him, though He Himself was among His own as One who served. The twelve were His chosen bodyguard, but He did not treat them as servants knowing not what their Lord did. Martha of Bethany served Him in the house of Simon the leper. Galilean women ministered to Him of their substance. He Himself asked a woman of Samaria to supply Him with a drink of water. But was it not fitting that the first to serve the Servant of Jehovah in His public service should be those august servitors whose functions lie in heavenly courts? Indeed, it was but in accord with an ancient prophecy that when the First-begotten was brought into the world all the angels of God should worship, as well as serve, Him (Deuteronomy 32:43, LXX.; Psalms 97:7; Hebrews 1:6). On this occasion the heavenly service was rendered in private, unseen of man. But in the coming day of glory, when the Anointed appears in His majesty, every eye shall see Him and His angelic retinue too (Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). This future attendance will be public, and unmistakeable even by unbelief. But while the service in the wilderness seems to have been personal and unwitnessed, angelic homage to Himself was announced by the Lord in the earliest days of His ministry as a form of testimony which His own should receive in the days of His flesh, the ampler witness awaiting the millennial day. To Nathanael He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, [Henceforth] ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51).

{Mark 1:12. — To translate here ekballo by "driveth," appears to go beyond the due requirement of the context which in all cases is the true arbiter of its force. Suitably rendered for the most part by "cast out," there are instances nevertheless, in our A. and R.V. where our translators have justifiably presented a more congenial rendering. Take the following: — Matthew 9:38 "send forth," Mark 1:43 "sent away" (or, "out," R.V.), John 10:4 "putteth forth" (or, "hath put," R.V.), Revelation 11:2 "leave out" (or, "without," R.V.). In this very chapter (ver. 43) did our Lord ("moved with compassion," 41) immediately after "drive" away (!) the cleansed leper? Why then "driveth" in verse 12?} 5. Jehovah’s Servant Preaching

1909 357 "Now after that John was delivered up,* Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel** of*** God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand**** repent ye, and believe in***** the gospel**" (Mark 1:14-15, R.V.).

{*"put in prison," A.V.

**"glad tidings," J.N.D. and W.K.

***"the kingdom of" is also omitted by W.K., who says "it is an addition borrowed from Matthew, whose Gospel it suits perfectly."

****"has drawn nigh," J.N.D. and W.K.

*****"in"; so also J.N.D. and W.K.} At the appointed moment, the anointed Servant of Jehovah commenced His public service by announcing the good news that God's promised kingdom was imminent. And who shall ever know with what ineffable joy the obedient Son whose ears had been "digged" for service (Psalms 40:6, margin) performed in this as in all else the will of Him who sent Him? We are, however, permitted to know some of the intimacies of the Father and the incarnate Son, wherein this mutual-satisfaction is expressed. We are, for instance, made privy to the Father's declaration from heaven, "Thou art my dearly-beloved Son, in whom is my delight." This personal complacency was fully reciprocated by Jehovah's Servant, who, entering into the world, says, "Lo, I am come; in the roll it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have published [preached] righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalms 40:7-10). And this delight thus expressed in regard of the service of preaching in the great assemblies of Israel was maintained even when His obedience led Him to lay down His life (John 10:17; Hebrews 10:5-7), thereby fulfilling to the uttermost, as He had previously made known, God's will.* We have a notable example of His joy in the path of service on that memorable occasion when the obdurate unbelief of Capernaum, the centre of His Galilean ministry, was brought before Him. We read, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced [exulted] in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21). Such a spirit in the moment of apparent failure was the perfection of service, and how contrasted it was with that of the preacher to the Ninevites, seeking first to escape from the path of duty, and then angry that the repentant citizens believing his message were spared. Jesus, who rejoiced in presence of the unbelief of Capernaum, rejoiced also over one sinner who repented.** For He was the good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:5-6). Blessed Saviour, in any service of ours, feeble and unworthy as it must ever be, may a like joy possess us and bring us in our measure with like equanimity through victory or what seems defeat!

{*It is noteworthy that in the quotations from Psalms 40:1-17 in the Hebrews, the expression of "delight" (or "desire" as the LXX. reads, from which version the quotation is literally made) is deliberately omitted by the Spirit of God, probably because the sacrificial aspect of the death of Christ is there presented by the apostle, and with this aspect the "strong crying and tears" of Gethsemane are more in accord than the expressed joy of obedience, though both were then equally before His God and Father.

**This was a heavenly joy (Luke 15:7; Luke 15:10), not earthly; from the latter, as the true Nazarite and the Man of sorrows, He was then separate, though in His Father's kingdom, yet to come, He will drink that cup also (Math 26: 29).} It is proposed to group some fragmentary thoughts relating

to this passage under one of the following heads:

(1) The signal for the preaching to begin;

(2) the scene of the preaching;

(3) the subject of the preaching;

(4) the declarations of the Preacher.

(1) The signal for the commencement of Christ's preaching. There is "a time to keep silence and a time to speak" — a precept never exemplified so perfectly as by the Lord of all. The time for Jesus to come forth into the way of public service was indicated by the imprisonment of John the Forerunner and Baptist. "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum" (Matthew 4:12-13, R.V.). There had previously been blessed ministry by the Lord to individuals in Judea and Samaria, as the early chapters of the Gospel of John show (John 3:24). But this ministry was the manifestation of His personal grace and glory which is above all the limitations of the times and dispensations which mark the ordered government of the world, and 3uch manifestations form the special subject of the Fourth Gospel. Mark, however, like the other Synoptists, sets before us the beginning of His Dfficial service in introducing the promised kingdom, and this initial act synchronized with the removal of John, who was a witness to Jesus as the Christ, from the sphere of public testimony.

John had preached of Jesus as the One who was about to come, and after baptizing Him in Jordan, had testified to Him as being then present in Israel. This work of the prophet of the Most High, the messenger of Jehovah, the herald of the Messiah, was now accomplished. And what distinguished service was his! His was the unique distinction of being the first to own the coming Saviour and King (Luke 1:41), and this by divine prompting of altogether a special nature, while his was the first voice to call the sinful sons of men to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Lord said of him, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). So powerfully did his work and testimony, though unaccompanied by miraculous sign, work in the hearts of men, that many seemed to be prepared to accept John himself as the Messiah (Luke 3:15), in spite of his utter repudiation of any such claim, and his clear testimony to Jesus: "He must increase, and I must decrease."

While men were thus ready to be misled as to the personality of the Christ, we may be sure that Satan, failing to destroy the royal Seed in the massacre of Bethlehem's babes (Revelation 12:1-5), and foiled in his temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, would welcome such an opportunity to set up a rival to Jesus, Israel's promised King and Saviour. He who would use Simon Peter, the honoured witness to Jesus as the Son of the living God as a stumbling-block in His way to the cross (Matthew 16:23), would seek to use the Baptist as a counter attraction when Jesus should offer Himself to the people as the sent One of God. If Satan had such a malevolent intention, it was frustrated by the shutting up of John in prison. The prophets of old had their contemporaries. The voice of Jehovah came to Israel through Micah the Morasthite as well as through the more brilliant son of Amoz of his day; while subsequently God spake simultaneously through Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. But He who had spoken in days past in many measures and in many manners to the fathers by His prophets was about to speak to them by a Son, the only-begotten. No

prophet, not even an angel, can for a moment be compared with God's spokesman in His unapproachable dignity as the Son. And John, the last of the prophets, though himself more than a prophet, was withdrawn by God from the scene of public testimony, that the Son might stand alone, an Object supremely worthy and sufficient to engross the hearts of all mankind. How could God have a servant contemporary with His Son? As He has no peer, so this Servant needs no coadjutor. Even Moses and Elias must vanish directly Simon Peter seeks to class them with Jesus; so that he and his astonished companions may see "no one save Jesus only," teaching them and all men that the Son is incomparable.

John then, having borne faithful witness to the truth, was removed to make way for Him who is the Faithful and True Witness. When the Light of the world shines forth, no place is found for the burning and shining lamp (John 5:35, R.V.), welcome as it was in the dawning. He was not, however, like his prototype Elijah, carried up to heaven by a whirlwind. He was carried to a prison and to death under the power of a dissolute Idumean king. He had preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But it was not for him to know in his own experience the beneficent sway of the sceptre of righteousness. For him the earthly throne was one of iniquity, and its sword was the sword of cruelty and revenge. Truly his eyes saw the King of Israel in the beauty of His grace, but notwithstanding, his headless corpse was soon to lie martyred in the kingdom of "this world." This was a fitting prelude to the coming tragedy when "the kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed" (Acts 4:25-27).

(2) The scene of the preaching. The Lord began His service of preaching in Galilee, not in Judaea. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Messiah had its favours according to the prophet — "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall One come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2, R.V.). But there is no record of any visit by the Lord to Bethlehem during His ministry. Galilee, the despised region in the north of the land, was privileged to have more than any other place His gracious and marvellous service by word and sign. This, too, was in accordance with the prophecy of olden time, as the Evangelist Matthew shows: "He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up" (Matthew 4:13-17, R.V.). This prophetic promise (Isaiah 9:1-2) was one of comfort for the faithful remnant in a day when Gentile powers should oppress the land and Messiah should be a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel." It was promised that in such circumstances a bright and glorious light should shine forth in the most obscure and despised part of the land. And so it came about, for into Galilee Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God; and this was a reason with the Pharisees of Jerusalem for despising Him. Ignoring Jonah, who was of the land of Zebulun, they said, "Search and see; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52).

Galilee "seems to have been originally confined to a little circuit of country round Kedesh-Naphtali, in which were situated the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre, as payment for his work in conveying timber from Lebanon to Jerusalem (Joshua 20:7; 1 Kings 9:11). They were then, or subsequently, occupied by strangers, and for this reason Isaiah gives to the district the

name Galilee of the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1). It is probable that the strangers increased in number, and became during the captivity the great body of the inhabitants; extending themselves over the surrounding country, they gave to their new territories the old name, until at length Galilee became one of the largest provinces of Palestine."

"It was outside the regular allotment of Israel, in that part of it which is yet to belong to Israel, which certain of the tribes had taken possession of, though, strictly speaking, it was beyond the proper limits of the promised land. The Lord goes through Galilee of the Gentiles; and in all that He fulfilled the prophecy [of Isaiah]. The Jews ought surely to have known it."

"It is shown afterwards in this prophecy that (while the Gentile affliction upon the nation would be heavier than ever, and the Roman oppression far exceed the Chaldean of old), the Messiah would be there, despised and rejected of men, nay, of the Jews, and that at this very time, when thus set at nought by the people that ought to have known His glory, great light would spring up in the most despised place, in Galilee of the nations, among the poorest of the Jews, where Gentiles I were mixed up with them people who could not even speak their own tongue properly.* There should this bright and heavenly light spring up; there the Messiah would be owned and received."

{*They said to Peter, "Surely, thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto" (Mark 14:70; Matthew 26:73).}

It was therefore appointed of God that in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, who had shut up John the Baptist in prison, the Lord Himself should begin to teach and to preach. And this He accordingly did.

1909 371 (3) The subject of the Lord’s preaching is here stated to be "the gospel of God." "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God," for it was the day of the fulfilment of ancient promise and prophecy now announced by Him in whom they were all fulfilled. This, therefore, was the beginning of the gospel, the true "Proto-evangelium," the source of that river of grace which, deepening and widening in its onward course, should eventually carry its blessing to the uttermost part of the earth (Mark 16:15).

Isaiah’s prophecy refers to this day of good tidings in more places than one. After foretelling the preparatory testimonies John the Baptist should render, he continues, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come as a mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that give suck" (Isaiah 40:9-11, R.V.). This prophecy, it is true, includes the coming of the King of Israel in power for deliverance and blessing and the establishment of the kingdom in glory. But, nevertheless, Jehovah Jesus was there, bringing to Zion in His own person the good tidings of His presence, which He began to announce in Galilee of the Gentiles. Would Zion receive these good tidings and believe Messiah’s report? Alas! the ears of the people were stopped and their hearts hardened, and they would not hear and believe. Not until a yet later day will they say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then will the people with ecstatic joy break out in the language of the same prophet, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth

good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchmen! they lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, when the LORD returneth to Zion" (Isaiah 52:7-8, R.V.). But whether Israel would hear or whether they would not hear, it was equally the part of the Servant of Jehovah to go forward in the work committed to Him. Jehovah had anointed Him to preach good tidings to the poor (Isaiah 61:1). He accordingly commences this ministry in the most despised town of the most despised region in the land of Israel (Luke 4:18). The phrase used here, "the gospel of God," is striking in its comprehensiveness; for "the kingdom of" is an unwarranted addition, foisted into the text from Matthew 4:23 at some period subsequent to the.apostolic day by misguided harmonists, zealous to introduce uniformity where the divine Author had ordered variety. "The gospel of God" implies the heavenly origin of the gospel. It was God's gospel, emanating from Him, and, in consequence, possessing a paramount authority. This Servant of Jehovah, Son of God as He was, brought no independent message of His own devising. The gospel He preached was the gospel of God. And we cannot fail to observe the beautiful propriety of this phrase, peculiar as it is to this Gospel, which, before we are permitted to hear a word of the preaching of Jesus, the Servant-Prophet, points us upward to heaven and to God as its source. And what is here stated by the inspired Evangelist was stated more explicitly and emphatically by the Lord Himself. "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or [whether] I speak from myself." "I spake not from myself, but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 7:16-17; John 12:49; John 14:24, R.V.).

It is noticeable that while the phrase — the gospel of God — only occurs once in the Gospels, it is of more frequent occurrence in the Epistles. The great apostle to the nations, in his Epistle to the Romans, speaks of himself as separated unto the gospel of God, and also of ministering it to the Gentiles (Romans 1:1; Romans 15:16). Twice he speaks of preaching the gospel of God to those at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9); while the apostle of the uncircumcision uses it in a solemn warning which he utters to unbelievers — "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" (1 Peter 4:17)?

Thus Paul and Peter united in the service of spreading the heavenly evangel; but it is a fruitful theme for meditation that God's gospel was first proclaimed by Him who was both its Essence and Fulness. Well might the apostle exclaim, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3)?

(4) We now come to the declarations of the Lord as they are summarised in this Gospel. They contained a twofold announcement, and a twofold exhortation. The Servant-Prophet announced (a) that the time was fulfilled, and (b) that the kingdom of God was at hand; while He called upon men (a) to repent, and (b) to believe the gospel. By the fulfilment of the time (kairos) it may be supposed that the Lord made reference to the fact of His own public appearance in Galilee as the Servant-Prophet at a moment which was predetermined by Jehovah who sent Him. We find a similar expression used by the Lord elsewhere, implying how perfectly His life was regulated from above, and in no sense the outcome of unforeseen circumstances. When the brethren of the Lord

urged Him to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, His reply was, "My time (kairos) is not yet come, but your time is alway ready. . . . Go ye up unto the feast; I go not up yet unto this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled (John 7:6; John 7:8). At the last paschal feast, the Lord sent this message to the man in Jerusalem, "The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples" (Matthew 26:18). Speaking also of the second coming of the Son of man, He says to His disciples, "Ye know not when the time (kairos) is" (Mark 13:33), warning them also of those who would raise a false alarm of the approach of that day, saying, "The time (kairos) is at hand" (Luke 21:8). To everything, therefore, in the life of the incarnate Son there was an appointed time. Of this He, as the obedient Man, was conscious; and it was an exemplification of the perfection of His service for God, not only to know this for the joy of His own heart, but to declare it publicly, as in this instance, in the hearing of those who were naturally the sons of disobedience. The theme of His announcement was that the kingdom of God was nigh. This constituted His glad tidings. Clearly this gospel was not that of the Acts and of the Epistles; only that Jehovah the Saviour was there, even then, in His fulness for empty and needy sinners. But until His death and resurrection, neither the utter depravity of man was proved, nor was the incomparable love of God towards guilty sinners manifested. Here, however, it is declared that "the kingdom of God was nigh." This was a word of hope and gladness, uttered to this saddened and sin-stricken world. And what a disordered spectacle the world then afforded to those that "feared Jehovah and thought upon His name"! The chosen people were divided and scattered, and the returned remnant of the Jews under the heel of the Roman oppressor. The Gentiles were "without God, and without hope in the world"; while the whole creation was groaning and travailing together in pain. At such a juncture the inspiriting cry is raised "The kingdom of God is at hand." This kingdom is not to consist of a fallen man ruling fallen men. When the blind lead the blind the ditch must be their destination. Such, in fact, is the history of man’s kingdoms, as the Old Testament fully shows. Now God’s kingdom is to appear, originating with God, governed by God, maintained by God. The sphere of influence of this kingdom is not confined to Israel, but to extend to all nations, to the uttermost parts of the earth; and not over man only, the head of creation, but all suffering creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Such beneficent and assured effects the word of God recites elsewhere, though these effects are not realised even yet.

Here the King appears. How near, therefore, must God’s kingdom be, when God’s King was among them! Only a short while and Jesus would present Himself to the daughter of Zion as her King. He would go up to Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zechariah’s prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." Alas! that the King should hear Himself denied by the sages of Jerusalem, who sat in Moses’ seat "We have no king but Caesar! "Away with this Man! Crucify him!" He was indeed crucified, and this of necessity changed the aspect of the kingdom for the time. But while this is so, "the kingdom of God" is yet to be established upon the earth, and all rule and all authority and power shall be eventually abolished according to His infallible word (see 1 Corinthians 15:24). But were the hearers prepared for the gospel? For the due enjoyment of the blessing of God’s kingdom, whether in its moral or material form, an inward change is essential. Hence the Lord calls upon men to repent. He was not here to subjugate men by the exercise of irresistible force. He came to "call sinners to repentance." In this the Lord reiterated the exhortation of His forerunner; for John the Baptist called upon men to repent. And those who received his testimony were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins. It was no less necessary that men should repent and accept the

gracious witness concerning the coming kingdom, trusting simply to the word of Him who brought the good tidings.

6. The Call of the Four Fishermen

1910 5 "And passing*1 along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting*2 a net in the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto*3 them, Come ye*4 after me, and I will Make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets*5, and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also*6 were in the boat mending the nets.*5 And straightway he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went*7 after him" (Mark 1:16-20, R.V.).

{1"walking," J.N.D.; 2"casting out," J.N.D., "casting round," W.K.; 3"to," J.N.D., W.K.; 4"ye," omitted by J.N.D., and W.K.; 5"trawl-nets," W.K.; 6"themselves too" (for "also"), W.K.; 7"went away," J.N.D., W.K.} The Evangelist has in the immediately preceding verses shown the Servant of Jehovah commencing His ministry of the coming kingdom of God. He thereupon shows that this Servant, in the execution of His momentous. mission, was pleased to associate with Himself some of the godly and believing ones of Galilee. Not that there was need on His part for such, or for any associates. Feeble and fallible man does, as a prudential, and even necessitous, measure, seek to counterbalance his own inherent defects by the strength of "big battalions," or by the wisdom of a multitude of counsellors. But this Servant was without limitations (save those that were self-imposed), and competent to carry out all that was given Him to do; and yet we are invited by the Evangelist to remark that directly He stepped forth into the path of public service, He called some fishermen to follow Him in that pathway. It is a circumstance which surely we cannot consider without advantage, since every detail in that divine biography is the exemplification here upon earth of a heavenly principle, for our wonder and instruction, as well as for our humble imitation. The details of this historical incident, fraught with such far-reaching consequences to the disciples personally and to multitudes of millions through them, are of the scantiest, though, having regard to its important nature, we might have expected an exuberance. By the call of Jesus these men were elevated out of that nameless obscurity in which Galilean peasantry were wont to live and die. This call involved, not indeed that their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, though this be true (but not truer of them than of every redeemed one), but that their names are recorded in the inspired and imperishable archives of the church on earth, of which church they, with other apostles and prophets, formed the foundation, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Possessing, as we do, the light of subsequent history upon this event, we can consider the high destiny of these humble men. Founders of world-empires there have been; great as the world counts greatness. But where are Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and their founders? The names of Simon and Andrew, of James and John, however, are hewn in the rock-foundations of that church against which the very gates of hales shall not prevail. Nay, when earth-kingdoms shall all have perished, and Messiah reigns gloriously, then shall these righteous ones shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. When the holy city Jerusalem descends from heaven to be the seat of government of the kingdom of heaven, manifested in all the glories of fulfilled prophecies, earth shall read the Galilean names again. In the dazzling vision of the prophet

of Patmos, where all is glory and perfection and brilliance, amid the blazonry of heaven itself, brought down for terrestrial view, we can see twelve names only (Revelation 21:14), and they include these four, once scored, as proof of ownership, on a couple of fishing cobles on the Galilean lake. This is a marvellous record, and where shall we match it? But if we consider for a moment longer we shall see what an excellent example this affords of that heavenly perspective in which events are set in Holy Writ. Man writes in earthly perspective, that is, human events and persons to him loom large in the foreground, but as he turns from the temporal to the spiritual and to the eternal, these dwindle in importance until they reach a vanishing point. Man magnifies present things in all their uncertainty with a light borrowed from the historical experiences of the doubtful past; consequently the eternity of the future is minimised, and if not altogether ignored by him is lightly regarded and reduced to a point of undefined position and without importance. In Scripture we have a corrective of this false vision. Man is invited to look through heavenly lenses and to behold what a change divine perspective makes, and how entirely the relative importance of things is thereby reversed. As we look we see that the angle of vision is increased with distance. Present things become petty, future things are magnificent. God starts with a feeble and sinful worm, and leads us on to behold His infinite and inscrutable grace covering his sin, and advancing the sinner to heirship with God and joint-heirship with Christ. We may also see a momentary suffering expanding into an eternal weight of glory. When we, through pressure of circumstances, are about to exclaim like a peevish saint of old, "All these things are against me," another examination of the case through this heavenly medium reveals to us that all these things "work together for good."

It would be easy to pursue this line of thought further to practical profit, but it is necessary to return to the simple narration of the call of the fishermen. Having in view the heights of peculiar eminence and distinction to which these men were to be raised in the future, a human historian would have invested their call with such legendary tales and mythical marvels as the Eastern mind is quick to imagine and skilful to invent. Circumstances of their early lives would be shown to constitute premonitory signs of their future destiny. And the reason for the adoption of such a mode of narration is that the historian would be, like others of his class, seeking to discover the cause of the future greatness of his subject in the subject himself and in his lineage or his early environment. In Scripture we have a contrasted method, and are shown that the cause of an ultimate position of extensive influence and grandeur in a servant of God is to be sought above rather than below. For God makes choice of human instruments not on the earthly principle of the unique and inherent fitness of the instrument itself, but rather because He sees there material that He can make fit for His purpose.* Clearly, therefore, the circumstances under which the actual call was made are of minor importance in a divine record. And in this instance we are certain all the future history of these men was before the inspiring Spirit, for He wrote Revelation 21:1-27 as well as Mark 1:1-45; yet the narrative is entirely divested of anything approaching earthly glamour. We just have the Lord walking by the sea; the fishermen at their work; His call, holding out to them no alluring prospects; their immediate response. Such simplicity was a deathblow to the pride of the Jew, who would have loved to have seen their lineage traced back to some ancient and honourable family in Israel, as well as to that of the Gentile who would have wished to see that they had been trained in the philosophy of the schools, or in the arts of war and legislation. Had they such qualifications there might have been ostensible cause for glorying in them; poor and simple as they were, we can only glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

{*"I will make you to become fishers of men," said the Lord to Simon and Andrew. They would thus as servants be His workmanship.}

It may be useful in this connection to make some remarks on the relation of the narrative as given by Mark with those appearing in the other Gospels. In John we have what unquestionably is antecedent and even preparatory to the call as recorded by the Synoptists. But to the significance of this it may be necessary to recur at a later stage of these remarks.

Matthew and Mark use almost identical terms in their respective accounts. There are differences in some phrases, however,* all of which we may well believe have their significance and their suitability to the scheme of the Gospel in which they occur. But we leave these points in order to refer at once to Luke 5:1-11, where a narrative is given which contains at first sight such points of diversity from Matthew and Mark that sober men have without adequate reason declared that it relates to a different event, and that it is subsequent in point of time.

{*Compare Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:14-20. Matt. (ver. 18), adds, "called Peter"; has "ballontas amphiblestron" for "amphiballontas" and "eis ten thal." for "en te thal." In ver. 19 "to become" is omitted. In ver, 21 "with Zebedee their father" is added, and in ver. 22, "with the hired servants" is omitted. These leading minor variations indicate that Matthew is no slavish imitator of Mark.} In Luke we read that the Lord saw two boats by the shore of the lake. He entered one belonging to Simon, and desired that he would push off a little that He might address the people who were crowding to the water’s edge in order to hear Him. After the discourse He directed Simon to push out into deep water and let down the fishing-nets. Simon obeyed, though dubiously; but an astonishing haul of fish was the result, so much so that his net burst, and he had to seek the help of his partners in the other boat. Peter was conscience-stricken in the presence of this Gracious Power, who, however, assured him that in the future he should catch men. When the boats returned to land, the occupants followed the Lord. This account, it is stated, presents points of absolute disagreement with Matthew and Mark. The latter make no reference to the preaching of Jesus nor to a miraculous catch of fish. They, unlike Luke, mention Andrew as the companion of Simon Peter, and that Zebedee and the servants were with James and John, who are said to be mending, not washing, their nets. They also record, while Luke does not, that Jesus definitely called the fishermen to follow Him, and that He addressed a separate call to each of the pairs. On consideration of these points of diversity it must be admitted that in no instance are they such as to render the narratives incompatible one with another. Luke does not contradict Matthew and Mark, nor do they him. It must further be admitted that in no one of the accounts, nor in all of them taken together, have we the whole of the details of the incident. This is unnecessary, and would indeed be impossible (John 21:25). Details not essential to the purpose of the Gospel are omitted. And while these omissions may sometimes prevent us from piecing together the four narratives into one "harmonious" whole, we are not, in consequence, the losers. On the contrary, the Gospels, as we have them, present the truth exactly as it was intended by the Divine Author that they should. It is only shallow-minded man who regards it as a defect in inspiration that one Evangelist does not supply the historical omissions of his predecessor. He would have arranged them so, because they would then form a series of Sunday school exercises to fit the four one with another like parts of a dissected map. What a poor idea of inspiration is in the minds of many!*

{*Do Christians really mean to hold that the four Gospels are not indivisible unities, but just four fragments, like, for instance, the Oxyrhynchus papyrus, only lengthier of course?}

It is, indeed, believed to be absolutely unnecessary to reconstruct any historical incident in the Gospels, to enable us to understand what each record was meant to convey. It is ours to seek in all humility to understand it in the form it has been given us.

1910 19 Now, what is the object of this narrative as given us by the first two Evangelists? Does not this lie on the surface? In each case we have (1) Jesus Himself beginning His public preaching of the kingdom, (2) His call of others to follow Him, (3) His activity in preaching in the Galilean synagogues, and performing deeds of mercy. Clearly, then, we have set before us the beginning of Messiah's ministry in which He immediately associates others with Himself in His public service. The objective fact of the call of the four from their temporal duties is mentioned, but no more than this, because no more was necessary. The possible significance of such a brief reference has already been stated. In Luke, however, we have a great deal more than the bare fact of certain disciples renouncing their possessions to follow the Messiah. We are called to witness, in the case of one of them as a sample of the others, how the Lord, using temporal circumstances in His own gracious and inimitable manner as the media, wrought within the man, teaching him something of His own nature and something of his own evil heart. We are shown, in fact, the moral preparation of Simon for the step of renunciation. Thus, while in Matthew and Mark we have what is objective, in Luke we have the subjective side. The difference therefore of the standpoints is radical, and must lead to what we actually find in the narratives divergences, though not discrepancies.

Another salient feature of the narrative in Luke is that the event is displaced from its strict chronological position. Such a displacement is for moral reasons, and is not of infrequent occurrence in this Gospel. The call which in Matthew and Mark is in immediate sequence to the Lord's initial public testimony, is in Luke made to follow, not precede, the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, and the healing of Peter's wife's mother. The truth is that Luke gives us not only the general fact of the beginning of the Lord's preaching (as in Luke 4:14-15), but taking up the single case of His word in the synagogue at Nazareth, gives us to see how grace was poured into and from His lips, delighting many sad hearts, but alas! arousing many evil ones also. He goes on to show that same grace not only speaking, but working for man's blessing, grouping a number of His merciful acts, that the Saviour's wonderful grace may be the more impressively set out as the Stronger than Satan and the Deliverer of men from those disabilities sin and Satan have introduced. Luke 4:1-44 is therefore an example of the topical style which may be said to prevail in this Gospel rather than the chronological.

"And now we have, in the beginning of the fifth chapter, a fact taken entirely out of its historical place. It is the call of the earlier apostles, more particularly of Simon, who is singled out, just as we have seen one blind man, or one demoniac brought into relief, even though there might be more. So the soh of Jonas is the great object of the Lord's grace here, although others were called at the same time. There were companions of his leaving all for Christ; but we have his case, not theirs, dealt with in detail. Now from elsewhere we know that this call of Peter preceded the Lord's entrance into Simon's house, and the healing of Simon's wife's mother (Mark 1:1-45). We also know that John's Gospel has preserved for us the first occasion when Simon ever saw the Lord Jesus, as Mark's Gospel shows when it was that Simon was called away from his ship and

occupation. Luke had given us the Lord's grace with and towards men, from the synagogue at Nazareth down to His preaching everywhere in Galilee, casting out devils, and healing diseases by the way. This is essentially a display in Him of the power of God by the word, and this over Satan and all the afflictions of men. A complete picture of all this is given first, and in order to leave it unbroken, the particulars of Simon's call are left out of its time. But as the way of the Lord on that occasion was of the deepest value as well as of interest to be given, it was reserved for this place. This illustrates the method of classifying facts morally, instead of merely recording them as they came to pass, which is characteristic of Luke."* {*"Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Gospels," by W. Kelly, p. 271.}

Sufficient has now been adduced to indicate that what seems at first so divergent in Luke is in perfect consonance with the character of that Gospel, which ever shows us the Lord of grace, though encountering and even arousing the evil of man, abounding over it with His compassionate love. It may not be necessary, therefore, to go on to show in detail the wealth of moral teaching and instruction contained in this section, profitable as this would be.

It may, however, still be asked, Are the particulars given in Luke altogether reconcileable with those named by the first two Evangelists? It has already been stated that this is not a question of vital importance, and by being led to consider it as such the believer is apt to be diverted from the profitable study of the Gospels. However, for the sake of any who find a difficulty here an attempt will be made to give the details recorded in the three Gospels in their strict chronological sequence. The four fishermen had spent a long night of fruitless toil upon the Galilean lake. In the morning Jesus came along the shore, where the boats were drawn up and men and women were at their work. He spake to them the word of God (Luke 5:1). So sweet was the heavenly message that they longed to hear more. It was so contrasted with that voice from Sinai which filled men with terrors, and they pressed upon Him in their eagerness to listen. Now the two fishing-boats were drawn up on the strand and were empty, their crews having left them to wash (Luke 5:2) the trawl-nets which had been used overnight in the deep waters, preparatory to another night's quest. Simon and Andrew presumably had the smaller boat; Zebedee, the hired servants, as well as James and John, being apparently in the other. They had, therefore, finished the washing* of their large nets, and with characteristic energy were now wading in the water near the shore, endeavouring with a hand or casting-net** to supply something of the deficiency of the past night's work. This Matthew 4:18 and Mark 1:16 tell us. They would be within ear-shot of Jesus, and can we doubt that they would draw nearer to hear Him the better?

{*The latter part of Luke 5:2, may be translated, "and had washed out their nets," according to "the well-known usage of the language, which gives to the aorist tense, on such occasions as the present, a pluperfect signification"; cp. Matthew 27:2; Matthew 27:60; Luke 5:4; Luke 13:16; John 18:14; John 21:15; Acts 12:17; Hebrews 4:8, etc. See The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, by Burgon and Miller, 1896, p. 212.

**The technical term used in Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16 (amphiblestron) implies a net manipulated with both hands, and used in shallow water. Only Peter and Andrew are said to have been using this kind of net.}

Jesus then selecting the smaller and more convenient boat for His purpose, bade Simon put it off from the shore. He finishes His discourse; then, knowing the natural anxiety of the breadwinners,

He said, "Launch [in the singular, being addressed to Simon as captain of the boat] out into the deep, and let down [this is in the plural, showing that others were present in the boat] the trawl-nets for a draught." Simon let down a single net,* which was filled to bursting with fish. The partners in the other boat are beckoned to come to their assistance, and both boats are filled with the spoil. Simon, convicted of his own lack of confidence and of the Lord's omniscient power and grace, falls before Him in confession. The Lord assures him, saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." This, however, was not the call to follow Him.

{*Most of the recent Editors read "nets" in Luke 5:5-6; but there is considerable evidence in favour of the singular among the Uncials, Cursives, and early Versions. The unauthorised alteration of the singular to the plural by a copyist, is more likely to have occurred than the reverse.} The boats then came to land. Will not He who cared for the fragments of the multiplied loaves and fishes care that this harvest of the sea be duly garnered? This being done, He says to Simon and Andrew, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Matt. and Mark). And going farther along the shore, the sons of Zebedee are seen in their boat mending the nets damaged by the great catch, and He calls them also.

It is by no means affirmed that the order of events here indicated is absolutely accurate; but it is affirmed that such an order is neither impossible nor inconceivable, and that it also shows that the statements of the three Evangelists are, as thus regarded, consistent with one another.

Returning now to Mark after this digression, we may observe how the Lord in this call, humble Servant of Jehovah as He was, asserts His sovereign claim. In a peremptory imperative He bade them, Come. The command awoke within them the divine instinct of obedience. This word of authority for ever adjusted their mutual relationship as servants to the Master. Later on, in a critical moment, Simon Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." He had learned the absolute rights of the Lord over Him from that memorable day when he forsook all to follow Him.

We may here see the distinction between the earlier lessons of Andrew and Peter, and what they now learned. Andrew and Peter had found Him to be the Lamb of God, the Messiah of Israel (John 1:36-42). Their hearts burned within them as they listened to His discourses of love and goodness and truth. But now He had come down to them in the midst of their daily toil. He said to Simon, Give me the use of your fishing-boat as a pulpit," sitting in it with more majesty than Solomon upon his ivory throne; and then at a word filling it with leaping fish in payment of their scant service. Now He had come nearer still to them in the humdrum of their lives, and they heard Him say to them, Come after Me. The authority of the voice was irresistible, and they obeyed like the fish of the lake, which, hearing the call of their Creator, swarmed along the trackless paths of the deep to do Him homage where He sat in the old fishing-boat.

These fishermen recognised the voice of the King of Israel. They so thoroughly believed His gospel of the coming kingdom that they were ready to admit the absolute rights of the King over them. He of His own wisdom had sought them out, made the selection between them and others, and instructed them to follow Him, conscious of what in His own power He could make them. The anointed king may be obscured in the cave of Adullam; these men obey Him as implicitly as if He were wielding the sceptre on the throne of Zion. Their ready response, however, is the result of previous workings within them. John shows us how they learned His personal glories as Saviour.

A second lesson was to know Him as Lord. For this they were prepared, as we have seen, by the word He preached and the miracle He wrought. And consequently when His call was given they obeyed with promptness.

Such is the order usually adopted by the Spirit in the induction of a believer into the place of service. For the believer confesses Jesus who died for his sins and lives as his Lord. He is bought with a price to live no longer for self, but to Him who died and lives for him. There are necessarily but few called to a place of renunciation such as that taken by the apostles, but there are no concerns of any believer over which the Lord has not His unqualified rights. Do we all yield Him His own?

7. — A Sabbath at Capernaum

1910 36 "And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught.*1 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught*1 them as having authority, and not as the scribes. And straightway*2 there was in their synagogue a man with*3 an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying,*4 What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?*5 Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace,*6 and come out of him. And the unclean spirit tearing him and crying with a loud voice came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*7 And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee.*8 And straightway when they were come out*9 of the synagogue they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of*10 a fever; and straightway they tell him of her: and he came*11 and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them" (Mark 1:21-31, R.V.).

{*1 "was teaching," W.K.

*2 J.N.D., W.K. and others omit "straightway" here.

*3 "in the power of," W.K.; "possessed by, not merely had he one, but he was completely under its power, characterised by it, J.N.D.

*4 Some insert "Ha!" or "Eh!"

*5 "Jesus, Nazarene," J.N.D., W.K. (as also in Mark 14:67; Mark 16:6).

*6 "Be mute," W.K.

*7 "What is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him," J.N.D.; "What is this? A new teaching with authority! Even the unclean spirits he commandeth, and they obey him," W.K.

*8 "the whole region of Galilee around," J.N.D.; "the whole region round Galilee," W.K.

*9 "going out," J.N.D. W.K.

*10 "lay in a fever," J.N.D.; W.K.

*11 "went up to her," J.N.D.; "coming up," W.K.

Many of these renderings by W.K. are taken from Vol. 2. of the Believer's Monthly Magazine.} The Servant of Jehovah proceeds with His ministry of the kingdom of God. Only He is not now alone in it. We read previously that "Jesus came into Galilee"; we now read "they go into Capernaum." He would necessarily direct all the service and provide and arrange all matters as the Master. It was their part to be ear-witnesses of His gracious words and eye-witnesses of His miracles and signs, and some of them of His majesty also. But they, we may be sure, found their joy and their strength not in visions of the future, but in the simple satisfaction that arose from being in the company and under the direction of a loved One. Is it not so even now? Does not the renewed heart crave for a sense of the Lord's presence? And did not the Lord Himself answer that craving by His promise before His departure, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). And, if this assurance be said to have a special collective application, the wish of Paul for Timothy is undoubtedly individual, "The Lord [Jesus Christ] be with thy spirit" (2 Timothy 4:22). May we then, individually and collectively, walk with Him! The Lord was pleased to select Capernaum as His abode in Galilee, making from thence His circuits through the numerous towns and villages of that populous district. Capernaum was from this circumstance highly favoured as a place. Matthew, alluding to the Lord's residence there, speaks of it as "His own city" (9: 1). In the words often quoted from Chrysostom, "Bethlehem bore Him, Nazareth nurtured Him, Capernaum had Him continuously as inhabitant." The Lord Himself referred to this mark of outward privilege and its abuse in words of solemn and tremendous import, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell [hades]; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:23). Capernaum repented not at the preaching of Jesus, and while its unbelieving inhabitants must answer for themselves individually in a day of judgment yet to come, this, the Lord's own city in Galilee, has been so completely overthrown that its site cannot with certainty be identified. In the Lord's service on this Sabbath day in Capernaum, as recorded by Mark, He is shown (1) teaching in the synagogue, (2) expelling a demon, and (3) healing Simon's wife's mother.

Jehovah's Servant Teaching with Authority

Jesus straightway went into the synagogue, probably that one built by the Roman centurion (Luke 7:1; Luke 7:5), and began teaching. We are not told here the matter of His discourse. Matthew, in what is commonly known as the Sermon on the mount, has summarised in the words of our Lord the moral principles which should characterise the coming kingdom of heaven. Mark simply states that He who had preached the fulfilment of ancient promise and the gospel of God now commenced to expound the truth, so that those who were hungering and thirsting after righteousness might be filled. Many prophets and kings had desired to hear the things taught in Capernaum that day, but had not heard them. And many in the synagogue, the Simeons and the Annas, had waited for that day, and now they received with joy the welcome news of grace, saying in their hearts, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9; cf. Luke 2:29). But the Evangelist points out for our admiration and instruction that the teaching of the lowly Servant in the synagogue was "with authority," and also that this character was so evident in His words as to fill the audience with astonishment. His words carried with them the weight of divine credentials, giving them a distinction altogether superior to those of unauthorised teachers, so that

not only the common people, but a learned rabbi was constrained to say to Him, "We know thou art a teacher come from God."

We may pause here to inquire more closely and particularly as to the exact meaning of this phrase used with regard to the Lord's teaching at Capernaum. "He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"; and again, "With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." What was it for Him to speak with authority? Does this mean that when He spoke His words were followed by an immediate and irresistible effect in the conviction of the minds and hearts of the auditors, or in compelling the obedience of the unclean demon present? Or does it mean that when He spoke it was evident to His hearers that He had an adequate commission as the Servant of Jehovah to declare the good tidings that He did? The latter, assuredly, is the meaning most in consonance with the scheme of this Gospel, and also with the general usage of the original word (exousia) rightly translated "authority." This word (ex.) implies the possession of the right or title to act, and not only the capacity or competency to do so, the latter being expressed by the word often translated "power" (dynamis) Moses might be said to have had zeal and competency when he first set about redressing his people's wrongs in Egypt; but when his authority was challenged, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" he fled ignominiously. Later, however, Jehovah said to him, "Come now and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." He then went as a divinely accredited emissary. It is so that Jesus is presented in Mark. He had an indisputable right to speak.

It is not implied that His word in any sense lacked power. On the contrary, in Luke we have, in connection with this very incident, both words* used; "with authority (ex.) and power (d.) he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36). As a Servant, He was heaven's Plenipotentiary in the fullest sense of the word. He had the amplest title to speak, and His word was also effective, according to Isaiah's prophecy, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

{*These two words also occur together in Luke 9:1, where the Lord delegates both authority and power over demons to the twelve. It is well to note that in a great many passages in the Authorised Version the word (ex.) is translated "power" instead of authority; see, for instance, Matthew 9:6; Matthew 9:8; Matthew 28:18; Luke 4:6; Luke 10:19; Luke 12:5; John 10:18; John 17:2; John 19:10-11; Romans 13:1-3; 2 Corinthians 13:10, et al. The Father gave authority to the Son to execute judgment (John 5:27), but Jesus withstood the temptation of Satan when he offered Him the authority (ex.) of the world-kingdoms (Luke 4:6).} The time soon came when men in resentment questioned this authority of the Lord. Did they not ask, "By what authority doest thou these things?" and, "Who gave thee this authority to do these things?" (Mark 11:27-33). But this question was the outcome of the stubborn will of man rebelling against the manifest authority of God; and Jesus vouchsafed no answer.

Here in Galilee were simple souls, thirsting for the word of life, desirous of having the great problems of an active conscience toward God settled with authority. They perceived with amazement such authority in the manner of the Lord's teaching, even before that authority was demonstrated in their midst by the expulsion of a demon. It must be observed that this character

was recognised although His word was not prefaced by the phrase so frequent in the prophecies which were read in their hearing every Sabbath, "Thus saith Jehovah." Indeed, a false prophet might use such a formula, but here was One who spake in His own name and yet in the name of Jehovah of Israel and the God of all the earth also. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you," giving them thus, by virtue of His own right, the word of Him that sent Him. Can we wonder that it was said, "I perceive that thou art a prophet"; and again, "We have heard ourselves, and know, that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (John 4:19; John 4:42)? While even the officers sent to arrest Him excused their failure to execute their task by the statement, "Never man so spake." The teaching of Jesus is placed in contrast with that of the scribes in so far as the former possessed an authority of which the latter was utterly destitute. "He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes." It is unnecessary to refer to the erudite speculations of professors of our day, at home or abroad, as to the theology of the scribes, in order to realise the force of this inspired contrast. We have all we need in this Gospel itself. The Lord Himself has characterised the scribes and their doctrine, and they therefore stand uncloaked in the presence of the Light of the world (Mark 7:1-13; Mark 12:38-40). Besides, the question here considered is not the one raised later, viz., what the scribes taught, but how they taught. The unlettered peasants, hearing the Faithful and True Witness, confessed how different His teaching is from that of the false witnesses. They heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, whose own the sheep were, and it had a ring of authority never heard in the voice of the hireling who cared for the fleece rather than the flock. The truth was that, though the scribes sat on Moses’ seat, they neglected the commandments of God, and expounded and enforced the precepts of men. Hence their words were bereft of all authority in matters appertaining to the responsibility of man to God, and this lack was evident to the natural conscience. But now One spake upon whose words sinful men might rest with assurance, as He said, "We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen." "His word does not consist of arguments which evidence the uncertainty of man, but comes with the authority of One who knows the truth which He proclaims — authority which in fact was that of God who can communicate truth." It is no wonder then that the audience in the synagogue was filled with amazement, as they listened to the authoritative words of Jesus of Nazareth. Let us hope that many received His words in faith, and, believing, had life in His name. The Demoniac in the Synagogue

1910 53 How soon the Evangelist shows that the ministry of the Servant-Prophet elucidated the true moral condition of things in Israel! The Light shone into the darkness, and there in the synagogue revealed the hypocritical scribes in the pulpit, and an unclean spirit in the congregation. Such ministry could never be popular, especially when its novelty was passed, because "men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved" (John 3:19-20). But if fallen man refused to own the light of life, the powers of darkness did not remain silent and irresponsive in the presence of the Majesty of heaven in human guise. He who was possessed by the unclean spirit acknowledged Jesus the Nazarene as the Holy One of God. It was a confession, no doubt, of apprehension and dread, for the demons "believe and shudder," but the declaration was real and true nevertheless, as indeed all such must be in the presence of Him who is the Truth. The unclean spirit hitherto concealed behind the personality of the man revealed himself by this public utterance, "What have we [the man and I] to do with thee, Jesus the

Nazarene? The spirit of lying spoke truth, for "what fellowship has light with darkness," but not the whole truth, for Jesus came to deliver man from the authority of darkness (Colossians 1:13). The demon continued, "Art thou come to destroy us [the man and me]?" Yea and nay, foul spirit. "To this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). But as for the man, "the Son of man is not come to destroy, men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56). Then, without equivocation or ambiguity, the unclean and unholy spirit bore testimony to the Holy and the Just One: "I [not now the man] know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

What a commotion such an outcry would create in the synagogue. The audience had not ceased to wonder at the gracious words of instruction from the new Teacher. They were now startled by the passionate outburst from the man with a demon. The two speakers afforded contrast of the widest possible nature. There was the Man, "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" (dyn.) "full of the Holy Spirit." There was also a man possessed by an unclean spirit, a power of evil. It was necessary that this existing contrast should be emphasized before all, and that it should be made clear to all that there was no association whatsoever between the Servant of Jehovah and the spirit of darkness. The Lord therefore, acting in His own authority, did what even Michael the archangel forbore to do when he durst not bring a railing accusation against the devil, but said, The Lord rebuke thee (Jude 1:9). Jesus rebuked him, quelling his riotous speech with a word, as with a similar word He did the howling winds, the tossing waves, and the raging, burning fever. Exercising His authority further than mere repression, He commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. The demon obeyed, speaking no more, only uttering inarticulate cries as he departed, his exit being attended by a paroxysm of physical pain to the possessed man (Cf. Mark 9:26). "What the devil cannot keep as his own, he will, if he can, destroy; even as Pharaoh never treated the children of Israel so ill as when they were just escaping from his grasp. Something similar is evermore taking place; and Satan tempts, plagues and buffets none so fiercely as those who are in the act of being delivered from his tyranny for ever."

Thus then did the Lord deliver the captive of Satan, and demonstrate that in His service He held no alliance with the evil one. The Servant of Jehovah who vanquished the prince of this world in the solitudes of the wilderness, unmasked him when, in the crowded synagogue, he came in the guise of one of the fallen sons of men, acknow ledging Him as the Holy One of God. In the power of the Spirit of God, Jesus, the true Nazarite, maintained His service in the unsullied purity of heavenly light. He who opened the mouths of dumb sinners to speak forth His praise closed the mouths of demons, forbidding them to say that they knew Him. And in this manner the Lord removed all occasion for stumbling as to His service, and anticipated that malicious spirit in the scribes and Pharisees which caused them to bring against Him the baseless and evil charge that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

Here, however, in the synagogue at Capernaum, the utmost amazement prevailed. Those present had felt the authority of His word within them; they now saw that authority exemplified in the person of another, a remarkable deliverance wrought at the simple word of Jesus. They questioned among themselves for an explanation, unready as yet to see a sufficient explanation in the Person of Jesus before them. They can but own, however, that this is a new kind of teacher and a different sort of teaching altogether from any to which they have been accustomed. For the word of Jesus evidently is of paramount authority even in the kingdom of Satan. The report of this incident, as it might well do, spread with rapidity throughout the Galilan district.

Simon’s Wife’s Mother Healed

Following directly upon the service of the Lord in the synagogue we are called to witness His service in the home. His activities and perfections which glorified God in the public synagogue are shown to have been equally in exercise in the privacy of the domestic circle.

Immediately He passed from the synagogue where such excitement had been awakened to partake of the hospitalities of the house of Simon and Andrew. James and John are invited also. They knew the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"; but could it be kept more holy than in the presence and company of Jesus?

Coming into the house, a shadow lay upon it. Simon’s wife’s mother was there, sick of a great fever, as Luke the physician states. With simple directness and with growing confidence in the love and sympathy and power of their Master they unite to tell Him of their trouble. They had seen His power in the physical world — over the fish of the sea. They had seen His power in the realm of darkness — over the unclean demon. But could He — would He — consider a private sorrow, a domestic affliction? The compassionate Lord dissipated once for all any uncertainty on this score. He had come to heal the diseases of Israel, and He vouchsafed a ready answer to their request.

Jesus came to the bedside. He stood over the patient and rebuked the fever. Taking her by the hand He raised her. The fever left her, and she immediately arose, the recovery being instantaneous and complete, so that she was able to wait upon them. The touch of Jesus is significant, indicating His personal contact with sorrowing humanity. He did not touch the demoniacs, but He touched the leper, the eyes of the blind, the tongue of the dumb, and the ear of Malchus. He also touched the bier of the dead, and the terrified disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. The hand of Omnipotence was laid upon the infirmities of man. He proved Himself a God near at hand, and not afar off. The principle is true now to faith, but will have a direct application when Messiah visits His enfeebled people, raising them up by His strong right hand. The restored woman used her newly-given strength in serving the One who had bestowed it and those with Him. This is an example for all time. What have we that we have not received? Let all therefore be rendered to Him who is the Giver.

8. Evening and Morning (First Day) at Capernaum

1910 71 "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought*1 unto him all that were sick,*2 and them that were possessed with devils.*3 And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and he suffered not the devils*3 to speak, because they knew*4 him.

"And in the morning, a great while before day,*5 he rose up and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.*6 And Simon and they that*7 were with him followed after him; and they found him and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils (Mark 1:32-39).

{*1"kept bringing," W.K.

*2"suffering," J.N.D.; "ill," W.K.

*3"demons," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4"had the inward consciousness who he was," J.N.D., note.

*5"long before day," J.N.D.; W.K.

*6 or, "while it was yet night was praying," W.K.

*7"those," J.N.D.; W.K.} The Jewish Sabbath was passed, and the first of the week began. The Mosaic day of rest was not such for the Servant of Jehovah. A captive of Satan was in the synagogue, and the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Weakness and pain, the effects of the presence of sin in the world, were present in the house of Simon Peter, and the Anointed One had come "to set at liberty them that are bruised." Hence it was a day of service for Jesus, who cast out the demon and healed the mother-in-law of Simon. And the necessity for such service proved unmistakeably the utter inadequacy of the law to relieve and bless the sinful and suffering Jew. But after Sabbath a new era dawned, a forecast of the kingdom come in power. Not now isolated cases were blessed, but all the sick and suffering of Capernaum flocked to the great Physician, who healed them all — every one. Those who had in weariness and painfulness passed many a sleepless night were freed of their infirmities to enjoy a rest Jewish ordinances could never give. It was truly the beginning of a new week for them. And it was also a happy augury of that millennial day for Israel when the glorious Sun of righteousness, even then present with healing in His wings, should arise and chase away all darkness, disease and death.

Shadows at the Sunset At eventide there was a great congregation of the afflicted of Capernaum at the house of Simon Peter. Those who had scruples in coming to be healed on the Sabbath now came freely. Those who feared the tyranny of an apostate priesthood came under cover of the lengthening shadows. And prostrate ones, fearful of the fierce rays of a noontide sun, were brought to Jesus in "the cool of the day." And He who in the garden of Eden sought the guilty pair at eventide as they shrunk abashed from His presence (Genesis 3:8), had come from heaven to seek and to save their suffering and groaning sons. The Lord of glory held a great reception that night, but the throng was not such as is found in the courts of the world’s great ones. He was indeed greater than Solomon, but no Queen of Sheba was there with her gifts. Truly the day is coming when all nations shall fall down before Him, but those who did Him reverence then were but a company of invalids. Nor did they seek His face in vain. They found that He whose sceptre shall in due time exercise its unchallenged sway over the governments of this world was supremely potent even then in the kingdom of affliction and pain. With the resources of His omnipotence blending with the exquisite sensibilities of His perfect manhood, He passed, while the twilight shadows deepened, through that motley assemblage, laying hands of beneficent healing on every poor sufferer (Luke 4:40), and expelling demons with a word (Matthew 8:16). How well did Jesus prove Himself that night the Servant of Jehovah! What occasion did He give for Capernaum to exchange the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise, and to take up the language of the prophetic Psalm and sing to God, "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalms 103:1-3).

We shall do well to reflect upon this vivid picture of the Lord’s loving service, given in all three of the Synoptical Gospels. For we are still in the shadows. We form part of the creation which, in its entirety, groans and travails in pain even yet (Romans 8:22), waiting for a deliverance still to come. In our weaknesses we need an all-sufficient One to sustain and to deliver; "until the day break and the shadows flee away."

Truly we have no warrant for believing that the Lord has secured to His own a present exemption from the physical and mental disabilities common to mankind. Neither have we warrant for believing that the power He exercised in New Testament times over the sick bodies of men is continued to His present witnesses. In those miracles of healing He demonstrated once for all His power as the First Cause, dispensing with all material remedies as intermediaries, accomplishing His purpose with a word or touch. He was pleased to use a plaister of figs for the recovery of Hezekiah, but the king knew that it was Jehovah who had healed him, as he said, "He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it" (Isaiah 38:15). And we, encouraged by the personal activities of Jesus recorded in the holy Gospels, may use our medicinal remedies in the assurance of His equal activity today both in sympathy and in power to heal.

"Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old, Was strong to heal and save;

It triumphed o’er disease and death, O’er darkness and the grave; To Thee they went, the blind, the dumb, The palsied and the lame, The leper with his tainted life, The sick with fevered frame. And lo! Thy touch brought life and health;

Gave speech, and strength, and sight; And youth renewed and frenzy calmed Owned Thee, the Lord of light. And now, O Lord, be near to bless, Almighty as of yore, In crowded street, by restless couch, As by Gennesareth’s shore.

Though Love and Might no longer heal By touch, or word, or look;

Though they, who do Thy work, must read Thy laws in nature’s book;

Yet heal and quicken, soothe and bless, With Thine almighty breath; And be our great Deliverer still, Thou Lord of life and death."

Though Israel did not know the Messiah, the demons were inwardly conscious of the personality of this Servant of Jehovah, and would have declared it aloud. This the Lord forbade, as in the synagogue. He did accept the fourfold witness of the Baptist, the Father, His own works, and the Scriptures (John 5:32-47), but He, the Holy One of God, disclaimed all testimony from beneath. In that wisdom which He possessed so perfectly as a Man, He, anticipating the unfounded charge against Him of complicity with Beelzebub in the expulsion of demons, and to give no occasion of stumbling to any of the Father’s "little ones," publicly renounced all association with the works of darkness, so that all might know that these things were wrought by Him in His Father’s name alone.

Morning Prayer The work of mercy over, the healed ones and their friends retired to their homes. Capernaum was soon wrapped in a healthy slumber not known for many a day. Was it so in the house of Simon Peter with the faithful and devoted Servant of Jehovah? We know not whether the long night watches were spent by Him in sleep or not. We know He slept in the storm-tossed boat when His disciples were filled with terror. We also know when His apostles fell asleep "for sorrow,"

the silence of Gethsemane was broken by His agonized pleadings to His Father. As to this particular night, however, while we recognise that what others did was no rule for Him, since Scripture is silent, it will profit us nothing to speculate further. But this we are informed that He rose up a great while before day, and leaving the sleepers to sleep on, He went away into a place of solitude, and there was praying. In the parallel passage in Matthew, though no reference is made to the Lord's morning vigil, a prophecy is cited from the Old Testament which may therefore rightly be considered in this connection. "When the even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" (Matthew 8:16-17). This passage is taken from the prophecy relating to Jehovah's righteous Servant, as it was translated from the Hebrew in the Greek Septuagint Version. It is a prophetic utterance of what the believing and suffering Jewish remnant will penitently confess in a future day when they recognise their guilt in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. "Surely he hath borne our griefs [sicknesses] and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." The passage in Isaiah evidently does not refer, as the verses which immediately follow do (Isaiah 53:5-6), to the atoning and substitutionary sufferings of Christ, but to the effects of His service among men which the Jews, blinded by unbelief, regarded as a visitation from God, so that they said, "He is mad"; "this man is not of God"; "He hath a demon," esteeming Him to be a Gehazi, a Uzziah, "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." The Spirit of God, however, in Matthew records this instance of extensive healing energy at Capernaum as an illustration of the manner in which the prophetic oracle was fulfilled. So that we are left in no doubt as to its true application. In the narrative of His taking the infirmities and bearing the diseases, there is not only the sense that the Lord removed these things from the sufferers, but also that He took them upon Himself; so that He became a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief [sickness]" as stated in the verse preceding the quotation (Isaiah 53:3).

It was thus Jesus was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15), and thus that He qualified Himself to be our sympathising High Priest on high. Not that He took these physical infirmities upon His own body, but He bore them upon His spirit. His acts of healing were not acts of power solely, but acts of sympathy also. He as none else could fully estimate the physical pain, the mental anguish and the moral ruin represented before Him. When the deaf and dumb man was before Him, He looked up to heaven and sighed (Mark 7:34). At the grave of Lazarus He groaned in the spirit, was troubled, and wept copiously (John 11:33-38), so that even the Jews said, "Behold, how he loved him."

It was therefore not only Omnipotent Power, but Infinite Love concerning itself intimately with the physical disabilities of our race, coming into contact therewith, and exhibiting His matchless sympathy. There was a partial expression of this loving regard in the Old Testament, when Jehovah brought His people through the wilderness. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9). More could not be till the incarnation, and Jehovah was now present in Israel in the person of the sorrowing and sympathising Son of man. How keenly affected therefore was His spirit as the suffering Galileans crowded to Him as their great Physician for healing. It was an evening of sorrow, and how much there was for Him to do and to suffer before the morning came, the morning without clouds. Did not He look on to that

morning of liberty and glory? Did He not say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50). Was then this burden upon the Lord's spirit throughout the long night-watches? Were the Psalmist's words fulfilled in Him; "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with tears" (Psalms 6:6)? and again, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3)? This may have been so, but the specific subject of this early communion between the Servant and the One who sent Him is not revealed, only the fact is certain, that He sought the solitudes "to pray." As on another occasion He was "alone praying" (Luke 9:18), exemplifying what He also taught the importance of secret prayer (Matthew 6:6). This privacy was only to be secured by such an act of self-sacrifice as this. The needy crowd surrounded Him in the evening, and a similar throng would seek Him in the early morning. The Lord therefore went out into the night-chills, always keenest in the hour before the dawn, to secure a period free from interruptions, thus subordinating, the activities of His service to the confession of His dependence upon God. What an example for us in the strenuous life of today! The following extract relates to our subject: "Here also we have the dependence of the Lord in all this. We must modify this by no specious pretext, as if the Lord's prayers were the only untrue ones* ever offered among the assembly of saints. His arm was not shortened; He clothed the heavens with blackness, and made sackcloth their covering; He dried up the sea, so that their fish stank; He could do what He pleased, but this state of things [shown by the Lord's prayers] is easily and blessedly explicable. The Lord God had given Him the tongue of the learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. He wakened His ear morning by morning. He opened His ear to hear as the learned, and now, with this early-wakened ear He went forth to hear, and to hold that blessed communion with the Father, where, in a world of evil, alone His soul could find delight and refreshment, and where He renewed the strength of His joy — the conscious ground of His coming forth into the world; and in the apprehensions of His soul, all [this] passed in intercourse with His Father. [It is] the most blessed, perhaps the most interesting, part of all our Saviour's life, and where He brings us in spirit with Him, into His Father's presence, into His Father's bosom, where He pours all His request, and passes through the evil [of the world] in the strength of it. Oh, it is a blessed portion! Are we to suppose the Saviour the only Man who never had it?"

{*The writer in this sentence, somewhat obscurely worded, is evidently combating the notion that the prayers of our Lord were affected, and not a real expression of felt dependence. How can we think of the Lord pretending to pray?} Popularity Shunned

Simon Peter the host was disturbed to find his gracious Master had departed. And he with others sought His whereabouts with an anxiety we can well imagine. A crowd also collected from near and far, all anxious for further knowledge of the Prophet who had wrought such mighty and merciful deeds of healing for the sons of Israel. When the ardent disciple found the Lord, he said to Him in his excited impetuous way, "All are seeking thee." Bright visions of the glorious kingdom were before this newly-called fisher of men. Did it not say in the prophets that all should know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest? His exuberant fancy saw in the Capernaum crowd the earnest of the thousands of Israel flocking to confess themselves subjects of the Saviour-King. The Lord did not rebuke Peter for vain thoughts, or crush his enthusiasm as ill-timed and misplaced. But the Lord's hour of triumph had not yet come, and He knew what was working in the

hearts of the populace, while Peter did not. Jesus did not commit Himself to men in Galilee any more than in Jerusalem (John 2:23-25). Not seeking popularity or importance in the eyes of men, He expressed His will to go forward in the service of His Father. "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth." Preaching, not miracles, was the chief end of His mission, and accordingly we find Him continuing His blessed service throughout the synagogues of Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.

9. The Leper Touched and Cleansed

1910 116 "And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, [and kneeling down to him], and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean. And he strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded,*1 for a testimony unto them. But he went out,*2 and began to publish*3 it much, and to spread abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city,*4 but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter"*5 (Mark 1:40-45, R.V.).

{*1 "what Moses ordained," J.N.D.; "what Moses enjoined," W.K.

*2 "having gone forth," J.N.D.; "having gone out," W.K.

*3 "proclaim," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "into town," W.K.

*5 "every side," J.N.D.; "everywhere," W.K.}

We now approach what may be regarded as a new section in the general scheme of Mark’s Gospel. And in this section the incident of the healed paralytic which immediately follows, is coupled with that of the cleansed leper. The change in subject here will be the more readily seen after a brief review of the preceding portions of this first chapter. It has been observed (1) how this Gospel opens by stating circumstantially the credentials of Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah (vers. 1-13); going on to record (2) His public announcement of the good news that God’s kingdom was at hand (vers. 14, 15); (3) His association of others with Him in His ministry (vers. 16-21); (4) His zealous and active beneficence in Capernaum, and indeed throughout Galilee., among those possessed of evil spirits, and those diseased in body (vers. 22-39). And the last-named account of this service of the Lord on the Sabbath and the first of the week is stated in such terms that it forms a tableau of the coming millennial day with its deliverance from temporal ills, which is connected in the prophecies with the personal presence of Jehovah’s Servant, and which will be preceded by the casting of Satan into the abyss where he will be bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-15).

Now the Evangelist passes on to illustrate how the Lord was present to relieve a deeper and more serious human need than any yet mentioned. His Galikean ministry was in the preceding narrative shown to comprise the healing of the sick and the deliverance of those oppressed by the devil. But besides this the nation was legally and morally defiled, and moreover sin had wrought such inherent weakness in the people that, unable to come of themselves, they needed to be brought to

the feet of the divine Healer. Two typical cases — the leper and paralytic — are therefore selected for the exemplification of the perfect suitability of the Servant of the Lord to remedy the existing state of physical and spiritual evil among men, the physical being used as a type of the spiritual according to the frequent custom in the Gospels, and in this way illustrating by concrete example the word of the kingdom which Jesus preached.

Before proceeding to consider the solemn significance of the former of these two incidents, it may be well to note that in the third gospel also, the same combination occurs. The healing of the leper and then of the palsied man are there given previous to the account of the call of Levi (Luke 5:12-26). In Matthew, however, the historical order, which is evidently that found in Mark and Luke, is not followed, but the events are set in that connection which most vividly portrays the Kingship of Jesus. There the healing of the leper is placed after that manifesto of the new order of things in the coming kingdom, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 8:1-4), although in point of time the miracle was wrought previously, as Luke shows. And this miracle is followed in Matthew by the healing of the centurion’s servant, and of Peter’s wife’s mother, the stilling of the tempest and the casting out of the demons which then entered the herd of swine. All these events are named before the cure of the palsied man (Matthew 9:1-8), and are followed by the call of the tax-gatherer.

Without now considering the significance of this chronological displacement of details, it is sufficient to note that Matthew gives a fuller and more varied array of witnesses to the character of Messiah’s coming kingdom than was needful in Mark. Here we have only two witnesses cited, whose joint testimony, however, is as valid as that of a more numerous company. The Cure of the Leper The Evangelist describes the cure of the leper in graphic terms, as is characteristic of him. We are called to behold the afflicted outcast coming to Jesus, not standing "afar off" like the leprous ten (Luke 17:12), but in his eagerness approaching Him of whose great power in the kingdom of pain he had heard. With mute entreaties the poor sufferer, "full of leprosy," as Luke tells us he was, beseeches the Master to exercise His pity and His power. In the intensity of his emotion he threw himself upon his knees* before the Lord in that attitude which is so significant at once of reverence and dependence. Then the kneeling suppliant framed his petition in the brief words which are recorded without variation by the Synoptists, save that Matthew and Luke add the term of address, "Lord." He does not say, as the fervour of his actions might lead us to expect he would have said, "Have mercy on me," or, "Heal me; cleanse me"; but he expresses his conviction that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth there is a resident power adequate to meet even such a desperate case as this "if thou wilt, thou canst cleanse me." The leper’s prayer has been criticised, it being alleged that it lacks faith because there is no expressed appeal to the love and mercy of the Lord. We desire, in passing, to record an emphatic protest against human criticism of the leper’s prayer or of the prayers of any. Prayer is the transmission of the inner cravings of the spiritual nature of man (whether articulate or not) to his God. Who shall intermeddle in this? Who has a right to censure what is meant for the divine ear? If I am an auditor, I may, if needs be, abstain from adding my "Amen" to the petition. This is permitted me, but further I dare not go. Am I competent to examine the naked heart of him who The Greek term is also used by Mark of the young ruler who knelt to Jesus, as did the father of the young demoniac (Matthew 17:14). These were sincere, but not so were the soldiers of the governor, who knelt before Him in mockery (Matt. 27 , 29), prays, and to unravel his secret motives? The Lord does this still, as He did of old when

He openly condemned the prayer of the hypocritical Pharisee for its insincerity. But the Lord does not condemn this defiled pleader. On the contrary, the appeal instantly calls forth the exercise of those potentialities of the healing mercy abounding in Him, though there was more than the mere act of miraculous power. He was moved with compassion; His whole nature, rising above all that was loathsome and repellent, physically and ceremonially, in the leper, was stirred with intense sympathy for the sufferer. Here we see the tender mercy of God (Luke 1:78) exhibited in Jesus, that we may be encouraged to seek and find true consolation in His compassions towards us, which fail not. As king Ahasuerus extended the golden sceptre of mercy to his beautiful queen Esther, so the Lord stretched out the hand of mercy and touched the unlovely leper, contracting no defilement as another would have done (Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2). Then He sent forth His word and healed him: "I will, be thou made clean."* {*For the cleansing power of the word of Christ, compare John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26.} What Does Leprosy Illustrate?

Leprosy was a common disease in Israel, and was brought with them, it has been said, from the bondage of Egypt. Apart from its seriousness as a disease of the body, the law of Moses imposed upon. it additional seriousness by the ceremonies of that economy. Other infirmities and diseases receive brief mention only, but the instructions having reference to leprosy occupy a considerable section in the priests' guide book (Leviticus 13:1-59; Leviticus 14:1-57). The priest, acting as the representative of Jehovah in the midst of His people, examined the symptoms of a suspected case, and decided accordingly whether the patient was a leper or not; and if so, condemned him to dwell alone in the place of uncleanness without the camp. The priest only was empowered to decide whether the plague of leprosy was healed in a given case, while a series of ceremonies was prescribed before the healed man could be again acknowledged as one of the congregation of worshippers of Jehovah.

It is easy to gather from this exceptional prominence assigned to it that leprosy is figurative of sin, and especially of sin in that aspect of it which causes the sinner to be excluded from the presence of God and from the privileges of relationship with Him. This intimate connection between the moral and physical in this disease is illustrated by the case of Uzziah, king of Judah, who in a spirit of profane bravado usurped the priest's office and went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense on the golden altar. He was opposed by the priests in his sacrilegious act, and he was smitten of God with leprosy to mark his uncleanness of heart and unfitness for the divine presence. "Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy broke forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah" (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). At his death he was buried in a field adjoining the burial-place of kings. The uncleanness of the king's heart was indicated by the leprous signs which arose in his body and demonstrated the justice of his exclusion from priestly ministrations, though he was the anointed king of Israel. His very effort to force himself into the presence of the All-pure brought to view his latent uncleanness.

Leprosy then is emblematical of man's natural defilement, individually and nationally. And by the cleansing of the Galilean leper the Servant of Jehovah showed that He had come to purify the

sinner from his sins, as He would Israel also, if the nation would take up the language of penitence, and say, "We are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6, R.V.). Then would Jehovah's prophetic promise to His people be fulfilled, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned; and whereby they have transgressed against me" (Jeremiah 33:8). This will be fulfilled in a day to come, but if Israel had known, even then a fountain was opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).

Legal Ceremony to be Observed

It was the function of a priest to pronounce a leprous man unclean, and it was also his function to pronounce a man clean when he was cured. The law was inoperative to heal, and only took cognisance of the fact of a man being healed or not. The work of ceremonial restoration only commenced when the cure of the plague had been effected by other means. This is expressly stipulated in the book of Leviticus "And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall go forth out of the camp, and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper" (Leviticus 14:1-3).

Clearly, the legal provision only contemplated one in whom divine mercy and power had wrought a cure. The leper whom Jesus cleansed was such a one. And the Lord bade him to observe the rites of the law in this respect. He was to show himself to the priest "for a testimony," that the genuine nature of this unusual case of recovery might be attested by the recognised authority in such matters. The priest who declared him unclean was the person most qualified to decide whether he was now really clean or not. To him was he therefore sent by the Lord, who never set aside the law. But there was more involved in this than the release of the cleansed leper from his sanitary and religious restrictions. The man was a living wit ness to the fact that God who of old cleansed a hated Syrian had now cleansed a despised Galilaean, and this He had done by His Servant, greater than Elisha, but equally ignored by the ruling power. The appointed sacrifices and offerings were to be made, so that Jehovah's name might be glorified in the obedience thus rendered to His word by the leper in a day of its neglect and dishonour. For this Servant sought not His own glory, but His who sent Him, being obedient Himself, and impressing on others obedience to constitutional authority. The Silence Enjoined

There has been much conjecture as to the reasons for the silence imposed upon the man by Jesus: "See thou say nothing to any man." But from the narrative it will be seen that the leper's mission to the priests was made to appear by the Lord to be one demanding immediate execution. After the healing Jesus at once sent him off, strictly charging him to say nothing to any one, but to show himself to the priest, who would then have before him indubitable evidence of the reality of this cure. This injunction the man disregarded, and as soon as he left the Lord began to spread the news in the immediate locality, so that Jesus could no longer go into town, but remained in desert places where persons visited Him.

"See thou say nothing to any man" may be compared with the Lord's direction to the seventy, "Salute no man on the way" (Luke 10:4). In matters of urgency it was necessary to avoid these tedious and elaborate salutations. Elisha gave similar instructions to Gehazi (2 Kings 4:29). The

verb (ekballo) used of the Lord’s sending him on the errand, while literally meaning "to drive forth," certainly implies urgency and speed. The man was directed to discharge his obligations to the Levitical priesthood before abandoning himself to the selfish joy of announcing his cure to his excitable friends and neighbours. Divine claims were paramount. But the healed leper disregarded both the word of His Healer and the express commandments of the law. And there have been those who have sought to justify the act of disobedience, as if grace such as the leper had received absolved the recipient from the responsibility of obedience. On the contrary, "to obey is better than sacrifice," and He, who told the delivere Gergesene to go home and tell his friends what the Lord had done (Mark 5:19), had wise reasons for what He said to the leper. Silence is a grace equally with speech when in accordance with the will of the Lord.

10. Out of Weakness made Strong

1910 132 "And when he entered*1 again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised*2 that he was in the house.*3 And many were gathered*4 together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door; and he spake*5 the word unto them. And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up,*6 they let down the bed*7 whereon the sick of the palsy lay. And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, *Song of Solomon 8:1-14 thy sins are forgiven. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God? And straightway Jesus, perceiving*9 in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether*10 it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power*11 on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and straightway took up the bed, and went forth*12 before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion"*13 (Mark 2:1-12, R.V.).

{*1 "on his entering again," W.K.

*2 "reported," J.N.D., W.K.

*3 "at the house," " at home," W.K.

*4 "brought together," W.K.

*5 "was speaking," W.K.

*6 "having dug it up," J.N.D., W.K.; "opened it up," W.K.

*7 "couch," J.N.D., W.K. Mark uses krabbaton in this section, and also in Mark 6:55; Matthew and Luke use a different word. They were not copyists one of another.

*8 "child" J.N.D., W.K.

*9 "knowing well," J.N.D., W.K.

*10 "which," J.N.D., W.K.

*11 "authority," W.K.;exousia, right as well as ability; see note on p. 38, ante.

*12 "out," J.N.D., W.K.

*13 "thus," J.N.D., W.K.}

Here we have the account of another of the numerous "mighty works of our Lord performed in that particularly favoured town, Capernaum. This town, whose name signifies the city of comfort or consolation, seems to have been the chosen centre from which the Lord proceeded upon His various itineraries. It is called by Matthew "His own city" (Matthew 9:1), and it was there, presumably because it was His place of residence, that the tax-collectors exacted tribute from Him (Matthew 17:24).

After some days of retirement in desert places, following upon the cleansing of the leper, Jesus came to town again and entered the house privately possibly the house of Simon and Andrew. His arrival was quickly reported, and the news travelled rapidly throughout the town and district, so that He was soon sought out by the crowds in Capernaum, as He had been in the desert places. The Lord continued His work of teaching, as the Sower sowing the good seed of the word of the kingdom, and as the righteous Servant of Jehovah instructing the masses in righteousness (Isaiah 53:11, New Tr.). Besides the simple unlettered peasantry of Galilee His audience, on a certain day at any rate, included Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come out of every town in Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem (Luke 5:17; Mark 3:22). Were these emissaries of the priests to whom the cleansed leper presented himself, and charged by them to make official inquiries concerning Jesus and His work? We indeed are not told so, but we are told (1) that this healed man was sent as a witness to the leaders of the people, and (2) that immediately afterwards hostility to the Servant of God had begun to work in their hearts.

Eagerness to see and hear something novel brought together then, as always, a great concourse of persons, whose interest was intensified not only by the fame of Jesus and His miracles, but also by the visit of the nation’s great ones from the metropolis and from the large towns of the provinces. Every means of access to the Master who sat indoors teaching was in consequence filled by excited crowds straining to hear a word or to catch a glimpse of what was being done.

There must necessarily have been disappointment for many that day, and it would seem that one of the least likely in Capernaum to receive benefit on this occasion from the great Healer was the paralysed man, whose infirmity confined him to his bed. This man had an earnest desire in his heart to seek the face of Jesus, whom he believed could relieve him, as He had done many others. His faith was shared especially by four devoted friends*, who carried him upon his bed to the house where Jesus was. These were accompanied by others, as Mark’s narrative shows — "they came, bringing a paralytic, borne of four." At the house further advance seemed impossible, for the courtyard and every avenue of approach was blocked by interested persons who showed no disposition to make room for the sick man and his hearers. But what so dauntless as earnest and purposeful faith such as this! They, the sufferer agreeing to endure the pain to himself which the scheme involved, ascended by an outside flight of stairs to the flat roof of the house (cp. Matthew 24:17), where they proceeded to remove the tiling or the thin stone roofing (not at all a difficult task, and its repair an easy matter), and to lower the paralytic upon his bed, through the opening thus made, in to the presence of the Master.

{*Is there any connection between these four unnamed bearers and the four "fishers of men," associated with Jesus for the purpose of bringing others to Jesus (Mark 1:16-20)?} The act was a bold and beautiful strategem of faith, arising not from a spirit of bravado, but from real confidence in the grace and power of Him whose presence they sought, coupled with a sense of the needed mercy. The faith was that of the five, for the action was concerted. And this the Lord saw, and approved what might have seemed to most brusque and ill-timed. It was indeed an offering to the Lord, even as the Jews will be in a future day when they are brought to Jehovah out of all the nations "upon horses and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts" to the holy mountain Jerusalem for blessing in their land (Isaiah 66:20). In this instance the Lord did not wait for the suppliant to frame his petition, nor did He say, as to the blind man, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He gave him the boon and more, going down to deep-seated needs the man, so far as we know, had never realised. Addressing the sick of the palsy in tender and affectionate terms, Jesus said, "Son*, thy sins are forgiven." The critical portion of the audience, seeing no visible effect following these words, drew adverse conclusions immediately, and in their hearts set down the Lord as a blasphemer "Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only?" But Jesus was present not only as the One to pardon iniquities and heal diseases (Psalms 103:3), but also as the One who searches the hearts, tries the reins and knows the inmost thoughts (Psalms 94:11; Jeremiah 17:10). He who saw the faith of the five men perceived the reasonings of the scribes in His own omniscient spirit (cp. John 2:24; John 6:61), and not by a power temporarily imparted to Him, as might have been the case with a prophet. None but God could penetrate the secret workings of man’s spirit, as Solomon confessed in his prayer (1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 6:30; Ezekiel 11:5), and the Lord gave the Pharisees the proof of the nature of His person by answering their thoughts. Who else could "hear them thinking"? The Lord thereupon addressed those who were inwardly cavilling at His words in terms which shed the light of God upon their hearts, revealing their secret thoughts: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?" The crucial point was not the actual words uttered, but what result was consequent upon their utterance. And the Lord proceeded to give them a visible assurance that His word was living and powerful, as He had just shown it to be "sharper than a two-edged sword." He demonstrated its power over physical infirmity, that by analogy its power to dispense pardon to the guilty might be known. The Master then continued, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

{*Luke gives "Man," the Lord having used both terms. But Matthew and Mark give teknon (not huios) indicative of more affection (cp. Mark 10:24; Matthew 21:28; Luke 2:48; Luke 15:31; Luke 16:25). Matthew adds, "Be of good cheer" — a word of comfort to the afflicted man.} The effect of these words addressed in His own authority ("I say unto thee"), and not speaking as a delegate, was instantaneous upon the paralytic man. His useless limbs were strengthened, so that he arose immediately; and so hale was he that he was able, as incontestable evidence of his thorough restoration, to take up the pallet or mattress upon which he had been brought to Jesus and to carry it away in presence of them all. What previously was a proof of his weakness, became thus a witness to his strength. The miracle too was an undeniable testimony to the claims of the One then in Capernaum. The company was deeply impressed by the sight. 1 hey were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. Israel by-and-by will see and believe on the

evidence of sight. But the Lord said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29), and this applies to the Christian today (1 Peter 1:8).

Forgiveness of Sins

1910 148 It is remarkable that the Lord in His ministry in only one other recorded instance deals with the question of the forgiveness or remission of sins. TO the penitent woman, in Simon the Pharisee's house, He said definitely, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). There were thus two witnesses to His power on earth to forgive sins according to the prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1:77). This blessed work was hindered by the obduracy and impenitence of the people. But after His crucifixion and the shedding of the blood of the new covenant for the remission of sins, He is presented anew in this character. Peter testified concerning this: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). And this grace is not for Israel alone, but for all that believe. This Paul declared in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:38-39).

Such was the wider and fuller tide of blessing for man which was ensured by the death of Christ. But here was a sample of this function performed by the Person deputed to forgive, the blood-basis of the act having not yet been laid. The cleansing of the leprosy and the healing of the paralytic, coupled with the forgiveness of sins, were indisputable evidence that the Servant-Prophet of Jehovah was present in Galilee exercising divine prerogatives in His own right. Was not the Psalm familiar to their ears, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases "* (Psalms 103:2-3)? There was now an exemplification of this mercy before their eyes which could not be dissociated from Jesus of Nazareth as the One who was acting. In point of fact, Israel did not know nor consider, but this Servant of God patiently accumulated evidences of His mission which would leave the nation without excuse.

{*In Luke we read that the "power of the Lord (i.e., of Jehovah) was present to heal" (Luke 5:17), a reference, it would seem, to this Psalm.} Are the Lord's words to be regarded as a benevolent wish on His part that the sick man's sins may eventually be forgiven? Not so; but rather as a positive declaration that they were then and thereby forgiven ("Thy sins are forgiven"); and the Lord intended that the sufferer should understand His words in this unequivocal sense. At any rate, the scribes understood the words in this sense, and they, in consequence, brought the charge of blasphemy against Him: "Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth? Who can forgive sins but one, even God? "It is evident they regarded the words as a positive expression of fact, and not a hope for future pardon, such as any one might compassionately utter on behalf of another.

It may be asserted that the disease of this man's body was an infliction upon him in consequence of some particular sins of which he had been guilty. God sent such temporal judgments in His government of the people of Israel, as the scripture testifies in many parts. For instance, at the repeated murmuring of the nation in the wilderness Jehovah smote them with a plague* (Numbers 11:32-33; Psalms 78:31). In New Testament times it was so also in the assembly at Corinth, where many were in sickness and some even slept, because of their transgression (1 Corinthians 11:30; see also James 5:14-16). The Lord recognised afflictions of this judicial character in the case of the impotent man of Bethesda, to whom He said after His cure, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing

come unto thee" (John 5:14).

{*The people of Israel were warned by Jehovah at the commencement of their wilderness journey that their disobedience would be punished in this way: If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).}

If it be so, that the Lord's declaration of forgiveness had reference only to that portion of the man's sins for which his paralysis was a temporal chastisement under the hand of God, and not to the sum total of his guilt as a sinner, the principle still holds good. It is equally the exclusive prerogative of God to release a man from the temporal, as it is from the eternal, consequence of his sins. Sin is an offence against God, and therefore He only can remit it. By divine mercy the sins of Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, were forgiven; by that same mercy alone, the thorn in the flesh could be removed from Paul the apostle (1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Corinthians 12:7).

True were the words of the scribes, "Who can forgive sins but one, even God"; but false was their assumption that He who had just spoken was not God. He was God "manifest in the flesh," as He proved so often before their eyes. But all human reasoning founded upon disbelief in the person of Christ must not only be false but evil. He alone is the Truth, and He is also the Life, and the Way to the Father.

Speaking Blasphemy

Blasphemy in Holy Scripture, while sometimes used for evil speech against man, has reference also to evil speaking against or about God. The mental charge of blasphemy made against our Lord on this occasion was due to the assumption of the scribes that He usurped one of the attributes of Godhead by pronouncing absolution of sins. His claim to be the Son of God was so regarded by the Jews; as the Lord said to them, "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:33; John 10:36). At the trial Caiaphas said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death" (Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 14:64, New Tr.).

While these references illustrate the use of the term by the Jews, the Lord Himself applies it to the disparagement of God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10). The term is also used for the calumniation of men, and of Jesus on the cross (Luke 22:65; Luke 23:39), and is translated variously as "evil speaking," "railing," "being defamed," etc. Its seriousness as a sin is correlated to the dignity of the person slandered or blasphemed — a distinction fully recognised by human laws.

Son of Man

It is to be noted that in this connection we have the first recorded use of this title of our Lord in this Gospel and also in Luke — the power of the Son of man to forgive sins. In Matthew it first occurs in the sentence, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). The title is frequently applied by the blessed Lord to Himself, but is never applied to Him by others, nor by the Evangelists themselves. Stephen testified, however, that he saw the "Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). And in the Apocalyptic visions John saw the Son of man in His capacity as Judge (Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14). It does not occur at all in the Epistles, except once in a quotation from the Psalms (Hebrews 2:6). This title, "Son of man," by its terms suggests a wider sphere than is suggested by "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham." It implies universal headship, as Hebrews 2:1-18. shows, and was adopted by the Lord in view of His rejection by the Jews as the Messiah. Son of a man He was not, but Son of man He was, and when on earth He could say, "The Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13; 1 Corinthians 15:47). In Daniel His universal dominion is prophesied of under this title: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). As Son of man He has power to execute judgment on sins as well as to forgive them (John 5:27). In the prophetic communications to Ezekiel, the title, "Son of man," is frequently employed by Jehovah when addressing the prophet. It is also used once in addressing Daniel (Daniel 8:7), but they never apply it to themselves. Both Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets of the exile, and ministered away from Judah, which was under the power of the Gentiles. The Lord too, as the despised Servant-Prophet, ministering in "Galilee of the Gentiles," assumed this title, proving His authority to forgive sins, not as Jehovah of Psalms 103:1-22, or as the Messiah of Israel, but as the Son of man.

11. — Publicans Enter the Kingdom

1910 163 "And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted*1 unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed*2 by he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the place of toll,*3 and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

"And it came to pass that he was sitting at meat*4 in his house, and many publicans*5 and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and the publicans, said unto his disciples,*6 He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners. And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, they that are whole*7 have no need of a physician, but they that are sick:*8 I came*9 not to call the righteous, but sinners"*10 (Mark 2:13-17, R.V.).

{*1 "came," J.N.D.; "kept coming," J.N.D., note.

*2 "passing by," J.N.D.

*3 "tax-office," J.N.D.

*4 "lay at table," J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "tax-gatherers," J.N.D.; W.K. "and Pharisees," J.N.D.

*6 "Why is it," J.N.D.; "How is it," W.K.

*7 "strong," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "ill," J.N.D.; W.K.

*9 "have not come," J.N.D.; W.K.

*10 "to repentance," which occurs in Luke 5:32, should be omitted here and in Matthew 9:13.} The Evangelist as directed by the inspiring Spirit proceeds to set forth the character of the ministry of Jesus the Servant-prophet. He had been announcing the imminence of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). He had by many incontestable proofs shown that the healing mercies of Jehovah were in their midst in His own person (Mark 1:16-39). But the people had heedless ears and callous hearts and the striking cases of the cleansed leper and the restored paralytic awakened the religious wisdom of the day only to prefer a malicious charge of blasphemy against Him as the Forgiver of sins (Mark 1:40 Mark 2:12). When the benign grace of God is met by the churlish resistance of man it seeks to extend its limits. The Saviour came bringing grace and truth to the favoured nation, but since the scribes and Pharisees would not have His boon, He would show that the nature of this grace was such that it embraced not only the despised Galilean, but the still more despised publican. Mark shows this development in the Lord’s ministry by the account of the call of Levi, and by the subsequent feast at which many tax-collectors and sinners were present as welcome guests. The Call of the Tax-Collector

Jesus left Capernaum and passed on to the shores of the Sea of Galilee where He was teaching the crowds that flocked to Him. Here was the Government custom-house, where various tolls and dues were collected either for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, or for the Romans. The persons responsible for the collection of these taxes were, in many, if not in all, instances, Jews. On this account, as well as because of the natural repugnance of most men to pay taxes at all, the "publicans" were regarded by their country-men as an odious and hateful class. In the performance of their duties they had ample opportunities for oppression and extortion, to their own personal enrichment (Luke 3:13). Such abuses naturally aggravated the hatred generally felt towards them. All, however, were not equally oppressive, and Zacchaeus evidently was an exception to the general rule, for he seems to have been of just and generous habits (Luke 19:8). As Jesus passed along he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the, place of toll. Addressing him, the Master said, Follow Me. And in instant response Levi arose and followed Him. As in the case of Simon and Andrew (1: 16-18), there was probably on the part of Levi some previous knowledge of the Lord and His teaching. They, as John 1:1-51. shows, had made a confession of Him some time before they were called to go after Him. Levi no doubt had heard His preaching and witnessed His miracles in Capernaum. For aught we know to the contrary he may have been one of those publicans who "justified God, having been baptised with the baptism of John," and thus confessedly was one of those waiting for the Redeemer of Israel (Luke 3:12; Luke 7:29). But his difficulty would be whether he who was considered to be no better than a Gentile* might dare to appropriate the blessings of the promised kingdom. Like his fellow who could not lift up so much as his eyes in the temple (Luke 18:13), this man could not lift up his eyes to Him who was greater than the temple.

{*Compare the Lord’s words as to one who would not hear the church, "Let him be unto thee as a Gentile and a publican" (Matthew 18:17).} But the Searcher of hearts was passing by. He who knew the vain thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees knew also the timid desires of the publican. He who saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, had seen Levi at the toll-booth. And the Lord of love summoned him who was already a disciple in heart to be His follower in the open light of day. At once he arose and left all, as Luke tells us, reclaimed thus from the service of the Roman to that of King Immanuel, who in this manner collected His dues by the Sea of Galilee.

Levi and Matthew

Some have found a difficulty in determining whether Levi the publican and Matthew the apostle were the same person. There is, however, no sufficient reason to doubt their identity. In the lists of the apostles given in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew is named in each of them. And Mark and Luke, in narrating the call of the publican, both give him the name of Levi. The obvious inference from these passages is that, like other of the apostles, the man had two names, Matthew being his most usual, if not his only, designation after his call to the discipleship of Jesus. In the first Gospel, Matthew, writing of the same eventful call, ascribes it to a man named Matthew (Matthew 9:9), thus indicating his own origin with the utmost candour and humility, and by the avoidance of the name Levi preventing any possible confusion as to his identity. It is granted that a crooked worldly policy animated by motives of short-sighted prudence might cause an author to conceal such a fact about himself; but he who was inspired to include the names of Tamar and Bathsheba in the genealogy of the Messiah (Matthew 1:1-25) would be preserved from the petty meanness of concealing the fact that one of the Lord’s apostles was a tax-collector. "Whom do we hear to blazon the shame of Matthew but his own mouth? Matthew the Evangelist tells us of Matthew the publican. His fellows call him Levi, as unwilling to lay their finger upon the spot of his unpleasing profession; himself will not smother nor blanch it a whit, but publishes it to all the world in a thankful recognition of the mercy that called him, as liking well that his baseness should serve for a fit foil to set off the glorious lustre of His grace by whom he was elected. What matters it how vile we are, O God, so Thy glory may arise in our abasement?" The truth is that Matthew bore two names; so "Thomas is called Didymus by John only; and Thaddeus (or Lebbeus as in Matthew and Mark) is called Judas by Luke and John." But while the identity of Matthew and Levi may be considered as well established, it is the merest conjecture to regard Alpheus, the father of Levi, as identical with the father of James (Matthew 10:4), and with Cleophas (John 19:25). The Feast in Matthew’s House

Soon after the call of the fishermen Jesus went to the house of Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:29). He is now shown as the guest of Levi the publican. "And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them" (Luke 5:29). The King is not the host here, for He has not yet taken possession of His own. Solomon in the day of his power made a feast to all his servants (1 Kings 3:15), but He who was a greater than Solomon had no place to lay His head. He who in a coming day will make in mount Zion for "all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isaiah 25:6), was well content to be entertained by the tax-gatherer. And what a company were seen at the banquet that day! The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins; hence sinners were welcome to Him who came to cleanse them from their sins. Levi the publican could testify to the grace that called him to be a follower of Jesus; hence,

other publicans felt this to be a sufficient ground for believing that if they also came He would in no wise cast them out. We find therefore that a goodly company responded to the invitation of Levi, and came to eat and drink with Him. "O happy publicans and sinners who found out their Saviour! O merciful Saviour that disdained not publicans and sinners!" They found Him to be indeed the "Friend of publicans and sinners," "a Friend sticking closer than a brother," and it is good to read that at the close of the feast "many followed Him," sinners as they were, fitted and made meet to follow the Sinless One into His kingdom.

Murmurs at the Feast The unbelieving and sinful generation that murmured of old in the wilderness at the heavenly manna murmured now in the presence of the Bread of God come down from heaven to fill with good things those who were hungry and thirsty after righteousness. The Pharisaic scribes said to the disciples, "How is it he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? "

It will be observed how the gradual development of evil opposition to the Lord is presented to us. In the previous incident we are shown the mental comment, the inward suspicion, the evil surmise of the Pharisees; and also how the Lord graciously corrected this, rebuking them before all that others might fear. Now we see that the sinful thought of foolishness became the spoken back-biting word of these men unrestrained and unabashed in the presence of Him who had laid bare the thought and intents of their hearts. The word of the Pharisees, however, was spoken not to the Lord Himself, but to the disciples, reminding us of the wily serpent in Eden who directed his assaults upon Adam through Eve, the weaker vessel. They, avoiding Jesus Himself, sought to bring the Master into discredit with His followers by their question, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" It was a whisper in their ears to turn away their hearts, even as Absalom sought to turn away the hearts of the people from David. But the Lord was watchful over His own. It was not yet the time to put words of wisdom into their mouths to speak for Him as His witnesses (Matthew 10:19). But He answered for them, confuting the sophistry of the scribes. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners," It was in this manner that the two-edged sword of truth proceeded out of His mouth for their moral judgment. For why was it they failed to receive their Messiah? Because in their own estimation they did not need such a one as He. Why complain then that those who did feel their need of such a Saviour came to Him and were made welcome? What sort of a physician is he who refuses to minister to any but the hale and the hearty? The Lord then definitely announced that He was come not to call the righteous (i.e. those who were righteous in their own eyes; indeed otherwise there is none righteous, no, not one), but sinners. These who responded should be washed, sanctified, justified, and made inheritors of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), but those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, except they repented, would most assuredly perish in their sins. In Matthew it is stated that the Lord vindicated His reception of the moral outcasts by a quotation from the prophet Hosea: "Go ye," He said, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6). It was the promise of God that when man was in a resourceless case, He would exercise His prerogative of mercy. The Lord accordingly was in the midst of Israel not to receive sacrifice but to show mercy. For it is suggested that this is the significance of the passage, rather than a rebuke to formalism and religious ceremonialism which some see in it.

According to the latter interpretation the sentence is a declaration that God desires not the sacrifices of the law but the merciful deeds of man to his fellow-creatures. But while this statement is true in itself, and indeed expressed in other portions of Scripture, the words of the prophet as used here by the Lord show that in receiving publicans and sinners He was performing the divine function of displaying mercy, which was in accordance with the will of God, rather than the offering of sacrifice by those whose hearts were far from God, like the Pharisees. It was for the remission, not for the judgment of sins, that the Servant of Jehovah, the "dayspring from on high," had visited His people; and His mission emanated from the tender mercy [the heart of mercy] of God Himself (Luke 1:78). While it abides true that judgment shall overtake every evil work, it was shown in the house of Levi the tax-gatherer how the mercy of God gloried against judgment.

12. — Fasting and Feasting

1910 179 "And John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken*1 away from them, and then will they fast in that day. No man seweth a piece of undressed*2 cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up*3 taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth,*4 and the skins; but they put new wine*5 into fresh wine-skins" (Mark 2:18-22, R.V.).

{*1 "shall have been taken," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 "unfulled," "unmilled," J.N.D. W.K.

*3 "its new filling up," J.N.D.;

*4 "is poured out," J.N.D. "is lost," W.K.

*5 "is to be put," J.N.D.; "must be put," W.K.}

There seems no sufficient ground to doubt that this question was put to the Lord in the house of Levi, nor that it arose while the feast was still in progress. The previous question related to the relative respectability of the assembly in the house of the tax-gatherer, where Jesus attended as the invited and honoured guest. The present question referred to the purpose for which the company was assembled. It was as if they had inquired with some display of zealous piety, Is this a time for eating and drinking and feasting? feebly imitating the indignant question Elisha put to Gehazi, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?" But unlike Elisha, the zeal of the questioners was without knowledge. The wisdom, however, of the Prophet whom God had raised up "like unto Moses" made the manifested ignorance of this inquiry the occasion for instruction to all. The questioners in this case embraced John the Baptist’s disciples and the Pharisees. John himself was at this time in prison (Mark 1:14), but his followers remained as a distinct body during this and some part, at any rate, of the Lord’s ministry (Matthew 11:2; Matthew 14:12; John 3:25), and even subsequently (Acts 19:1-4). They were taught by John to pray and to make supplications (Luke 5:33; Luke 11:1), and as their master came eating no bread nor drinking wine (Luke 7:33),

so they used often to fast, imitating his austerities. In this they were in unison with the Pharisees, for was it not the proud boast of one of them that he fasted twice in the week (Luke 18:12)? They were on this occasion accompanied therefore by the Pharisees, though, as Matthew tells us, they were the actual spokesmen. "Then come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not" (Matthew 9:11)? The Occasion of the Question

We are not informed in the Gospels why this question was laid before the Lord. But it can hardly be supposed that on the part of the Pharisees there was a sincere desire for instruction. The publicans were entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 21:31), but they were not desirous of learning its principles. They were probably hoping that some word of His might form a basis of attack. On the other hand it is easy to conceive that the disciples of the Baptist might have been presenting to the Lord what was really an insuperable spiritual difficulty to them, founded upon the striking contrast between John and Jesus, which their imperfect knowledge could not reconcile. John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; the Son of man came eating and drinking. Who was right? The disciples of John had every confidence in their master. Though he wrought no miracles, they regarded him, and rightly so, as the prophet of the Highest, the forerunner of the Messiah. They were profoundly convinced of the justice of his stern denunciations of the evils prevailing in every social class at that time, though now, in the strange providence of God that voice of testimony was silent in the prison of the oppressor. They believed that the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and everything was ready for the baptism of the fire of Jehovah’s judgment (Matthew 3:11-12). They repented; and was not fasting fruit worthy of repentance? John fasted, and should not the disciples be as their master? But more than this they were not without the support of scriptural example and precept for the association of fasting with the introduction of the kingdom of Messiah. Truly this support existed more in their own fancies than in reality, but such is often the case in the history of spiritual difficulties. They would remember the long fast of Moses on the occasion of the giving of the law, and of Elijah, in whose spirit John had come, in the days of the restoration of the law. When Zechariah prophesied of the fountain to be opened for sin and uncleanness, and of the deliverance of Jerusalem from the oppression of the Gentiles, did he not prophesy that in that day there should be a great mourning in Jerusalem? The whole land should mourn, every family apart (Zechariah 12:9-14; Zechariah 13:1). Joel also, in view of the imminence of the day of Jehovah, calls the people to fasting and to prayer: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the old men and all the inhabitants of the land unto the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD" (Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15).

These and other scriptures in connection with the introduction of the kingdom, which they believed to be at hand, might well cause them to wonder when they saw a feast not a fast proclaimed, and sanctioned by the presence of Jesus Himself, while sinners were not cut off in judgment but made welcome at this feast which was proceeding at the very time of one of their own fasts. What was the explanation? They sought instruction of the great Prophet of wisdom. "Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?" The Terms of the Answer The solution of their difficulty was simple, and in like manner all our difficulties vanish as the light of God shines upon them. They had fallen into the common error of thinking of the coming kingdom and of forgetting that the King was already present with them. They were absorbed with the adjustment of the Bridegroom’s affairs, and overlooking the Bridegroom Himself. They were full of the sense of their own guilt as sinners, and ignorant of the presence of the Saviour of sinners.

There is a time to fast and a time to feast. The question really was which of these was seasonable, and this the Lord settles in His own inimitable way, revealing the truth concerning Himself in simple and homely figures such as all might understand.

He was among them as One to serve them all in love, not in the majesty of His might to condemn; with the branch of olive, not with the rod of iron; as the Bridegroom, not as the Judge. "Can," said He, "the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall have been taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."

It was clearly incongruous for there to be, from whatever motive, fasting in the presence of a bridegroom. The nuptial season is, by common consent, one associated with joy, from the days of Adam and Eve in Eden. And the disciples of John had to learn that the Lord Jesus was presenting Himself to the daughter of Zion in the character of her Bridegroom, come to betroth Himself to her "in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies," according to the spirit of the prophecies of Hosea. God had raised up a Horn of salvation for His people; was it therefore a day for a man to afflict his soul, to bow his head like a bulrush, to cover himself with sackcloth and ashes? Was not the "Magnificat" of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) more suitable to their lips than the Lamentations of Jeremiah, since the Servant of Jehovah was in their midst — He who had come to give a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3)?

There is reason to think that these men had heard this figure of the Bridegroom applied to the Messiah on a previous occasion. They spoke to John with reference to the numbers of persons whom they saw coming to Jesus. John showed them that he was aware that this was, and must be, the case, saying also in explanation, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30). The Baptist compared himself to the friend of the Bridegroom, showing that he was conscious that Jesus was present in that character though he himself was His friend, rather than of the bride. For like Moses upon Pisgah, he discerned the promised kingdom and its glories near at hand, yet not for him. Like aged Simeon he would depart, having seen the King in His beauty. The Lord now confirmed the application of this prophetic figure by John, their master, to Himself, as if to awaken a sense of allegiance to Him as the Bridegroom of Israel. Had not John pointed to Him, saying to them, "Behold the Lamb of God"? But they had not responded. Had he not spoken of Him as the Bridegroom? But still they fasted and prayed and held aloof from Him to whom John witnessed. The Lord did not definitely call them to follow Him as He called Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Levi the publican, for they lacked that appreciation of Himself which would have impelled them to instant obedience. But He set before them that truth concerning Himself which, when received by faith, would inevitably draw them unto Him. An Occasion for Fasting to Come

While the disciples of the Lord had at that time adequate reasons for rejoicing, inasmuch as the Hope of Israel was with them, the days would darken again before the millennial dawn. The Bridegroom would be taken away; then they would have reason to fast. Thus did the Lord, early in His ministry, intimate to His own, in veiled but significant language, that He must be removed from their midst, and, in consequence, a sorrow should fill their hearts which would be turned into joy

only at His second coming (see John 16:17-22). The coming days, characterised by the absence of the Bridegroom, are strictly those which immediately precede His public appearing for the blessing of Israel and the nations generally. Those will be days of unparalleled tribulation for the Jews, of such an intensely violent nature that if they were protracted none could be saved (Matthew 24:21-22). Then the faithful ones might well fast. So the Lord instructs them subsequently in more definite terms (Mark 13:1-37), but here imparts so much of the truth as was needful to meet the difficulty raised. The Lord was with them, and in this they were authorised to rejoice, as they would be constrained to do by the affections of their hearts towards Him. The Lord did not condemn fasting as a practice. He instructed His disciples that it should be undertaken in secret, as before God, rather than before men (Matthew 6:16-18). It was to be united with prayer for the effectual expulsion of unclean spirits in certain cases (Mark 9:29). There was a season of prayer and fasting in the early church when Paul and Barnabas went forth on their first missionary tour (Acts 13:3). Nothing in scripture appears to warrant the present general abandonment of the practice by Christians, though indeed there is a sense in which we may say the Lord is still with us (Matthew 28:20). Self-denial in the spirit of Nazariteship, of which food-fasting is but a single phase, should, however, be practised by the believer habitually and not only on special occasions.

Fasting appears to be expressive of an occupation of the spiritual nature with heavenly subjects to such an intense degree that the instinctive cravings of the physical nature for food and relaxation are disregarded or unheeded for the time. In its purest form therefore fasting is involuntary. It is surely needless to say that the perfunctory or the Pharisaic fast is valueless before God. The Old and New Contrasted The Lord, in taking up the question of the apparent incongruity between His disciples and ohn’s, used it as an occasion for general instruction as to the contrast in principle between the dispensation that was passing away and that which was about to come. That was old; this was new. The two differed in nature and character — both externally and internally. This essential contrast the Lord placed before them in the simple and homely metaphors of the cloth and the wine, with the absence of affinity between new and old in both cases. "No man seweth a piece of undressed [unmilled] cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins: else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins; but new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins." In the first case a worn-out and torn garment is rendered still more unserviceable by a patch of new cloth — the newness itself causing a further breach. In like manner, unless new wine is put into fresh unused skins (or leather bottles) the skins burst* and both the wine and the skins are lost.

{*It is explained that new wine, or "must," being put into old skins would be caused to ferment by the traces of old wine in the skins. Hence the bursting of the skins (cp. Job 32:19; also Joshua 9:4; and Genesis 21:14; Psalms 119:83).} The joys of the promised kingdom are associated in the prophets with the introduction of what is absolutely new and created of God, not with the rehabilitation of the old things. Thus we read in Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isaiah 65:17-19). Nothing can be newer than a created thing. And the principle is true in Christianity, even as it will be in the coming millennial day. "If any

man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The dispensational truths underlying the emblems of the cloth and the wine are fully revealed in subsequent parts of the New Testament. That outward righteousness which is of the law is replaced by that which is of faith. And the joys of the "vine of the earth" give way to those of the "True Vine," who bestows the inward power and comfort of the Holy Ghost, a source of joy of which no one can rob us. Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews particularly deal with these contrasts.

"It is not possible to attach the spiritual power of Christianity to the carnal ceremonies which human nature loves, because it can make of them a religion without a new life, and without the conscience being touched. The unconverted man, if he wishes, may thus do as much good as the converted man. No, the new wine must be kept in new bottles: it is important for us to remember it. The dispensation was changed, a new order was coming in, and all was altered; the nature of the things was different — they could not exist at the same time; fleshly ceremonies and the power of the Holy Ghost could never go together. Think of it, Christians! Christianity has tried to embellish itself with these ceremonies, and often even under pagan forms; and what has it become? It has adapted itself to the world of which these forms were the rudiments, and has become really pagan, and its true spirituality can hardly be found at all."

13. — The Servant of Jehovah the Lord of the Sabbath

1911 196 "And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the cornfields; and his disciples began, as they went,*1 to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and did eat the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also*2 to them that were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for*3 man, and not man for*3 the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even*4 of the sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28, R.V.).

{*1 "began to walk on, plucking the ears," JT.N.D.

*2 "even," J.N.D.

*3 "on account of," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "Lord also," J.N.D., W.K.} The Servant of Jehovah is shown by the Evangelist in a variety of circumstances, carrying out in them all the will of God with absolute and unvarying perfection, so that in every recorded word and deed we have for our admiration and humble emulation a living exemplification of divine truth.

We have seen Him at the feast spread by the love of Matthew the publican, having accepted the invitation with that humility which was the wonder of the Pharisees and is the ambition of the believer. But as He thus "goes along with the lowly" we see the Guest become the Host. He will be debtor to none, and in that motley assemblage of self-righteous and self-abased men He dispenses the hospitality of heaven, making them free of truths of the kingdom which the prophets and kings, the Abrahams and Davids of old, had longed in vain to know.

We now see Him a wanderer, and His followers staying their hunger with a few grains of corn, plucked by the wayside. They who had no occasion to fast because the Bridegroom was with them were compelled to fast because the Bridegroom was a rejected one. The Pharisees raised objections to this act of the disciples, as if the law of God were infringed thereby, but the Lord exposed their sophistry by means of the Old Testament scriptures, and accepting His title as the rejected Servant, He asserted the authority of the Son of man as the Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus in the Cornfields The Lord and those who were with Him were walking in the cornfields on the Sabbath day. We learn from the parable of the Sower that a public way or path often lay through the cornfields, on which indeed some seeds were apt to fall in sowing-time (Mark 4:4). The disciples, as they passed along, began to pluck some of the ears of corn, and, after rubbing them in their hands, to eat the early ripened grain. This act was not regarded as a violation of the law of private property. On the contrary, it was expressly permitted under the Mosaic economy: "When thou comest into thy neighbour’s standing corn, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn" (Deuteronomy 23:25). Accordingly, in this case we do not find that any protest was raised by the husbandman himself, but the envious and jealous eyes of the Pharisees were upon the little band, and directly they began (Matthew 12:1-2) to pluck the corn in their hunger, the hostile critics in their indecent haste to find some occasion to condemn the Lord, said to Him, "Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? " The Lord Himself had not participated in the act of the disciples, but He defended them against their accusers. Precious proof of His faithful guardian love for those whom the Father had given Him out of the world! If He is for His own, who can be against them? The time was to come when the little flock would be left alone, and in that future evil day they must gird themselves with the girdle of truth and wield the sword of the Spirit. Now the Master, whose hands had been taught to fight in the wilderness (Psalms 144:1), used the two-edged sword of scripture to overcome these adversaries who sought to fasten upon His followers the stigma of law-breakers. The reply of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, consists of two distinct portions, each of which is introduced by the words, And he said unto them." (1) He appealed to written scripture in support of what was done: "Did ye never read what David did?" etc. (2) He vindicated the act of the disciples on the ground of the origin of the Sabbath, and of His own authority as Lord of the Sabbath. To this two-fold testimony the Pharisees, so far as we learn, returned no reply. We can well believe that, in a greater degree than in the case of the protomartyr Stephen, "they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). In the Gospel by Luke, the same two points raised by the Lord are given, but in Matthew two other points are added, so that His testimony there is shown to have a fourfold character. But this we can now do no more than mention. The Lord there is stated to have cited, in addition to that given by Mark and Luke — (1) the example of the priests serving on the Sabbath day in the temple, executing their duties in the offering of sacrifices and the like, not contrary to, but in accordance with the law, and (2) the declaration of Jehovah through Hosea of His desire for the exercise of His own mercy rather than the reception from man of the sacrifice required by law (Matthew 12:5-7; Hosea 6:6). But of all these things the Pharisee in his religious pride was ignorant, or he would not have condemned the guiltless disciples. This instance afforded a practical illustration of the truth previously declared by the Lord that the old wine-skins of the law could not contain the new wine of the kingdom.

David and Abiathar

Let us consider now this reference — the only one — made by the Lord to the history of His ancestor according to the flesh, the great king of Israel (1) regarding the incident itself, and (2) inquiring what is its application to the event in the cornfields.

David, chosen of God and anointed of Samuel to be king over Israel, was in flight from Saul, who sought to kill him. It was a day when the appointments of Jehovah for His worship and praise in Israel were sadly "out of course." The ark was at Kirjath-jearim, while the tabernacle was at Nob (1 Samuel 7:2; 2 Samuel 6:2), where the priests were also; and thither David came, a fugitive from the wrath of the king, and famished with hunger. He arrived on the Sabbath day when the priests had changed the twelve loaves of showbread ("the bread of the face," or "of the presence") which according to divine instruction were placed on the golden table in the holy place every Sabbath (Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9). The ritual was therefore proceeding, though there was no ark within the holy of holies — an indication of the manner in which the nation had departed from the centre and core of worship as laid down in the beginning of its history. David asked the priest for some of the stale loaves for himself and his companions. This was a bold request, for this hallowed bread, unleavened, anointed with pure frankincense, one of the most holy fire offerings to Jehovah, was eaten in the holy place by the priests only (Leviticus 24:7-9). But the priest recognised in the hungry David fleeing from Saul the anointed of Jehovah, and he gave him showbread, in spite of the evil eyes of Doeg the Edomite, a creature of Saul’s, which were upon him (1 Samuel 21:7), and by whose hand the fearful vengeance of the king was speedily wreaked upon Nob and its priestly inhabitants.

It was to the written account of this incident in the life of David that our Lord referred by way of scriptural support of what the disciples had done on the Sabbath. "Did ye never read what David did?" The parallel is clear. The glory of God had departed from the temple, and the Pharisees were despising and rejecting their Messiah, even as David was hunted into exile by the cruel and unrighteous rage of Saul. In that day the letter of the ancient ordinances had to yield to the necessities of him who was the anointed king after God’s heart. Of what value then were these petty cavils of the Pharisees who sought to impose grievous burdens contrary to the spirit of the law, and refused to acknowledge either the King or His kingdom? Their objections recoiled to their own condemnation, for were they not to blame because the Lord from heaven was wandering on the Sabbath, with His followers, hungry and homeless? "In the presence of the evil that despises God’s beloved and faithful witnesses in the earth, the outward ordinances of the Lord lose their application for the time being. The sanctity of ritual disappears before the rejection of the Lord and His people." "Granted that the showbread was only for the priests, yet for them to keep their consecrated bread and let the anointed king starve would be strange homage to God and the king. And now the Son of David, the Lord of David, was there, and more rejected, more despised, than David himself."

Abiathar or Ahimelech? In a divine revelation there must be of necessity difficulties to a finite mind. And in an inspired history extending over many centuries and consisting of events selected and grouped for moral and spiritual instruction, there must indeed be difficulties many of which arise from the omission of connecting links which, though unessential to the divine aim, would nevertheless, if supplied, at once remove the perplexity. An instance of such a difficulty, which is indeed common in all history, occurs in this section of Mark. The Lord’s words, as recorded in this Gospel, are, "Did ye never read what David did . . . how he entered the house of God in the days

of Abiathar the high priest." In the book of Samuel, David is said to have come to Ahimelech the priest, (1 Samuel 21:1), who gave him the bread, and was subsequently massacred with his family by order of Saul (1 Samuel 22:11-19), one of his sons named Abiathar escaping to David, and afterwards becoming high priest. So that apparently the same man is called Ahimelech in one place and Abiathar in another. This constitutes the "difficulty," and if we were in possession of the whole of the details it would no longer be a difficulty to our intelligence, as it is now none to our faith. We dare not suppose that our Lord was ignorant of the name of the priest at Nob, nor that Mark, who alone of the Evangelists supplies the name, was permitted by the inspiring Spirit to record the words of his Master erroneously. But as the Lord definitely challenged the Pharisees, who were so punctilious as to the letter of scripture, on their reading ("Did ye never read?") we may examine the Old Testament for help. The Lord's words, as we have seen, imply that the truth on this point could have been ascertained by reading.

Now it will be observed from the Historical Books that (1) the same person frequently possessed more than one name, and (2) that the same name frequently recurs in the pedigree of families. It is not therefore an improbable explanation that the priest who succoured David bore the joint names of Ahimelech and Abiathar, and that his son, who escaped the massacre at Nob, also bore the same double names. Indeed, the responsible priest at Nob is "called by no less than three names: Ahiah (1 Samuel 14:3; 1 Samuel 14:18), Ahimelech (1 Samuel 21:1-6; 1 Samuel 22:9-23); and, as in St. Mark, Abiathar (1 Chronicles 18:16; 1 Chronicles 24:6; 1 Chronicles 24:31). The Septuagint gives also the form Abimelech. Moreover, the son of this Ahimelech or Abiathar, who was afterwards David's joint High Priest* with Zadok, was himself also called by both names, viz., Abiathar (1 Samuel 22:20-23; 2 Samuel 15:24-29; 1 Kings 2:26-27), and Ahimelech (2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 24:6; 1 Chronicles 24:31), or Abimelech (1 Chronicles 18:16). Now it has often been remarked that there occur in the Old Testament many instances of double names,** as Reuel, Jethro, and Hobab; Esau and Edom; Benjamin and Benoni; Gideon and Jerubbaal; Solomon and Jedidiah; Uzziah and Azariah; Zedekiah and Matthaniah (see Patrit. de Evang. 50. 3. ; Diss. 9: 100: 3); but it has scarcely been noticed that the priests especially appear to have borne double names, and that father and son were frequently called by the same names. Yet both these facts are of the utmost value for the passage before us. The following are illustrations: — As to the first: In 1Ma 2:1-5 is a list of five priests, sons of Mattathias, all with double names. The priestly pedigree of Josephus, from the public records, furnishes several other examples (Jos.

Vit. §§ 1, 2). As to the second: It was proposed to call John the Baptist Zechariah after the name of his father; and his father was a priest (Luke 1:5; Luke 1:59). In Josephus's pedigree, Matthias, one of his priestly ancestors, had a son also called Matthias; whose grandson again was likewise named Matthias, and his son also Matthias (l.c.). Also, upon the deposition of Joseph Cabi, the High Priesthood was conferred on the son of the famous High Priest Ananus, "who was himself also called Ananus (Jos. Ant. 20. 9.1). Thus, then, we not only have Old Testament evidence to the fact that the High Priest who gave David the hallowed bread bore the name of Abiathar as well as that of Ahimelech, and his son likewise; but also independent evidence that this possession of double and the same names by father and son in the families of the priests was not an unusual occurrence. With such evidence the alleged historical error of St. Mark completely vanishes.*** {*Strictly speaking, he is not termed high priest in the Old Testament, but priest.

**Compare also the double names of the apostles viz., Simon, Peter; Matthew, Levi. [Notes, W.J.H.] ***J. B. McClellan, The New Testament, p. 672,} This explanation seems preferable to that which supposes that the phrase in Mark is elliptical and means "in the days of Abiathar who afterwards became high priest." Abiathar, it is further assumed in this hypothesis, influenced his father to befriend David, and as he alone escaped, this may have been the case.

Seeing that the senior priest at Nob was called Ahimelech and Abiathar, a pertinent inquiry arises why the Lord refers to him as Abiathar instead of Ahimelech, the latter being the name by which he is described in the narrative relating to the showbread incident. In connection with this inquiry, it should be remembered that Ahimelech was of the house of Eli, and that house was doomed to extermination by the judgment of God, because of the wickedness at Shiloh (1 Samuel 2:30-33; 1 Samuel 3:12-14). In accordance with this judgment, Eli's descendants were all slain at Nob, but with one exception. For God was not unmindful of the mercy of Ahimelech shown to His anointed, and He did not then make a full end of the line of Ithamar, and blot out the posterity of Eli from the earth. Abiathar was spared to be the representative of the junior house of Aaron throughout the reign of David, being subsequently deposed by Solomon in fulfilment of the word of Jehovah spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh (1 Kings 2:27). Abiathar therefore (to use the more frequent name by which he is called who was the companion of David in his exile) preserved the second name of his father Ahimelech throughout the glorious reign of David when the rest of the family were cut off. In the warning of judgment delivered to Eli by the man of God, he said, "It shall come to pass that every one that is left in thine house shall come and bow down to him [Jehovah's anointed] for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread" (1 Samuel 2:36). But it came about that Jehovah's anointed begged bread of the descendant of Eli, and as he was not denied, the mercy of God was displayed in the midst of the judgments that fell upon the ungodly house, and a scion of that house held the priestly office while David was upon the throne. The Lord therefore, in alluding to the act of kindness shown to David by Ahimelech, alludes also to its recognition and reward by Jehovah in a manner familiar to students of God's word by selecting the least obvious of his names, but that name by which his reward is marked in Holy Writ, viz., in the mercy and distinction conferred upon his son Abiathar. The principle of moral and spiritual significance conveyed by the use of the one or the other of double names may be traced elsewhere in scripture. Compare, for example, the use of Jacob and of Israel in the prophecies, and of Simon and of Peter in the Gospels.

It is believed therefore that underlying this alleged historical difficulty there is a truth of great beauty which is seen upon patient inquiry. In addition to the assertion that the Son of David may do what David did, there is the quotation of an example of God's grace shining out in a dark chapter in the annals of the priesthood. We cannot think there was no bread in Nob except the show-bread. But all closed their hearts to David except one, and he helped and honoured the true king of Israel when all else despised him. And Jehovah, true to His word spoken to the head of that priestly house, "Them that honour me I will honour," rewarded his kindness as is recorded. The Lord would have them know that the principle was equally true in their day. If the Pharisees received God's anointed, already rejected by the spirit of the nation, their reward should be great in heaven. The stone of stumbling would assuredly fall in crushing judgment upon the guilty people, but the followers of the Lord in "His temptations" should "sit on twelve thrones, judging the

twelves tribes of Israel."

Second-First Sabbath

1911 215 The parallel account in the Gospel of Luke of the Lord’s walk with His disciples through the cornfields contains a chronological note which does not occur in either Matthew or Mark. There we read, "Now it came to pass on the second-first sabbath that he was going through the cornfields" (Luke 6:1). The occasion is in this sentence specified by the use of a very unusual term, "the second-first sabbath." The word (for in the Greek it is but a single word) is so infrequent and so difficult of exact definition, that in many ancient MSS. it is unwarrantably omitted. For this insufficient reason the Revisers have also omitted the word, briefly indicating this omission by a note in the margin that "Many ancient authorities insert second-first." "Now the witnesses which omit the word are few, though high, and the difficulty of understanding a word nowhere else occurrent, and in itself hard to explain without an exact knowledge of Jewish scripture and usage, accounts readily for the tampering hand of copyists prone to cut knots instead of untying them. . . . Nobody would or could create a needless difficulty by inserting this [word in sixteen uncial MSS.]; but we can easily account for a few omitting what was hard in their eyes, as it is to most readers still."*

{*W. Kelly.}

What then is to be understood by this difficult epithet, "second-first"? There have been many explanations, mostly far-fetched, the discussion of which is beyond the purpose and scope of the present article. That interpretation is prima facie most to be commended which is founded on the scripture itself.

Now there is an express injunction in the law of Moses forbidding the Israelites at harvest-time to partake of the fresh corn until the ceremony of the wave-sheaf was passed. This occurs amongst the very particular and explicit regulations regarding the feasts of Jehovah (Leviticus 23:9-14). The children of Israel were enjoined to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest to the priest that he might wave it before Jehovah. This was to be done during the feast of unleavened bread, or of the passover, as it was also called, "on the morrow after the sabbath." This sabbath occurring after the slaying of the paschal lamb was considered of especial sanctity, and was regarded by the Jews as a great or high day (John 19:31). It was emphatically the first sabbath, not necessarily in point of time, but in point of importance. The following day, the wave-sheaf was offered to Jehovah, and the succeeding sabbath would be the "second-first." On the great sabbath no godly Jew would have partaken of ears of corn, because of the legal prohibition which stated, "Ye shall eat neither bread nor parched corn, nor fresh ears, until this selfsame day, until ye have brought the oblation of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:14). On the second-first sabbath the wave-sheaf would have been offered, and the injunction just quoted would therefore not be applicable to the action of the disciples, they being ceremonially free to partake of the newly-ripened corn.

Sabbath Made for Man The Evangelist proceeds to show that the Lord justified His followers on another ground — by the enunciation of a weighty truth concerning the sabbath which the Pharisees had nullified by their tradition. The distinction of this utterance from the Lord’s historical allusion to the Old Testament is marked in the narrative by the phrase, "And he said unto them."

For He proceeded to introduce to them a new phase of the subject, illuminating it by the truth of God, as it could emanate from Himself only. In their ignorant zeal, under a thin veneer of piety, they had made the sabbath a yoke of bondage grievous to be borne. The Lord pronounced authoritatively, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." The object of the institution of the septenary season of rest was not the punishment of man, but his blessing. Was not this so at the beginning? When the works of creation were complete and the earth was in a glorious state of perfection and beauty fresh from the hands of its Maker, "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2-3). In that rest our first parents were to participate, but sin entered into the world, and thorns and thistles, and wearisome labour and death. Still, as to original divine purpose, the sabbath was made for man who appeared on the sixth day. And if the people of Israel were to do no manner of work on the sabbath, a merciful and gracious Jehovah provided a double portion of manna on the sixth day. And when the sanctity of the seventh day was enforced by the attendant terrors of Sinai, this was due to the choice of the proud and self-confident people themselves, who placed themselves under the law and its restrictions (Exodus 19:8). The vexatious deprivations associated with the sabbath were therefore derived from man and not from God. In its original nature it was not mere prohibition, but positive blessing. The Lord declared that the sabbath was made not for Israel only, but for man. It was true that the sabbath was a special sign that Israel was the nation of Jehovah; but it was also true that it existed before Israel’s day, though the responsibility for the observance of the sanctity of the seventh day was placed upon them. Thus Jehovah said to them through Ezekiel, "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them" (Ezekiel 20:12). And the Levites in their worship said, "And [thou] madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them commandments and statutes and a law, by the hand of Moses thy servant" (Nehemiah 9:14). At Sinai therefore Israel received what had existed as the sabbath of Jehovah from the beginning and what in its original scope embraced all mankind.

"Pharisees might turn the sabbath into an engine for torturing man, but in God’s mind the sabbath came in most mercifully. There were the days of labour which God Himself had known something of in figure, for there was a time when He had wrought and made the earth; and God Himself was pleased to rest on the sabbath, and to sanctify it. Then sin came in, and God could no longer own it, and His word is silent. We read of the sabbath no more until God takes up His people in delivering mercy, and gives them manna from heaven. Then the sabbath day becomes a marked thing, and rest follows, the type of Jesus sent down from above. It disappears from the beginning of the first book of scripture, and reappears in the second. God makes rest once more. He was giving to man in grace when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Of this the sabbath was the appropriate sign." Law came in by-the-bye, imposing its observance with penalties for disobedience, but from the beginning it was not so. The Lord of the Sabbath

"The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." In these words, to the confusion of the unbelieving Pharisees, the Servant of Jehovah asserted His claim to an absolute authority over the sabbath. In virtue of His own rights He was competent to decide what might or what might not be done on the sabbath, for He was Lord of the sabbath. This was an important revelation of the dignity of His person, and we find the saying recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels in connection with the

incident before us. But here it is especially instructive to observe that the Servant of Jehovah, so perfect in His dependence, so untiring in His energy, so exquisite in His sympathy, and so tender in His compassion, quietly and unostentatiously, using the simplest form of speech, claimed an unqualified authority which no man ever possessed previously. For, let it be remembered, this Lordship implied more than the Adamic supremacy over the lower creation. This was Lordship over a divine institution which Adam never had. The Son of man, who had power on earth to forgive sins, had power on earth to regulate the sabbath also, for, even as Peter said to Cornelius, "He is Lord of all." The ideal sabbath is yet to come. So the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, after showing that the rest of God did not come about in Old Testament times, declares, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). Of this sabbatism the Son of man is Lord, as He is the true Joshua to lead His own into that rest, and to maintain them in it. At that day both the heavens and the earth will participate in the sabbath of Jehovah, whose glory shall fill the whole earth throughout the millennial day. This period to which the prophets witness will be the true sabbath when the second Adam, the Son of man, will rule, and both the heavenly and the earthly departments of His kingdom will enjoy this rest.

Son of Man The Lord advanced this claim of Lordship of the sabbath not as the Son of David, nor as the Seed of Abraham, nor as Immanuel, but as the Son of man. "The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath also." This title of Christ is remarkable for more reasons than one. In the New Testament it is found almost exclusively in the Gospels. The exceptions are two passages where the Lord is seen in vision and thus named as the future Judge of men (Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14) in accordance with other scriptures (Daniel 7:13; John 5:27); and a quotation from the Psalms which is used in Hebrews, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Hebrews 2:6; Psalms 8:4). Stephen, when arraigned before the Jewish council, also uses it (Acts 7:56). In the Gospels it does not occur in the narrative itself, nor in any utterances made by others either to the Lord or about Him, but is strictly confined to His own sayings. And it is by far the most frequent term applied by the Lord to Himself. Thus in Mark’s Gospel "Son" is recorded once (Mark 13:32); "Lord" twice (Mark 5:19; Mark 11:3); "Christ" once (Mark 9:41); "Master" (teacher) once (Mark 14:14); "Lord of the sabbath" once (Mark 2:28); "King of the Jews" once (Mark 15:2); "Sower" twice (Mark 4:3; Mark 4:14); "Master (lord) of the house" once (Mark 13:35); "Bridegroom" three times (Mark 2:19-20). But "Son of man" occurs fifteen times, which is more than all the others added together. A similar proportion is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, while in John "Son" used alone is more prevalent than "Son of man."

We may now inquire what is the significance of this title assumed by the Lord. This can only be learned by a careful study of the passages in which the title occurs. And with the intention of providing assistance in such a study the various references in the Synoptic Gospels are collated under headings which indicate their general tenor and form a basis for further research by such readers as are so disposed. The Lord refers to Himself as the Son of man when:

1. Foretelling His betrayal, sufferings and death — Matthew 17:12; Matthew 17:22; Matthew 20:18; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:2; Matthew 26:24; Matthew 26:45; Mark 8:31; Mark 9:12; Mark 9:31 Mark 10:33; Mark 10:45; Mark 14:21; Mark 14:41; Luke 9:22; Luke 9:41; Luke 18:31; Luke 22:22; Luke 22:48; Luke 24:7.

2. Foretelling His coming glory and kingdom — Matthew 10:23; Matthew 13:41; Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 19:28; Matthew 24:27; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 24:37; Matthew 24:39; Matthew 24:41; Matthew 25:31; Matthew 26:64; Mark 8:38; Mark 13:26; Mark 14:62; Luke 9:26; Luke 12:40; Luke 17:22; Luke 17:24; Luke 17:26; Luke 17:30; Luke 18:8; Luke 21:27.

3. Foretelling His resurrection — Matthew 12:40; Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:9; Luke 11:30.

4. Foretelling His session on high — Luke 22:69.

5. Declaring Himself the homeless One — Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58.

6. Declaring Himself the Forgiver of sins — Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24.

7. Declaring Himself Lord of the sabbath — Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5.

8. Declaring Himself the Saviour — [Matthew 18:11] Luke 9:56; Luke 19:10.

9. Declaring Himself the Sower — Matthew 13:37.

10. Referring to men's opinion of Him — Matthew 11:19; Matthew 12:32; Matthew 16:13; Luke 7:34; Luke 12:10.

11. Referring to the confession of His name — Luke 6:22; Luke 12:8. In the Gospel by John it is recorded that the Lord used the term when speaking of:

1. His death — John 3:14; John 8:28; John 12:34.

2. His glorification — John 1:51; John 12:23; John 13:31.

3. His ascension — John 6:62.

4. His authority to judge — John 5:27.

5. His personal glory — John 3:13.

6. Himself as an object of faith — John 6:27; John 6:53; [John 9:35]. A consideration of the whole of these references is at this time impracticable; but a cursory glance is sufficient to instruct us that this title is one taken by the Lord in view of the fact that the kingdom of God which He proclaimed was not accepted by the people of Israel. On the contrary, He Himself was met with personal hatred, and in view of the culmination of this hatred in His crucifixion under a coalition of Jews and Gentiles, He adopted the designation of Son of man a title of wider limits than Son of David. Thus, when Peter, speaking for the other apostles, confessed Him as the Christ, the Lord "charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly" (Mark 8:27-32). And as may be seen from the above classification, a great proportion of the passages in the Gospels containing this term allude to His approaching death. The greater part of the remainder refer to His resurrection, ascension, glorification, and to the future manifestation of His kingdom in judgment and glory, which will be not only national but universal in its scope. But all the passages coincide to point out this title, though of wider significance than "Messiah," as that assumed by the Lord in consequence of His rejection by the chosen nation to which He expressly came. The use of this

phrase in the Old Testament corroborates this interpretation of its significance. Passing over the general prophetic sense of the term in Job 25:6; Psalms 8:4; Psalms 80:17; Daniel 7:13; it is applied by Jehovah to two of His prophets, viz., Daniel and Ezekiel (Daniel 8:17; Ezekiel 2:1, etc.). Now both of these men were raised up as witnesses during the period when the nation, on account of its apostasy from the worship of Jehovah, was under a foreign yoke. Sovereignty was transferred from Israel to the Gentiles, and it is remarkable that these two contemporary servants of God who prophesied outside the land of Israel during the captivity are the only ones who are so designated. So that the Lord, in describing Himself as the Son of man, adopted a title hitherto borne only by prophets in exile. It was even then a title of reproach, inasmuch as it indicated that the nation of Israel, like Esau, renounced the privileges of its birthright. But what was the departure in the day of Daniel and Ezekiel to the departure in the day of the Gospel? Was it not an incomparable privilege that the Messiah should offer Himself to the Jews, insignificant as they were nationally at that period, and enslaved moreover to the Romans? But the people deliberately refused Him,* whereupon the Lord instructed His followers to proclaim Him no longer in that character (Matthew 16:13-28; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:21), but to know Him as the Son of man who was to pass through the depths of suffering to the heights of glory in the kingdom beyond. This was a difficulty to His disciples then even as it is still; only faith can adequately sustain him who seeks to walk in the pathway of the despised and suffering Son of man.

{*In Matthew, treating specially as it does of the presentation of Messiah to the Jews, it will be seen that more emphasis is laid on His rejection, by the construction of the Gospel, than in Mark or in Luke.} The Second Man, the Lord from heaven, was in a world different in nature from that in which the First man, Adam, was placed. He was in a world into which sin had entered, and in which it reigned unto death." And in this world, when it demonstrated its implacable hostility to all that is divine by refusing to receive Him or to recognise Him, He took the title of Son of man. This title implied that the Servant of Jehovah was in the world outside Eden, the same world into which Cain and Abel, Seth and Enosh were born, begotten in the likeness and image of fallen Adam. But Jesus was "without sin," Son of man truly, but not son of a man. He was "born of a woman," but the Holy Thing" born was the Son of God.

"He was to be the Son of man — a title the Lord Jesus loves to give Himself — a title of great importance to us. It appears to me that the Son of man is, according to the word, the Heir of all that the counsels of God destined for man as his portion in glory, all that God would bestow on man according to those counsels (see Daniel 7:13-14; Psalms 8:4-6; Psalms 80:17; Proverbs 8:30-31). But in order to be the Heir of all that God destined for man, He must be a man. The Son of man was truly of the race of man — precious and comforting truth! born of a woman, really and truly a man, and partaking of flesh and blood, made like unto His brethren.

"In this character He was to suffer, and be rejected, that He might inherit all things in a wholly new estate, raised and glorified. He was to die and rise again, the inheritance being defiled, and man being in rebellion — His co-heirs as guilty as the* rest."

14. — A Merciful Deed on the Sabbath

1911 234 "And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered.*1 And they watched him whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man that had his hand withered,*1 Stand forth.*2 And he

saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm?*3 to save a*4 life, or to kill? But they held their peace.*5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved*6 at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored. And the Pharisees went*7 out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel*8 against him, how they might destroy him" (Mark 3:1-6, R.V.).

{*1 "dried up," J.N.D.

*2 "Rise up [and come] into the midst," J.N.D.

*3 "evil," J.N.D.

*4 "a" omitted, J.N.D.

*5 "were silent," J.N.D.

*6 "distressed," J.N.D. "sullupoumenos here only. It is contested whether it means 'sympathising grief' (Psalms 68:20) or 'deep grief.' There is, I apprehend, sorrow for, with an intensitive force in syn — ; but from its use, not its natural force, entering into their state; not sympathy, which is feeling with, but feeling what a state they were in, with grief for it.' Note, J.N.D.

*7 "going," J.N.D.

*8 "symboulion peion" is an expression peculiar to Mark; Matthew has always lambanein. s. is used also for a council, Acts 25:12. It may be more in this sense here, but a private one." — J.N.D.} In the cornfields the lowly Servant of Jehovah, by the vindication of His followers from the groundless charge made against them by the Pharisees, declared that He had supreme authority over the sabbath. The record of this declaration by the Son of man is immediately succeeded, in all three of the Synoptical Gospels, by the account of the miraculous restoration, on another sabbath, of the withered hand of the man in the synagogue. Whether the latter event followed the former in immediate chronological sequence cannot be definitely ascertained from the sacred history, and this point may therefore be regarded as one of no importance in the scheme of the Gospels.

It is, however, of the deepest interest to observe that the two incidents are brought together by three of the Evangelists, and thus constitute an epoch in the Galilean ministry of our Lord. At this juncture the truth of the gospel broke away from Judaism. For herein it is shown how the teaching and practice of Jesus came into direct collision with the teaching and practice of the Jews in regard of one of the most salient of the outward features of their religion — the observance of the sabbath. In this particular, as in others, the Jews had rendered the law of God inoperative by their traditions. The Lord, by exposing this departure from the spirit of their ancient oracles, and the evil tendencies of their beliefs, aroused their hostility and censure. The two incidents may be regarded from this point of view as forming a double witness (1) to the apostasy of the Jews in their manner of observing the sabbath that characteristic ordinance committed to the chosen people and (2) to the wise and faithful testimony to the truth delivered by Jehovah's Servant in the face of Pharisaic gainsaying and rancour. And while both occurrences show the persistent zeal exercised by the Lord's enemies to prove Him a sabbath-breaker, they also show how able the Lord was to confound their schemes and to discern the evil motives concealed beneath the cloak of piety. The Withered Hand Restored The Lord went into a synagogue on the sabbath. It is not clear whether

this was or was not the synagogue at Capernaum where He had already performed miracles. But when the Pharisees and scribes who were assembled there saw amongst the congregation a man whose hand (the right, as Luke the physician, tells us) was shrunken and useless they suspected that the Master might heal the afflicted man. Thoroughly opposed to Him as they were, their unspoken thoughts by this conjecture paid tribute to the unfailing compassion of Jesus for whatever weakness and suffering crossed His pathway. But it is patent that the fact of His being good and doing good, which they inwardly acknowledged, caused them to hate Him and to seek to destroy Him. Imbued with this sinister desire they eyed the Lord narrowly, hoping that out of His active beneficence which they anticipated they might concoct some charge which would bring Him under the jurisdiction of the law.

Jesus knew their machinations (Luke 6:8), but was not to be diverted out of His course of "doing good." He bade the afflicted man to rise and stand out in the midst in sight of the whole company. Then the Lord, desirous of awakening the dormant consciences of the Pharisees and scribes to a sense of their own guilty motives, asked them, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath or to do harm? to save life or to kill?" (Mark, Luke).* To this piercing question, which exposed the hidden sophistries of their minds, they had no reply, and were dumb before Him. They had reasoned within themselves that, since the commandment of God forbade all work on the sabbath, Jesus, by healing the withered hand, would be working, and therefore breaking the sabbath. But the Lord's words put the matter on a different plane altogether. The question was not, as they supposed, one between activity and passivity; it was between doing good and doing harm, between saving a life and destroying a life by refraining from saving it. The law of God was given for the repression of evil, not for the repression of good. "There is none good save one, that is, God," and it is inconceivable that He, "the Goodness of goodness," would promulgate a law which would prevent the doing of good. Indeed to refrain from doing good when opportunity is offered is to display unlikeness to God. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him" (1 John 3:17)?

{*In Matthew we are told they asked the Lord, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" And that part of the Lord's words in reply which directly answered this question is there recorded. "What man shall there be of you that shall heave one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:10-12). He takes them on the ground of their own practice. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Proverbs 12:10). If a beast may be the subject of mercy on the sabbath, how much more man, who is head of the lower creation!}

Thus then did the Lord, by the presentation of the truth, seek, first of all, to heal the diseased minds of His enemies in the synagogue, but was hindered by their unbelief. The entrance of His words would have illuminated their dark hearts; but as the Prophet of Jehovah surveyed the congregation, His omniscient eyes marked not only the frowning brow and furtive glance but the hardened hearts and minds refusing to accept the truth. The zeal for God which "consumed the Righteous Servant drew forth a momentary flash of that "wrath of the Lamb from which the potentates of this world shall vainly seek to be sheltered in a future day (Revelation 6:15-17). But the Lord was not there to judge. Hence He regarded their desperate condition with sorrow and grief. "He looked round* about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart."

Then addressing the disabled man, He bade him stretch out his hand. With implicit trust in the words of the prophet of Nazareth the man essayed to do so, and found the limb restored to its natural strength and suppleness.

{*The word periblepo, looking round, occurs several times in Mark — Mark 3:5; Mark 3:34; Mark 5:32; Mark 9:8; Mark 10:23; Mark 11:11 — but nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Luke 6:10.}

Such a result could not be gainsaid. The miracle was performed in a public place in the presence of a company of witnesses, consisting not of ignorant and credulous peasants only, if at all, but also of educated Pharisees and scribes who were only too anxious to deny the cure altogether, if possible, or at any rate to raise objections to its genuine character. They did not, however, attempt to deny the miracle, but leaving the synagogue they sought their rivals, the Herodians, and laying aside their mutual animosities, the two parties conferred together that they might find the most expeditious method of destroying Jesus.

Prominence Given to Sabbath-Service In the brief outline of the life and ministry of our Lord which we possess in the Gospels, it is striking to observe what a large proportion, comparatively speaking, of His recorded service was performed upon the sabbath. There are, altogether, about twenty-six cases of healing specifically mentioned in the Gospels, and of these, seven are stated to have been executed on the sabbath day. These seven cases are: —

1. The demoniac at Capernaum (Mark 1:21).

2. Simon’s wife’s mother (Mark 1:29).

3. The man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5).

4. The bowed woman (Luke 13:14).

5. The man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6).

6. The impotent man at the pool (John 5:9).

7. The beggar blind from birth (John 9:14).

Other instances are referred to in general terms as happening on the seventh day. It may also be observed that the Lord commenced His public ministry at Nazareth on the sabbath; and that He was in the sepulchre during the whole of the sabbath after His crucifixion — that "high day," as it was called. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the incident in the cornfields occurred on the sabbath.

Much of this service was rendered in synagogues where it was customary for the law and the prophets to be read in the hearing of those assembled. The acts of mercy therefore, in addition to the direct benefit which they conferred upon those immediately concerned, formed instructive examples of the blessing for man which would characterise the coming kingdom even then preached by the Servant of Jehovah. This blessing was not to be effected without the energy of divine love. And divine love had charged itself to remove the presence of sin and its fruits; nor could it rest until this was accomplished for the whole creation. As the Lord said on another occasion, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). The instance here of the healing of

the withered arm was a sample of the "powers of the world to come," and was but a single instance of what shall eventually be effected for the whole earth.

Looked at truly, the presence of this sufferer in the synagogue was undeniable evidence that the sabbath could not be rightly kept. For at the beginning of the world's history, when Jehovah rested on the seventh day from His works and blessed it and hallowed it, the earth was unblemished, and declared the glory of God. In an Eden unsullied by man's disobedience Jehovah could, in that primaeval sabbath, commune with Adam. The entrance of sin destroyed these conditions, its presence in the world being incompatible with the rest of God.* {*Hebrews 4:1-16 shows that man has never yet entered into the rest of God, which, in point of fact, is still future.} At Sinai the people of Israel were enjoined to "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." There were to be no sinful desires, no sinful actions, no sinful associations. They were to regard the claims of Jehovah upon them and observe the day to Him, distinguishing it from the six days by abstaining from all manner of work, 1:e., all labour usually undertaken for personal gain or gratification or comfort. Where was this sanctity in the Galilean synagogue? It is true there was a cessation of manual labour in the town. The fishing-boats rode idly at anchor or were drawn up on the strand, the fields and vineyards were deserted, the bazaars were silent, and a decorous company assembled for prayer and reading of the Scriptures. This man saw, and judged what a pious observance of the sabbath was there. But Jesus saw more and differently. He saw a man there doing no manner of work truly, for his right hand was robbed of its cunning. If this affliction was not a direct infliction from God, as in the case of the renegade king and of the false shepherd of Israel (1 Kings 13:4; Zechariah 11:17), it was certainly the result of sin, whatever the secondary causes may have been. The human hand, by its flexibility and manifold utility, differentiates the physical organisation of man from the ape-like animals which superficially resemble him. Its uselessness in this case demonstrated the cruel effects of sin upon mankind. But the Saviour saw even more. He looked beneath the cloak of formal piety and hypocrisy, and discerned a fountain of corruption. Evil thoughts and desires were in the assembly. Those who considered that to heal a man on the sabbath was to violate sanctity had no scruples about holding a council on that day for the destruction of Jesus. The Cain-thirst for innocent blood was there. The professed sabbath-keepers were hating their Messiah without a cause, and had already murdered Him — in their hearts. Was this remembering the sabbath day to keep it holy? All this and more the Lord saw, as He looked round on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts. He surveyed them in the spirit that at His final entry into Jerusalem wept over the guilty city.

Similarly, we read of divine grief in the Old Testament when in antediluvian days "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5-6). Again He said of the Israelites in the wilderness, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" (Psalms 95:10). A Solemn Lesson

There is in this incident, beside other instruction, a solemn lesson for all time as to the utter futility of 'the mere outward observance of a divine ordinance. The same truth is expressed many times elsewhere and in many ways. But it is here associated with the keeping of the sabbath and not with the offering of sacrifice or the repetition of prayers, and it may be well to state the principle which seems to be involved.

Here, on the part of the Pharisees, was a great display of zeal, ostensibly for the honour of Jehovah’s sabbath. They appeared to be desirous above all things that its holiness should be preserved inviolate, so much so that they regarded the plucking of a few ears of corn and the healing of a withered hand as infractions of God’s law. But what was the truth? They were all the while furiously angry without cause, hating their Messiah and persecuting the benefactor of their fellows. It is evident that their position was one of gross deceit, though while they might deceive other men and even themselves, they could not deceive God. And this was the true nature of Pharisaism, as the Gospels abundantly testify.

It is well, however, to remember that this hypocrisy arose from the natural tendencies of the human heart, and for this reason all religious persons are liable to fall into the same unreality in their devotional exercises. And what at first may be no more than an occasional lapse, becomes eventually a settled habit. We are therefore to regard the exposure here made of the inward evil of these religious professors as a serious warning for the present day.

It should be comparatively easy to discern that the exercise of public Christian worship and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper are liable to the danger of unreality a punctilious performance of these rites being accompanied by a complete absence of spiritual intention. And it is commonly and rightly understood that this failure to present to God "worship in spirit and in truth" is especially to be feared when that worship is connected with an ornate ceremonialism and a prescribed liturgy. The aesthetic ritual may proceed most agreeably to the cultivated taste, but what if the soul of the worshipper be out of harmony with its God?

Most admit the possibility and even the prevalence in Christendom of this spiritual pretension. But is it not too often forgotten that the danger equally exists, however simple the external forms of worship may be? In our Lord’s day it was found in the synagogue as much as in the temple. Nowadays hollow formalism frequents both the fretted aisles of venerable cathedrals and the whitewashed rooms of our obscure by-ways. Reality may be as seriously lacking in the simple singing of a "common metre" hymn as in the classical rendering of an anthem accompanied by trained choral and instrumental harmonies. The delusion lies in the false assumption that the negation of all outward ceremonies provides a certain safeguard against unspiritual worship and prayer. The truth is that the presence or ’the absence of an appointed ritual will not exclude from ’the worshippers thoughts which are evil and hostile to the Saviour, though it is likely enough that these thoughts may assume the disguise of religious zeal for the readier deception of the unwatchful, and of such as, like those in the synagogue, have not learned the real nature of their own sinful hearts.

Heart-Hardness

What are we to understand by the phrase used here — "the hardening of their heart"? Does it imply that the hearts of the audience in the synagogue were naturally incapable of appreciating the cogent and irrefragable evidence afforded by the works of Jesus to the divine nature of His person and mission? or does it imply that they, knowing otherwise, resolutely refused to recognise the value of this evidence? In other words, is the allusion to their inborn or to their wilful obdurateness of heart? The word porosis translated "hardening" or "hardness" signifies a state of callousness, and, considered in connection with the other instances of its use in the New Testament, seems to specify the deplorable state of insensibility of the Jews to the words and works of the kingdom

which were placed before them by their Messiah a condition of indifference which became intensified by their neglect of the testimony to the gospel.

Looking at the other occurrences of the word and its cognate forms, we find that it is applied to the Jews, to the Gentiles, and to the disciples of our Lord to indicate their want of receptivity of the truth. In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle uses it in reference to the rejection of the gospel by the mass of the Jews. "That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened. "A hardening in part had befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:7; Romans 11:25). Again, in another epistle, the apostle, speaking of the same subject, says, "Their minds were hardened" (2 Cor. 3: 1.4).*

{*In Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians the word (verb or substantive) is erroneously translated "blinded," or "blindness," in the A.V.} The same term is used to express the natural irresponsiveness of the Gentiles also to what is of God: "Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). The word is not found in the Synoptical Gospels except in Mark. He uses it here, and also in reference to the disciples: "They understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52). And again, he reports the words of Jesus to the dull apostles, "Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? Have ye your heart hardened (Mark 8:17)? In the above instances the activity of the will in opposition to the truth is not necessarily implied. The term appears rather to point to that prevailing state of moral stupidity among the Jews which failed to perceive what was evidently of God. When the apostle in the Hebrews is referring to the wilful obstinacy of the Israelites in the wilderness he uses a different word: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Hebrews 3:8; Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:7). And without presuming to dogmatise as to its finer shades of meaning it is suggested that the word a skleruno* and its derivatives is employed to denote that definite resistance on man’s part which deliberately blocks up the heart to exclude the light of God — as the Lord said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life" (John 5:40).

{*This word in one form or another also occurs in Matthew 19:8; Matthew 25:24; Mark 10:5; Mark 16:14; John 6:60; Acts 7:51 [Acts 9:5]; Acts 19:9; Acts 26:14; Romans 2:5; Romans 9:18; Hebrews 3:8; Hebrews 3:13, Heb. 15; 4: 7; James 3:4; Jude 1:15.}

It must be added that the former word, porosis, occurs in one other connection not yet mentioned. John uses it in his Gospel with reference to the solemn judicial process which is exercised by God upon those who fill up their measure of guilt in repeated refusal of divine testimony. The Evangelist, speaking of those who had not believed on Jesus although they had witnessed so many miracles by Him, wrote, "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40; citation from Isaiah 6:9-10). This judicial sentence was not pronounced upon the nation until the divine patience was exhausted with those who stumbled at the stumbling-stone, ignoring the Messiah sent to them (Acts 13:27).

15. A Summarized Statement of Service

1911 250 "And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed:*1 and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples that a little boat*2 should wait on him because of the crowd lest they should throng*3 him: for he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon*4 him that they might touch him. And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he charged* them much that they should not make him known" (Mark 3:7-12, R.V.).

{*1 Note that the punctuation is altered here. The Galileans came to Jesus first, then, as the report concerning Him spread in various directions, others sought Him also. This is not so clear in the Authorised Version.

*2 "ship," J.N.D.; W.K.

*3 "press upon," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "beset," J.N.D.; W.K.

5 "rebuked," J.N.D.} The Lord who knew the thoughts of those around Him in the synagogue, and was grieved at the hardening of their hearts against the many gracious testimonies of the gospel, knew also the evil intentions of the Pharisees and Herodians who left the synagogue in company that they might together concoct some scheme for His speedy destruction. This intimate knowledge of the secret plottings of His enemies aroused no animosity in the heart of the Saviour, neither did He, to counteract their plottings, organize some "plan of campaign" amongst His adherents, as a political or social agitator might have done. But in the serene dignity becoming the Servant of Jehovah who was governed alone by the will of Him by whom He was sent, He withdrew Himself from the immediate neighbourhood. Supremely trustful in the perfection of His manhood, omniscient also as to His Godhead, yet He did not adventure Himself where danger threatened. As He had refused to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, so He retreated from the vicinity of those who sought His life. The hour wherein to deliver Himself into their hands had not yet come.

{*In Matthew this withdrawal as a consequence of their evil plans is expressed more definitely than in Mark: "But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him. And Jesus, perceiving it, withdrew from thence" (Matthew 12:14-15).}

Jesus therefore, accompanied by His disciples, betook Himself to the coast of the Sea of Tiberias, as the inspired history states. Then in a pregnant sentence, the more striking because of the account of Pharisaic unbelief and enmity which immediately precedes, the evangelist sums up the widespread interest which the words and works of the Lord had awakened. If the religious leaders despised Him, the toilers and sufferers of the house of Israel congregated to hear more of One who healed the sick and preached the gospel to the poor. Crowds flocked to Him from all parts — from Tyre and Sidon in the north, from Perea beyond Jordan on the east, from Idumea in the south, and even from Judah and Jerusalem in the centre of the land. The report of Him that traversed every part of Galilee (Mark 1:28) spread beyond in all directions, and multitudes, hearing what things He did, gathered to Him* (see also Mark 1:45). But how few had real faith in Jehovah's Servant! How soon were the words of the prophet Isaiah fulfilled, "Who hath believed our report?

and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?"

{*The Galileans "followed" Him; the others, named subsequently, "came" to Him (Mark 3:7-8).} The Mission Boat The great crowds that sought Jesus to hear or to see or to receive somewhat from Him were selfish, as all crowds are. They had no consideration for others, nor for Him whose benefits they desired. The afflicted ones especially, in their eagerness to obtain healing, pressed upon (literally, "fell upon") the Lord, to His great inconvenience, if not danger, besides interfering in this way with the activities of His service. The Lord therefore instructed His disciples to arrange that a small boat should attend upon Him; so that He might from a point of vantage declare the gospel of peace to the multitude, and be secure from the thronging of the disorderly people.

It was a simple arrangement most certainly and for this reason the incident is commonly passed over by those who are in search only for profundities, and who imagine that only what is vague and mysterious is to be prized. But a great feature of the Gospels is that both here and elsewhere they show how our Blessed Lord glorified the common and ordinary things of daily life. Pity it is if we miss the truth that divine power and love reach down to the humdrum "the daily round, the common task." The Servant of Jehovah required no accompanying "pomp of circumstance," no gorgeous ceremonial, no cumbrous paraphernalia. His service was in simplicity, making use of just what was at hand. A madly impetuous crowd was hindering Him in His labours. A little boat rocking on the Galilean lake is therefore commissioned to serve His purpose who was speaking words such as man had never heard, and doing works such as the world had never seen. There was a time to speak in the synagogue; there was a time to speak in Solomon’s porch. But at this time it was most fitting that the small boat should be the pulpit. Let us learn the lesson of heavenly wisdom, and amid the throng and hubbub of life be ready to avail ourselves of the humble vessel near at hand from which to speak to the glory and praise of the Master. The Lord here, by His action, gave no countenance to the dreams of ascetics, and of such as seek to glorify God by the "neglecting of the body." The body was His instrument of service, and He adopted prudent measures to prevent injury to it from the struggling crowds. The means were simple yet effective, and at the same time forbid the notion that the Lord despised the corporeal substance. Was it not the body "prepared" for Him, and in which He had come to do the will of God? It is true that subsequently wicked men scourged and smote Him, and He submitted to their contumeliousness with unexampled meekness. For then the will of God led the obedient Son of man to deliver Himself into their hands. But before this hour had come we learn, as in the passage before us, which, be it noted, is found in this Gospel only, that the Lord took such precautions as were needful in this emergency, if we may call it such, so that He might the more effectively perform Jehovah’s service. It may surely be inferred that the servants of Christ, while not allowed to pamper or indulge the body, are not, on the contrary, permitted to despise it, but rather enjoined to present it "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." In the natural order of things the outward man decays, but there is no scriptural warrant for the belief that it is well-pleasing to God to hasten that decay either by our wilfulness or by our neglect.

Touching Jesus The numerous cures wrought by the Lord Jesus incited those that had plagues to push forward among the crowd in the hope that they might get near enough to touch Him and obtain healing for themselves in this manner.

Plague is an uncommon word in the New Testament. It is used in Luke’s Gospel in speaking of the works wrought by Jesus in the presence of the two disciples sent to Him by John the Baptist from prison: "In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits" (Luke 7:21). The word is also twice applied by Mark to the disease of the woman suffering from an issue of blood (Mark 5:29; Mark 5:34). Literally meaning a scourge, it probably included the severer forms of complaint from which relief was sought. This effort to touch Jesus was evidence of strong faith on the part of those that sought healing in this way. The bold faith that stretched out weak hands to Him was mute, inarticulate indeed, but nevertheless genuine as the Saviour knew, and could never deny. "He filled the hungry with good things." The poor were feeble, pain-racked, dying. They touched Him, the great Physician, in blind trust as little children. And in the words of another evangelist, describing a similar occasion,* "power came forth from him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19).

{*This occasion was later, and is mentioned by three of the Evangelists — Matthew 14:36; Mark 6:56; Luke 6:19. The woman with the issue of blood also touched His garment for healing — Matthew 9:20; Mark 5:27; Luke 8:44.} This action is the converse of the touch by Jesus Himself which was so significant of the outflow of healing power to the patients whom He blessed. The touch is used in the Old Testament as expressive of the divine communication of power to individuals, as in the case of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:7), of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:9), of Daniel (Daniel 10:10; Daniel 10:16; Daniel 10:18), while in that of Job it is used with reference to the infliction of personal trial (Job 1:11; Job 2:5).

It will be of interest to summarize here the instances recorded in the Gospels where we find the Blessed Lord bringing Himself in this manner into personal contact with the sufferers whom He healed. He touched —

1. a leper (Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13).

2. the hand of Peter’s wife’s mother (Matthew 8:15).

3. the eyes of two blind men (Matthew 9:29).

4. the eyes of two other blind men (Matthew 20:34).

5. the eyes of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22).

6. the tongue of the deaf stammerer (Mark 7:33).

7. the ear of Malchus (Luke 22:51).

8. the bier of the widow’s dead son (Luke 7:14).

9. the terrified disciples on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:7). In addition to this phrase ("He touched"), which is so beautifully expressive of the intimate way in which Jesus identified Himself with the circumstances of suffering and pain from which He delivered those who sought Him, we find another which is closely related. We also read that He laid or put His hands on persons for healing or for the communication of strength. In some cases these terms appear to be used synonymously. Thus it is stated in Mark and Luke that babes were brought to Jesus that He might touch them (Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15), while in Matthew the desire is said to have been that

He should put His hands on them (Matthew 19:13). In recording the grant of this request, Matthew and Mark say He laid His hands on the infants (Matthew 19:15; Mark 10:16). Mark uses the two terms similarly in his accounts of the cure of the deaf stammerer, and of the blind man of Bethsaida (compare Mark 7:32-33; Mark 8:22; Mark 8:25).

Other instances in which it is recorded that Jesus laid hands on persons in the bestowal of healing or power are in the case of —

1. the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18; Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:23; Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54).

2. the demoniacal youth (Mark 9:27).

3. the bowed woman in the synagogue (Luke 13:13).

4. a few sick folk (Mark 6:2; Mark 6:5).

5. every sick one that came to Him at Capernaum (Luke 4:40).

6. Peter on the waves (Matthew 14:31).

These numerous cases in which He either touched or laid hands upon those whom He healed testify not only to the striking activity of Jehovah’s Servant, but to His personal interest in the individuals who came to Him to be blessed. And in this feature of His character we all have the most intimate concern, while the contemplation of this grace which cares even for the individual need, should lead us to adoration.

Demoniacal Witness Refused This great concourse of persons that came to Jesus from all parts of the land was evidence that a report of Him as the Healer of Israel had spread in all directions, and that there was an eagerness among the poor of the flock to seek His face for blessing, in spite of the evil judgments pronounced upon Him by the religious leaders. Here also were voices loudly testifying to Him before all as the Son of God. But alas! this testimony was "from beneath." It was not of man, but of Satan, whose works He had come to destroy. "Unclean spirits whensoever they beheld Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." In like manner, the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum acknowledged Him, but there He was owned as the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24). The Lord refused both the one and the other. "He charged them much they should not make him known." The time had not come for their confession. In a future day infernal beings shall publicly bow to the name of Jesus (Php 2:10). But in the day of His humiliation the lowly Son of man will not have evil spirits to speak forth His praise as the Holy One or the Son. He chose other witnesses, as the narrative goes on to show. And one of them, Simon Peter, taught by the Father above, confessed Him in this double character — Son of God (Matthew 16:16) and Holy One of God (John 6:69, R.V.).

Such testimony the Lord valued and honoured, and proceeded to choose twelve of His disciples who should be His accredited witnesses, not only during the term of His earthly ministry in the favoured land, but in a more active sense in all the world after His ascension.

16. — The Appointment of the Twelve

1911 262 "And he goeth up into the*1 mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send

them forth*2 to preach, and to have authority*3 to 4*cast out demons: and Simon he surnamed*5 Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed*5 Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot,*6 which also betrayed him" (Mark 3:13-19, R.V.).

{*1 "The indefinite article appears wrongly in the A.V.; the Revised gives 'the' correctly, not meaning any particular mountain, but the high land as contrasted with the low or plain; as 'on board ship' or 'on the sea' is in contrast with 'on the shore.'" — W.K.

*2 "forth" omitted, J.N.D.

*3 "power," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "to heal sicknesses and" in A.V. omitted here, and also by J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "gave the surname of," J.N.D.

*6 "Iscariote," J.N.D.}

We now arrive at what was an important juncture in the ministry of the Servant and Prophet of Jehovah. His continuous and indefatigable labours in Galilee, proclaiming the coming kingdom, have been recorded in the previous verses of Mark, along with the marvellous testimonies which accompanied His preaching, of His goodness and His power. This witness to the gospel awakened an interest which spread in every direction throughout the country, so that crowds came to Jesus from all parts. Clearly there was a general desire abroad to hear and to know more of the Prophet of Nazareth. If many journeyed to the place where He was, there were presumably many more unable to travel who were equally desirous to hear for themselves the wonderful works of God. "But how shall they hear without a preacher?" To meet this difficulty the Lord of the harvest selected certain of His followers whom He authorized to proceed in various directions and proclaim in every town and village the good news of the kingdom. The Occasion of the Call In the First Gospel the call of the twelve is narrated in connection with the great need that sprang up for more extensive service among the masses of the suffering poor of the land. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:36-38). Such was the sympathy of the Good Shepherd for the distresses and infirmities of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that He desired that others should co-operate in the work of speedily gathering together those that were scattered abroad. And immediately, being Himself the Lord of the harvest, He proceeded to send forth labourers into the harvest.

Luke, in recording the call, states quite another circumstance which brings into emphatic prominence the perfect dependence of the Man Christ Jesus upon God. "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose from them twelve whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:12-13). In this Gospel, the immediate context pourtrays the intensified hatred and opposition of the religious leaders to Christ. In view of this enmity Jesus retired to the

solitudes of the mountainous country, and spent the night in prayer. At dawn, He chose twelve witnesses to labour with Him in face of this growing antagonism.

These aspects of the apostolic call both differ from that which appears in Mark, while all three, each being itself perfect in its setting, combine to present a flawless portrait of our ever adorable Saviour and Lord in His choice of those who should eventually occupy positions of honour and dignity in His kingdom. Sympathy for the ignorant and love for the erring wrought in the heart of the Master, as Matthew shows; grace also wrought in associating fishermen and others with Himself as the "Faithful and True Witness" in testimony against a hostile world, as Luke shows. But Mark is careful to display the holy and heavenly calling of the apostolate instituted by the Lord. He makes it clear that these chosen ones had no connection with the grateful crowds on the one hand, nor with the witnessing demons on the other.

We are told that Jesus left both of these companies and went up into the mountainous region. It was a place of separation from the world of confusion, the powers of evil, and the passions of sin, below. In the presence-chamber of the Most High, the thrice-holy Servant passed the night-watches in communion with His Father. This act of His was, as it were, a foreshadowing of what He said later, in that marvellous prayer before His crucifixion, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). Even then it was true, though more fully so later, that the called ones were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. But if this is the correct view of the passage in Mark, the Spirit being jealous for the honour of Christ shows by this connection that the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah was thus freed of all apparent association with either time-serving beneficiaries or the spiritual agents of Satan. He, on the contrary, silenced the demons, and, exercising His sovereign right, selected from His disciples "whom He Himself would." The Purpose of the Call The object for which these twelve persons were selected from among the mass of the disciples or followers of the Lord is here stated to be threefold. They were (1) to be with the Lord, (2) to be sent forth to preach, and (3) to have authority to expel demons. These chosen ones, as Luke tells us, are named apostles" by the Lord Himself (Luke 6:13); and it is well to remember that this term was applied to them from the first, so that the apostolate, so far as the twelve are concerned, originated before the founding of the church. The first of their qualifications is of special interest since it is mentioned by Mark alone — they were to be "with Him." The phrase constitutes one of those inconspicuous points in the differentiation of this Gospel from the others that offer to the believing heart such indisputable evidence that a predominating purpose characterises fife portraiture of the Lord Jesus in each of the four. Here we have the calling of those destined to carry on the service and testimony of the gospel in the whole world after His departure. Do we not therefore see the exquisite propriety that the Evangelist who describes the perfect Servant of Jehovah should show us that His under-servants received their training in the company of the Master Himself. Who so competent to instruct them, by example and precept, what was acceptable and glorifying service to God, as He whose "ears were digged," as the Psalmist said (Psalms 40:6)? They, after their service in the day of suffering, should serve in the day of glory, as the Lord told them at a later period. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-29). Those who were with David’s Son in the cave of Adullam should be with David’s Lord in mount Zion.

We may thus consider that this phrase covers the spiritual education which Christ's servants received under the personal tuition of the Incomparable Servant, who in His service served even His own servants. They were admitted to a degree of favour and intimacy which was accorded to none beside. In such a hallowed associateship what daily lessons were ever before them for their learning of untiring zeal, exhaustless patience, purest devotion, absolute and unqualified obedience to God and profoundest sympathy for man! But more than this being "with Him" they heard His words, and received the truth. Seeing Him, they saw the Father also. Beholding Him, they beheld His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father. So that the apostles became qualified to testify, as eye-witnesses, of the revelation of the Father made by the Son. One of them, subsequently, writing to the whole family of God, referred to the fulness of this intimacy as that which constituted the credentials of his apostleship. "What was from [the] beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked on, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, the which was with the Father and was manifested to us); that which we have seen and heard we report to you" (1 John 1:1-3, N.T.). The apostles therefore had the honourable distinction of being not only the servants of the Lord, but His friends (John 15:14-15). In the second place, the apostles were called that they might be sent forth to preach. At the commencement of His public ministry the Lord presented Himself, preaching the gospel of God — that the kingdom was at hand. It now was proved to be necessary that this testimony should be taken up by others and spread in all directions, and the Lord chose the twelve that He might commission them to go throughout the country as the accredited heralds of His kingdom. The term "apostle" signifies one who is sent, and the first item of the service assigned to them was to announce that the Redeemer was come to Zion, and that the prophetic kingdom was therefore at the doors.

Thirdly, the apostles were to receive authority to cast out demons. In Matthew and Luke the power to cure diseases is coupled with that over unclean spirits. And copyists with an ignorant zeal to make the Gospels all alike, appear to have added the phrase here unwarrantably, for it is now agreed that the best witnesses omit it in Mark. And the context supplies what will be found to be quite an adequate explanation of the omission here by Mark of any reference to the curative powers conferred upon the apostles. The purpose of this section, as has been suggested already, is to show the dissociation of the kingdom of the Lord and the kingdom of Satan. One of the special forms of temptation in the wilderness was that the Lord should obtain the dominion of the world by acknowledging the rule of Satan (Luke 4:6-8). Now we read that evil spirits submitted to His power and rendered public testimony to His divine person. The Lord knew what His enemies would say, and what indeed they did say of Him, soon afterwards that He had Beelzebub, and that His mighty works were done by evil agency.

Hence the Lord, anticipating this calumny, chose the twelve apostle to be His ambassadors, and gave them also authority over evil demons. So that wherever the Lord and His apostles encountered the spiritual powers of darkness, there was the reverse of co-operation; the unclean spirits were cast out and not suffered to speak. Mark had shown the angels ministering to Jesus (1: 13), but he makes it clear that evil spirits, the servants of the great enemy, were in no way associated with Him. The apostolic power over diseases is therefore not mentioned in this connection, in order that greater prominence might be given to their power over demons. We can

see the utmost propriety in this omission, especially when we consider that the chapter goes on to narrate that the charge of complicity with Satan was actually brought against the Lord by the scribes which came down from Jerusalem. The Twelve and Their Names The Lord chose and appointed the twelve to be His apostles. The term itself, though used in connection with the call by Matthew and Luke, is not given by Mark, who only uses it once throughout his Gospel (Mark 6:30). Their number has an obvious allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28); and the sphere of their service was confined to the earthly people of God. Their charge from the Lord was, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). After the Lord's resurrection the commission was made universal in its scope: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And at Pentecost the apostles being together with others of the followers of the Lord, the Spirit descended upon them (Acts 2:1-47), and they were incorporated in the church, that new building of God which groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Paul, called after Pentecost, was pre-eminently the apostle of the church in the sense that the revelation of the mystery of its heavenly calling was communicated to him. Barnabas is also alluded to as an apostle in company with Paul (Acts 14:14). But the original call of the twelve Jewish apostles as recorded in the Gospels is clearly in connection with the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to Israel. This band of apostles is frequently alluded to in Scripture as "the twelve," but this mode of reference is used most of all by Mark. The following is a list of the passages: Matthew 26:20; Mark 3:14; Mark 6:7; Mark 9:35; Mark 10:32; Mark 11:11; Mark 14:17; Luke 6:13; Luke 8:1; Luke 9:12; Luke 18:31; John 6:67; John 6:70; Acts 6:2; 1 Corinthians 15:5. Thomas is called "one of the twelve" (John 20:24); and so is Judas (Matthew 26:14; Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:10; Mark 14:20; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:3; Luke 22:47; John 6:70-71). After the defection of Judas, they are called "the eleven" (Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:9; Luke 24:33; Acts 1:26); Matthias being subsequently chosen by lot after prayer to fill the vacancy (Acts 1:26; Acts 2:14). The names of the twelve apostles are enumerated in each of the Synoptic Gospels, and also in the Acts, and these names were also seen in vision inscribed upon the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14). They occupied a special place of honour and privilege in the confession of the name of Jesus in the days of His presentation as Messiah to Israel, and in the coming day of glory a special award is accorded to them in manifestation before Israel and the nations in that holy city which is to come down from God. Paul undoubtedly will have his distinguished place in that heavenly kingdom, but the twelve, unlike Paul, moved along, in believing wonder, with the Lord in His daily progress through this world of woe. Hence, their names are written, not only in heaven (a matter in itself of greater cause for their rejoicing than power over evil spirits, Luke 10:20), but also in the foundations of the wall of that figurative city which will be a medium for the light of the glory of God and the Lamb throughout the millennial earth. The various names of the apostles, with one or two exceptions, are easy of identification. A few brief remarks upon each are appended, following the order found in Mark.

(1) Simon Peter. The name of this apostle is always placed first in the various lists of the twelve, and also when two or three or more are mentioned by name. Simon or Simeon (Symeon, Acts 15:14; 2 Peter 1:1) was the son of Jona or Jonas (John 1:42; John 21:15-17). Jonas, which is equivalent to John, is the Greek form of Jonah. And Bar-jona, or Bar-Jonah, means son of John

(Matthew 16:17).

Simon received a new name from the Lord, signifying a stone or a rock. This name in the Aramaic, that is, the language usually spoken by the Lord, was Kephas, or, Cephas (John 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1:12; Galatians 2:9), and in the Greek, Peter (Petros, Matthew 16:17). Peter, or Simon Peter, occurs most frequently by far in the New Testament. Besides in those references, made historically before his call and at his naming, Simon is used alone in the following passages: —

(a) By the Lord (Matthew 17:25; Mark 14:37; Luke 22:31; John 21:15-17).

(b) By the other apostles (Luke 24:34).

(c) By James (Acts 15:14).

(2) James. This was one of the sons of Zebedee the fisherman, the New Testament form of Zabdi (Joshua 7:1; Joshua 7:17-18; 1 Chronicles 8:19). The word James is an English form of the Hebrew and Greek name Jacob. He is the only apostle whose death is mentioned in the New Testament, being executed in Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa I. (Acts 12:1-2). From a comparison of Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40, it would appear that the name of the mother of James and John was Salome.

(3) John. The brother of James was also chosen to be an apostle, and the two sons of Zebedee were surnamed by the Lord Boanerges, which means, Sons of thunder.* Though others of the apostles appear to have had several names, Peter, James and John are the only ones who, we are told, received surnames from the Lord.

{*Some regard this as having reference to their natural fiery temperament, of which some indication is given in Mark 9:38; Mark 10:37 : Luke 9:54.}

There seems no doubt that John alludes to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; John 19:26; John 21:20) in the Gospel which he wrote. He also wrote three Epistles, as well as the Apocalypse, the latter during his exile in the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9).

3 John is associated with Peter in their visit to the tomb of Jesus (John 20:1-10), in the healing of the lame man and the subsequent testimony (Acts 3:1; Acts 3:4; Acts 4:14; Acts 4:19), and in their journey to Samaria after the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:14); while Peter’s inquiry of the Lord concerning John, "And what shall. this man do? (John 21:21) shows the affection existing between the two men. The name John in Hebrew is Johanan, signifying, "the gift of Jehovah."

(4) Andrew. In Matthew and Luke, Andrew immediately follows Simon Peter in the list of names. They were brothers, and natives of Bethsaida, like Philip (John 1:44). Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, whom he left to follow Jesus, afterwards communicating to his own brother the joyful intelligence that the Messiah was found. This preceded the call by the Lord (Mark 1:16).

Little is said of Andrew. His name is, however, mentioned alone twice by John (John 6:8; John 12:22). The four, Peter, Andrew, James and John are named as being together with the Lord in the house at Capernaum (Mark 1:29) and on the mount of Olives (Mark 13:3).

(5) Philip. This apostle was also of Bethsaida, a fact stated twice in John’s Gospel (John 1:44; John 12:21). He was one of the early disciples of the Lord, being called by Him, as it says, Jesus

"findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me" (John 1:43). The Lord "proved" Philip before the feeding of the multitude (John 6:5-7). Some Greeks came to him, and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). He said to the Lord, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). All these historical items are communicated in the Fourth Gospel only. The name itself means "lover of horses."

(6) Bartholomew. This was the apostle's patronymic, that is, his family name, or surname; and it occurs in all four lists. Nathanael was, most probably, his personal name, signifying the "gift of God." He confessed the Lord before His public ministry as Son of God and King of Israel (John 1:49). Bartholomew is not mentioned by John, who, however, includes Nathanael of Cana when naming others of the apostles after the resurrection (John 10 11: 2). Of him the Lord said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47).

(7) Matthew. The identity of Matthew and Levi the publican seems to rest upon sufficient evidence, and reference has previously been made in these articles to this point.* He was the writer of the First Gospel, but no further record of him is found in the Scriptures. Mark alone gives the name of his father, Alphaeus (Mark 2:14), a different person, it is presumed, from the one mentioned in connection with James, since the two apostles are not associated like James and John of Zebedee.

{*See ante, pp. 164-5.}

(8) Thomas. The name Thomas, like that of Didymus, which is used three times by John, means "a twin." Nothing is said of him after his call and appointment except by John. When the Lord spoke of going to Bethany, Thomas said to the other disciples, "Let us also go with him, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). When the Lord was instructing the apostles as to His immediate departure and their knowledge of the way, Thomas broke in with, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). His incredulity at the tidings of the resurrection has passed into a proverb (John 20:24-31).

(9) James. In each of the four lists, Peter heads the first four names, Philip the second four, and James of Alpheus the third four.

James is a name of frequent occurrence among the Jews, and, on this account, the name is not easy of identification, apart from some distinguishing epithet. In the New Testament we read of (1) James of Zebedee, (2) James of Alphaeus, (3) James the Lord's brother, and (4) James the Less. The first is clear, but scholars are divided in their opinions as to the number of persons referred to by the following terms, whether three, two or one. A few words must suffice here upon what has been the subject of much controversy.

James [the son] of Alphaeus only occurs in each of the various lists of the apostles. But it has been supposed that Alphaeus is the Greek name for the Hebrew Cleophas (Clopas, John 19:25), whose wife stood by the cross with the other Marys, and is called the mother of James (Luke 24:10). In any case, that James of Alpheus was an apostle is fully established.

James the Lord's brother is so called by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. He states that on his visit to Jerusalem, "other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19). This person appears to be distinguished in this way from the other James who is

mentioned in the succeeding chapter without any qualifying phrase (Galatians 2:9; Galatians 2:12) [?]. Such a form of reference implies that the latter was too well-known in Galatia to require any special term of distinction. The latter may therefore be assumed to be the James who came into prominence in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:18), and to be identical [?] with James of Alphaeus, one of the twelve. He wrote the inspired Epistle to the twelve tribes (James 1:1), and is sometimes known as James the Just.

James the Lord's brother is mentioned with others (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3); and in the account of the meeting in the upper room at Jerusalem before Pentecost, the brethren of Jesus are said to have been there, but they are mentioned separately from the apostles (Acts 1:14). In favour of the hypothesis that he wrote the Epistle of James it may be noted that like Jude he does not claim to be an apostle, but neither does John in any of his three Epistles. This argument therefore is not a weighty one.

James the less, or little, occurs but once (Mark 15:40), and is named as the son of Mary, one of the Galilean women who were last at the cross and first at the tomb. She was the wife of Alpheus, so that this is the James already mentioned, the epithet being applied to him probably because of his stature.

(10) Thaddaeus. From Matthew we learn that Lebbaeus was surnamed Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3), while Luke, in his Gospel and in the Acts, gives a further name of this apostle, viz., Judas [the son or brother] of James. A question of his is recorded by John, who distinguishes him from the traitor of the same name: "Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22). There is no further reference to him by name in the New Testament.

Whether Judas the apostle was the writer of the Epistle bearing this name is a matter upon which difference of judgment exists. The writer introduces himself, not as an apostle (see also verse 17), but as "Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James," this James being the Lord's brother. It is certain that of the Lord's brothers there were two so-named, since they both are mentioned by Matthew and Mark (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and we know that the brethren of the Lord were at the apostolic prayer-meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14), including James and Judas, if not Joses and Simon. There is no great difficulty therefore in supposing that Judas the Lord's brother wrote the Epistle known by that name.

If the contrary opinion is held — that the writer was an apostle — it is necessary to translate the idiomatic expression in Luke 6:16 and in Acts 1:13 as in the Authorised Version, "Jude [the brother] of James" to agree with Jude 1:1, instead of "Jude [the son of James," as in the Revised Version. And yet in a previous case the same idiom is rendered, "James [the son] of Alpheus," so that the identification calls for patient discrimination rather than hasty dogmatism.

(11) Simon. He is distinguished from Simon Peter by Matthew and Mark as the Cananean, and by Luke as the Zealot. The first term is the Hebrew (not meaning an inhabitant of Canaan)), and the second the Greek name for a Jewish sect holding violent religious and political views, inimical to the Romans. Nothing else is recorded concerning this apostle specially.

(12) Judas Iscariot. This name is always placed last of all in the lists of the apostles. With one or two exceptions each reference to him is accompanied by a phrase alluding to his betrayal of

Jesus. He is said to have been [the son] of Simon (John 6:71; John 12:4; John 13:2; John 13:26). He was not of Galilean origin, like the majority of the apostles, but of Kerioth, a town in the land of Judah (Joshua 15:25), this being implied by "Iscariot."

17. — Opposition by Friends and Foes

1911 295 "And he cometh into a house.*1 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends*2 heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.*3 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils*4 casteth he out the devils.*4 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*5 And if a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand? And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand,*5 but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil*6 his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil*6 his house. Verily I say unto you, All their sins*7 shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme;*8 but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal*9 sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:19-30, R.V.).

{*1 "They came to [the] house" J.N.D.; "they came home," McClellan.

*2 "relatives," J.N.D.

*3 "out of his mind," J.N.D.

*4 "demons," J.N.D.; W.K.

*5 "subsist," J.N.D.; W.K.

*6 "plunder," J.N.D.; W.K. (second case only).

*7 "all sins," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "injurious speeches"; "speak injuriously," J.N.D.

*9 "everlasting," J.N.D.; W.K.}

Immediately after the call and appointment of the twelve it would seem that the Lord delivered an exposition of the principles of the new kingdom, such as is recorded by Matthew (Matthew 5:1-48 — 7) and in Luke 6:20-49. But Mark does not mention what is commonly known as the "Sermon on the Mount"; he states briefly that the Lord and the band of apostles came home, or to the house. This house was one habitually occupied by Jesus and His disciples when they came to Capernaum. Here on a previous occasion the crowd had gathered, and the paralytic let down through the roof was healed (Mark 2:1-11). In the house He explained the parable of the sower to His disciples (Mark 7:17). In the house also the Lord questioned the apostles privately as to the subject of their disputations among themselves by the way (Mark 9:33). This practice of Jesus appears to have been recognized in Capernaum, for, as a crowd quickly assembled upon a former occasion, so we read they did so "again"; "the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." The open doors of Eastern houses and the liberal hospitality of the

domestic circle would explain as customary much of what in this incident the Western mind might regard as an unwarrantable intrusion. But making due allowance for local custom, it is clear from this passage and others (Mark 6:31-33) that there was a great eagerness on the part of the people to know more of the Prophet of Nazareth, while on His part an absolute disregard of self and an absorbing love to do good to the needy led Him willingly to forego meal-time when an occasion such as this arose for service. Is He out of His Mind? The news that Jesus was again at Capernaum spread quickly beyond the town itself into the surrounding country and to Nazareth where He was brought up. His relatives received these tidings with feelings of apprehension. They were alarmed at the growing interest and the excitement displayed by the populace, and possibly more so by the fact that a deputation of scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22) was even then in Capernaum to investigate the practices of the Prophet of Nazareth and to ascertain whether anything in the new teaching was antagonistic to the religion they had received from Moses and the fathers. As soon as they heard,* they started out, presumably from Nazareth, to go to Capernaum in order to prevent this mischief, for so they conceived it, spreading further. In their blind ignorance and blinding unbelief they said, He is beside Himself, or, out of His mind.

{*The phrase "of it" is italicised in the A.V. very properly, thus indicating that it is not in the original. The Revisers have not made this distinction, and consequently have unwarrantably restricted the news to a report of the crowd being in the house.}

There is no ground for understanding the term "friends" in the above translation in the sense of a relation based mainly upon feelings of love and regard. When the Lord said to His disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14), He used a different word altogether (philoi), which does signify those who love. But here the Evangelist employs a peculiar phrase (or, par autou), literally, those from Him, or, from His home. It means no doubt His relatives or kinsfolk, and certainly included, as we find from the account in this chapter of their subsequent arrival (Mark 3:31), His mother and brethren. Cranmer’s Version (1539), following Tyndale’s (1534), translated the phrase expressively enough as, those belonging unto Him: "And when they that belonged vnto him heard of it, they went out to laye handes vpon him. For they sayde: he is madd."

We are shown here by this outrageous comment of the relatives how utterly unable "flesh and blood" under the most favourable conditions was of appreciating the true nature of the service of Jesus. It might be supposed that the family at Nazareth would have supported Him. And yet sacred history is not without examples of family ties covering family feuds, even though the enmity existed upon one side only. Cain slew Abel his brother; the sons of Jacob sold Joseph into Egypt; and the sons of Jesse scoffed at David the shepherd who slew Goliath before their eyes. And the Spirit of Christ in the prophets said, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children" (Psalms 69:8); and again, "Because of all mine adversaries, I am become a reproach, yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear to mine acquaintance" (Psalms 31:11, R.V.). The Gospels illustrate the fulfilment of this predicted estrangement. Mary, in her overweening anxiety that Jesus should do some great thing to signalize Himself, said to Him suggestively at Cana, "They have no wine." Before the feast of tabernacles, His brethren said to Him in Galilee, "Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may behold thy works which thou doest. . . . If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world" (John 7:3-4). Here, as Mark shows, mother, brethren and others came out to restrain Him, for such zeal, they said,

bespoke an unsound mind. Thus in every case, whatever appearance of aid their actions had, there was real opposition to Him in His path of service.

How full of bitterness was the cup of the Lord, who endured not only the "contradiction of sinners" against Himself, but the mistaken and evil judgments of His own kinsfolk. He trod first and foremost in that pathway wherein, as He warned His disciples, a man should find that his foes included his own household.

It has seemed to some that to translate exeste by "out of his mind," "beside himself," or is mad," is to give the word a stronger sense than is justifiable. And it is true that in John 10:20, where His enemies say, "He hath a demon and is mad," a different word is used. But whatever may be an exacter rendering here in Mark the general sense is certainly that they thought Jesus was actuated by an extravagant enthusiasm which altogether exceeded the bounds of soberness and propriety. This was a false judgment which arose because they failed to understand what Person had now undertaken service for Jehovah in the midst of His chosen people. The Infamous Charge of the Scribes With that austere impartiality which is indubitable evidence of the divine inspiration of the sacred Gospels, the Evangelist, after she wing that the Lord’s zealous activities awakened in His kinsfolk a suspicion of mental derangement, states, in immediate juxtaposition, the awful charge preferred against the Servant of Jehovah by the religious leaders of the Jews. They were unable to disprove or to deny the reality of the signs and wonders wrought by Him. They therefore, with horrible perversity, attributed this power to a Satanic origin. They could not condemn Him as guilty of this charge by the test laid down of old in the Scriptures of failure in the fulfilment of His words. For in their presence the Lord spoke the word of healing to the palsied man who was so helpless that only by a most extraordinary method was the prostrate sufferer brought before the Prophet of God. His word was immediately effective, as crowds in Capernaum could testify, and the man was able to carry away his bed before their eyes. This proved conclusively the validity of the Lord’s claims. Was it not written, "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the LORD hath really sent him" (Jeremiah 28:9). And Moses had previously written of the converse, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22). In the case of the Lord, however, there were abundant instances that His word was fulfilled, so that a fair-minded teacher of eminence in Israel was constrained to confess, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him (John 3:2). The Pharisaic scribes from Jerusalem,* unable to accuse Jesus of failing to comply with these tests divinely laid down in former days for an alleged prophet, resort to a charge of complicity with evil spirits. Such a charge, if established, would have rendered the Lord liable to the death-sentence of the law. For Jehovah had commanded through Moses, "A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones" (Leviticus 20:27). The Jews did, as we learn elsewhere, say of the Lord that He had a demon (John 7:20; John 8:48; John 8:52; John 10:20), and they also sought to stone Him (John 8:59). Here they went further, for they said, "He hath Beelzebub," and "By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons." The degree of aggravation in this charge will be seen when we remember, on the one hand, that Judas, the perfidious traitor, in his act of betrayal, was possessed not of a demon but of Satan himself (Luke 22:3; John 13:27), and, on the other hand, that the Man Christ Jesus was

anointed for service by the Heavenly Dove, the Holy Spirit of God (Mark 1:10-12). By this statement of theirs which attributed the works of Jesus to the power of Satan, the scribes incurred the guilt of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

{*There seems to have been a special commission sent from Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin to investigate the words and deeds of Jesus in Galilee. See also Matthew 15:1; Mark 7:1.} The Lord's Reply to the Scribes The Servant of the Lord did not contend with those that opposed Him so unscrupulously, but He gently, meekly, patiently, instructed them (see 2 Timothy 2:24-25). He called them to Him and showed them (1) the absurdity of their charge, using for this purpose plain and forcible figures of speech (Mark 3:23-27), and (2) the gross wickedness of their charge, and the peril of it to themselves (Mark 3:28-30).

(1) Their folly. The Lord demonstrated that these learned scribes whose opinions by reason of their eminence would possess a weighty influence upon the people, were devoid of even ordinary wisdom. He set this forth in "parables" or pithy metaphors stated in the form of interrogatories. "How," said He, "can Satan cast out Satan?" The prince of the demons is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44), and his purpose is to rob and kill and destroy. How unthinkable therefore that Beelzebub should be the author of the merciful and beneficent deliverances from the power of the demons wrought in the cases they had witnessed. The prince of darkness could not be the agent of such works of light.

Besides, as the Lord proceeded to point out, such a policy involved self-destruction on the part of Satan. All worldly experience proves that disunion and faction in a community result in disintegration. That union is strength is a universal maxim. Whether it is a kingdom or a household that is divided against itself it will not be able to subsist. And if Satan had risen up against himself, as the words of the scribes implied, he could not continue, but must destroy himself.

Thus the Lord exposed the folly of His accusers and then added another truth which the many instances of the expulsion of demons by Him proved. Every demoniac was a witness of the power Satan wielded over men; while every such miracle of Jesus was evidence of the superiority of His power to that of the Evil One. As the Lord said, "No one can enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." This He Himself had already done. He had resisted the temptations of the strong and crafty one in the wilderness. He had also delivered a great number of demoniacs. And shortly He would bruise the serpent's head, through death bringing to nought him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). The hand of Jehovah was thus upon the Man of His right hand, the Son of man whom He made strong for Himself (Psalms 80:17). And if only Israel had faith, they might well sing praise with the Psalmist, "All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and needy from him that spoileth him?" (Psalms 35:10). But the scribes and Pharisees could not deny the gracious mercy in exercise in their midst, yet would not believe it to be the power of God, bringing rather the baseless and improbable charge of Satanic influence against the Lord.

(2) Their wickedness. This gross charge was not only foolish, it was worse; it was impious and blasphemous. They said of Jesus, He hath an unclean spirit; and this statement was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit by whom the Son of man was indwelt, anointed and sealed. And the Lord warned of the gravity of their sinful speech, prefacing His warning by the solemn and impressive

phrase, "Verily I say unto you."* He said to the scribes, "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin."

{*In John's Gospel the form of the phrase recorded is always, Verily, verily I say unto you"; the above form with a single "Verily" only occurs in the Synoptists — in Matthew about 32 times, in Mark 15:1-47, and in Luke 7:1-50 times.} The Lord, speaking as the anointed Servant of Jehovah, shows that He regarded the railing of the scribes as directed not so much against Himself as against the Holy Spirit by whom He wrought His miracles. In like manner Ananias, in lying to Peter, lied to the Holy Ghost dwelling in the newly-formed church; and, taking another instance, the Sanhedrin, in refusing the testimony of Stephen, resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51; Acts 7:55). Only here the sin was greater; for those that sat in Moses' seat, in the obstinacy and virulence of unbelief, called the Holy Spirit an unclean spirit.

Though they knew it not, these scribes were tools of the great enemy of God and man. They were carrying into effect the scheme of Satan to cause that the Lord should be regarded among men as his emissary. The awful character of this design will become more apparent to us when we recollect that, according to apostolic teaching, Satan will even yet succeed in imposing upon men for a time a modified form of delusion. If he then sought to persuade men that Jesus was his Servant, he will yet delude men into accepting his agent as the object of divine worship. Such temporary success over men Satan will accomplish in the days of the coming apostasy, which will affect both Judaism and Christendom. This agent is in the prophetic word called the "man of sin, the son of perdition," and in evil arrogance will impersonate the Messiah Himself to the deceit and destruction of many. It is said of this personage that at his future coming he "opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly against every one called god or object of veneration; so that he sitteth down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," his coming being "according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Scripture is clear that this gross imposture will be accepted by the mass of Christendom as well as of the Jews, and this servant of Satan will be successful in luring multitudes to destruction. But think of the enormity of this evil scheme, originated in the days of the Lord, to characterise Jesus, the meek and lowly Servant of Jehovah, as One under the power and direction of Satan! And according to the subtle policy of the serpent, that the slanderous accusation might fall with greater force upon the hearts of men, this declaration concerning the Prophet of Nazareth was made by the religious leaders who had come down with authority from Jerusalem to Galilee.

Such a sinful charge, directed as it was against the eternal Spirit of holiness, was of such heinousness that there was no forgiveness, neither in that age nor in that to come (Matthew 12:29).

Unpardonable Blasphemy

1911 308 It is important to observe that the sin concerning which our Lord made such an unqualified pronouncement is a specific one. It is in no sense vague and indefinite, but on the contrary it is here, as well as in the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, stated in precise terms

to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This terrible guilt rested upon the Jewish generation of that day. Most cogent evidence of the power of the Holy Ghost was before their eyes in the words and works of Jesus; but they denied the validity of that evidence, and going further in their malice they ascribed this power for good to the energy of Satan. For this wilful blindness and obduracy of heart there was no remission. Such perverse unbelief was the sure sign of that impending doom to the nation which could not be averted. Could there be a more perfect testimony than that which was rendered by the Spirit through the holy Son of man in whom every act and word and motive were in absolute accord with His divine energy? The generation to which the Lord ministered had "done despite to the Spirit of grace" by describing this testimony as Satanic, and was "guilty of an eternal sin." This last phrase is peculiar to Mark. And the expression is one pregnant with deep significance. It teaches by a word the unalterable character of the unforgiven. There is an eternal fixity in the unholy character of such rebellion against the authority and love of God. The penitent is forgiven, but the guilt of the impenitent is eternal. And eternal sin implies eternal punishment. A Common Error The following remarks are helpful in elucidating the correct interpretation, and thus preventing erroneous views of this passage, some of which have caused unnecessarily much personal distress, as in the case of Peter Williams and of many others.

"Our Lord most solemnly pronounces their doom [the scribes], and shows that they were guilty — not of sin, as men say, but of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. There is no such phrase as sin against Him in this sense. People often speak thus, Scripture never. What the Lord denounces is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasoning about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous unforgivable sin against Him. All sin, I presume, is sin against the Holy Ghost, who has taken His place in Christendom, and, consequently, gives all sin this character. Thus, lying in the church [the case of Ananias and Sapphira] is not mere falsehood toward man, but unto God, because of the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there. Here, on the contrary, the Lord speaks of unforgivable sin (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as ’sin against the Holy Ghost,’ but blasphemy against Him).

"What is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing the power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would be instantly relieved if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible. The truth is, that as any sin of a Christian may be said to be sin against the Holy Ghost, what is especially the sin against the Holy Ghost, if there be anything that is so, is that which directly hinders the free action of the Holy Ghost in the work of God, or in His church. Such might be said to be the sin, if you speak of it with precision.

"But what our Lord referred to was neither a sin nor the sin, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into, and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up, who will receive the Christ whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that generation was concerned, they were guilty of this sin, and they could not be for given. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus. They consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised. They still carried it on persistently; and it [this persistency] is always the case when men

enter upon a bad course, unless sovereign grace deliver. The more that God brings out of love, grace, truth, wisdom, the more determinedly and blindly they rush on to their own perdition. So it was with Israel. So it ever is with man left to himself, and despising the grace of God. 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness.' It is the final stage of rebellion against God. Even then they were blaspheming the Son of man, the Lord Himself; even then they attributed the power of the Spirit in His service to the enemy, as afterwards still more evidently when the Holy Ghost wrought in His servants; then the blasphemy became complete."* {*"Lectures Introductory to the Gospels," by W. Kelly, 2nd ed., 1874, pp. 165-7.} 18. — Obedience the Test of Relationship

"And there come his mother and his brethren*1 and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting about him;*2 and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren*1 without seek for thee. And he answered them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith,*3 Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:31-35, R.V.).

{*1 "his brethren and his mother," J.N.D. as the A.V.

*2 "a crowd sat around him," J.N.D.

*3 "looking around in a circuit at those that were sitting around him, he says," J.N.D.} The kinsfolk of Jesus had set out for Capernaum with the intention of restraining Him in His active service by word and work (ver. 21). They arrived after the interview in the house between Jesus and the scribes from Jerusalem had taken place. On account of the multitude, His mother and His brethren were unable to obtain access to Him, and they accordingly sent a message to announce that they were seeking Him. They must have known that scribes, to whom naturally some reverence and regard were due as teachers of the law of Moses, were among the audience. But this they disregard and send their peremptory message as if to assert the paramount claims upon Jesus of natural ties. But the Servant of Jehovah, in that wisdom which had come from above, turned the occasion to account in His preaching of the kingdom of God. He did not meet with an angry rebuff this unwarrantable interference which sprang from natural affection, although it was ignorant affection, blind to His heavenly mission. But the Lord used the incident as a text, so to speak, for the announcement of the fundamental principle of the kingdom which was at hand. The effort made by His kindred to influence Him led Him to declare that obedience to the will of God is the only reliable foundation of divine relationship, while it necessarily takes precedence of every other claim. "Looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

"Looking round" (periblepo) is a characteristic expression of Mark, and is only used once by any other New Testament writer (Luke 6:10). By Mark it is used six times, and on all but one occasion it has reference to the Lord Himself (Mark 3:5; Mark 3:34; Mark 5:32; Mark 10:23; Mark 11:11). In the remaining instance it is applied to the disciples (9: 8). The term seems here to imply the intense personal and individual interest the Lord took in those who sat around Him in the attitude of discipleship.

Jesus Himself doing God’s Will This simple and profound saying of the Lord (ver. 35) embodied truth applicable to man from the beginning. For obedience to the will of God must ever be inseparable from man’s well-being and happiness. Historically, the will of God forbade eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and disobedience to that expressed will involved the forfeiture of the bliss of Eden and the inheritance of a world of sorrow and sin. Of Adam’s descendants, whether enlightened Jews or darkened Gentiles, it is written comprehensively, not of a particular era, but of every age, "They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one." So that disobedience to God is declared to be perpetuated among men, His will being universally slighted and despised.

Now the Lord Jesus came not only to recall man by His instructions to a sense of his individual responsibility to God as the moral Governor of the world, but to afford in Himself an instance of perfect human obedience to the will of God. He came as a man truly, but also as the Incarnate Servant of Jehovah, which no man beside Him was or could be. Upon every sentient creature service to God is not a matter of choice but of incumbency, but upon the Son there was no obligation of servitude. He chose to take upon Himself "the form of a servant." This He purposed to do before the world was, as was intimated by the prophetic Spirit through the psalmist, "Then said I, Lo, I am come: in the roll of the book 1 is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:7-8). This utterance is definitely declared in the Epistle of the Hebrews to have been fulfilled by the coming of Christ (Hebrews 10:5; Hebrews 10:9). In Him the will of God was done in this world, where the will of man was and is ever struggling for supremacy. And no Gospel sets forth with greater precision than the Fourth — that which pourtrays Him especially as the Son of God — His absorbing devotion to the will of God. After His ministry of the water of life to the woman at the well of Sychar, He said to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know nothil" "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:32; John 4:34). Again, testifying to the Jews of Himself as the appointed Judge of living and dead, He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5:30). And once again, He declared, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me," going on to make known what is that will with regard to those who come to Him, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:38-40). What subjection was this! In the matter of receiving poor vile sinners, loving them as He did, about to die for them as He was, He acknowledged that He could not cast them out because it was the Father’s will that they should come to Him and receive eternal life. In His joy, as in His suffering, He was the submissive One — in all the worthy Object of our admiring and adoring wonder and worship.

But, moreover, we have been permitted to see how His submission was subjected to the most rigorous of all tests. Three only of the apostles were allowed to accompany the Lord in His vigil in Gethsemane. But sleep overcame these, so that there were no human witnesses of that agony of the Holy Servant. Yet we have the record of the prayers and supplications, the strong crying and tears, the bloody sweat, the threefold repetition, communicated to us in the Gospels as well as by allusion in Hebrews 5:7. As a Son He learned obedience, and His obedience was unto death. In the garden the consummation of that obedience in atoning sufferings and death was immediately

before Him. He anticipated the cup that His Father had given Him to drink. He gauged its bitterness with absolute perfection. He measured the immeasurable burden of guilt to be laid upon Him. The sting of death as for none else was before His spirit. It was in the anticipative realisation of all this and of much besides, that He fell prostrate and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In this perfect resignation we have the triumph of holy obedience. "Thy will be done" was soon followed by "It is finished," and the will of God was indeed done. That obedience was thereby accomplished through which many were made righteous.

Doing God’s Will the Basis of Relationship

1911 324 The religious trust of the Jews was in their pedigree. They boasted that they were lineal descendants of Abraham (John 8:33; John 8:39) — an idol that John the Baptist sought to hew to pieces with fierce invective, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). The Lord here declared that in the kingdom of God vital relationship with the King was demonstrated not by nationality, but by personal obedience and individual fealty. The mass were obdurate and irresponsive to the Lord’s teaching, but whoever separated himself from the disobedient nation proclaimed himself thereby on the Lord’s side.

It will be remembered that Israel as a nation placed themselves at the beginning upon the ground of obedience, and it was because they proved themselves in this relationship to be a disobedient and gainsaying people that they were set aside. Jehovah said to them through Moses, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." In their self-ignorance and self-satisfaction they readily accepted this condition: "All the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:5-8; Exodus 24:3). Thus it came about that at the people’s desire the law was imposed with its defined responsibilities of unqualified love to God and man, its conditions being summed up in the phrase, "This do, and thou shalt live." But the recorded history of Israel under the law is one of dismal failure. Like sheep they all went astray and turned every one to his own way. They were the sons of disobedience. In the concluding words of the Book of Judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord by turning the hearts of the "disobedient to the wisdom of the just." For Messiah’s kingdom, as the Lord here intimated, is characterised by doing the will of God. For this consummation the Lord taught His disciples to pray to their Father in heaven — a new title of God evidently contrasted with that of Abraham their father on earth as to the flesh. The Lord had come to set up the promised kingdom, and He instructed His followers to pray to Him whose it was ("Thine is the kingdom") for its due establishment, so that the will of the Father might be done on earth even as in heaven (Matthew 6:9-13). On high there is the harmony of perfect desire among the angelic hosts to do the divine pleasure, as it is written in a psalm of praise, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure" (Ps. 8: 20, 21). And in Messiah’s kingdom this spirit of obedience to the divine will shall also be seen below. When it comes about that Jehovah’s anointed rules in the midst of His enemies His people "shall be willing" in that day of power (Psalms 110:3).

Enough has now been written to show what a far-reaching principle obedience to the will of God is. And it is as essential in the present as in the past and in the future. Relationship to God is inseparable from subjection to His will. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And the Lord said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Recipients as we are of His illimitable grace, we may not ignore His authority, but are called to do the will of God from the heart [soul] (Ephesians 6:6). And to quote again the Master's words, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). This is the divine purpose with regard to us, who are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience" (1 Peter 1:2). And the impulse of the new nature begotten of God within us is to cry with the psalmist, "Teach me to thy will, O God" (Psalms 143:10). So Saul of Tarsus, convicted in the dust, exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" nor was he disobedient to the "heavenly vision."

It may be asked, How can I ascertain the will of God? First of all there must in such a case be the willing mind. This the Lord Himself declared — "If any one willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 6:17). Coming to the scriptures with the prayer, already quoted, of the psalmist, "Teach me to do thy will, O God (Psalms 143:10), the docile spirit is instructed, so that he may stand perfect and fully assured in all that will (Colossians 4:12). The apostle Paul desired on behalf of the saints at Colosse that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9). There is first the hearing and then the doing. In the Lord's words, "My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). But while to understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17) is obviously essential, it is required further in order to prove that good, acceptable and perfect will, that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, not fashioning ourselves according to this present evil age (Romans 12:1-2). Self-denial and suffering are mostly involved in doing the will of God, as Peter reminds us (1 Peter 3:17; 1 Peter 4:19; 1 Peter 2:15). The obedience of Christ was of this nature, and we also are to have that "mind," as is exhorted in the verses which speak of His Great Renunciation unto the death of the cross (Php 2:5-8).

It is important to mark this, since the Incarnation is an insoluble enigma apart from the fact that the Son was here in human guise to do the Father's will. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). As God He was essentially exempt from the responsibilities of the creature. These He assumed that as the Second man He might become the federal Head of a new creation which should be characterised by obedience, even as the first creation was by disobedience (see Romans 5:12-19).

Until the Father's kingdom is fully established, and a spirit of unvarying obedience to His will pervades the whole earth, obedience to His word by the minority must be attended, by the renunciation of selfish interests and by the persecuting opposition of the disobedient ones. But the faithful Christ will publicly confess as akin to Himself, who came to "do and suffer" the will of God. His obedience had a double character — an active and a passive side — the doing and the suffering. In our case the will of God involves, on the one hand, the active and diligent performance of assigned tasks, and on the other hand, the patient endurance of privation and suffering for the sake of righteousness and the name of Christ. Thus we do (poieo) the will of God from the heart, and we also say in the spirit of the Lord Himself, "Thy will be done" (ginomai), (Matthew 26:39; Matthew 26:42; Acts 21:14).

However, in spite of the world's fierce enmity and powerful antagonism, the obedient believer is the only stable person in the world. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17). The Lord taught this same truth by a parable concerning the obedient disciple: "Whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Matthew 7:24-27). Though there may be temporary defeat, there will be eternal victory for the obedient. Whoso suffers with Christ shall also reign with Him. The Lord then, in these weighty words, indicated what was before Israel after the flesh, who boasted in the possession of the law but forgot that not the hearers of the law are just before God, but that the doers of the law shall be justified (Romans 2:13). As the Servant of Jehovah He acknowledges as His associates those who follow Him in the pathway of obedience to the will (thelema) of God, which is "that which God decides to have done because it is pleasing to Him." "God's good pleasure is everywhere [in scripture] regarded as the law whereby all things, human and divine, are ordered. Christ is regarded as its embodiment and manifestation; and the Christian, being — by profession at least — one with Christ, is supposed to be conformed to that will in all things." And regarding this incident in its connection with what precedes it, we believe that in the words He used we have not so much His absolute renunciation of natural relationship as His enunciation of obedience to the will of God as the only valid basis of spiritual relationship with Him. Thus we take the yoke of Christ upon us, and learn to love, to do, and to suffer the will of God.

"O Will, that willest good alone, Lead Thou the way, Thou guidest best; A silent child, I follow on, And trusting, lean upon Thy breast."

19. — The Sower, the Seed and the Soils

1911 340 "And again he began to teach by the seaside.*1 And there is gathered*2 unto him a very great multitude, so that he entered into a boat,*3 and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by*4 the sea on the land. And he taught*5 them many things in parables, and said unto them in his teaching,*6 Hearken:*7 Behold, the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some*8 seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it.*9 And other*10 fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness*11 of earth: and when the sun was risen,*12 it was scorched;*13 and because it had no root, it withered away. And other*10 fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others*4 fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing;*15 and brought) forth, thirty-fold, and sixty-fold, and a hundredfold.*16 And he said, Who*17 hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:1-9, R.V.).

{*1 Omit "side," J.N.D.

*2 "was gathered," J.N.D.; W.K.; A.V.

*3"going on board ship," J.N.D.; "went on board ship," W.K.

*4 "close to," J.N.D.

*5 "was teaching," W.K.

*6 "doctrine," J.N.D.; W.K.

*7 "hear," W.K.

*8 "one," J.N.D.

*9 "devoured it up," W.K.

*10 "another," J.N.D.; "some," W.K.

*11 "depth," J.N.D.; W.K.

*12 "arose," J.N.D.; W.K.

13 *"burnt up," J.N.D.

*14 "another," J.N.D.; "other," W.K.

*15 "that sprang up and increased." W.K, "bore," W.K.

*16 "one thirty, one sixty, and one a hundred," J.N.D.; "some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred," W.K.

*17 "he that," J.N.D.; W.K.} In the fourth chapter a marked change is indicated in the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah. And it will be seen that a modification in His teaching was made at this juncture by the Lord both as to what He taught and as to the manner in which He communicated His message. At the first Jesus announced with authority that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the appointed time being fulfilled, and all classes were invited to repent and believe these good tidings. But now the Lord commenced to teach that there would be only a partial acceptance of the gospel, and much hostility would be aroused by it, so that the external form of the kingdom would be changed in consequence. This change the Lord placed before His audience in a series of parables, a method of teaching in strong contrast with the plain statements of the Sermon on the Mount, spoken previously, as we learn from Matthew's Gospel.

Why was this change made? This question may be answered to some extent from the history of the Lord's ministry up to this point, as it is presented by Mark. Brief and compressed as his narrative is, we are therein shown that the responsible leaders of the people made a studied and determined resistance to the prophetic testimony of the Servant of Jehovah, regardless of the holy and benignant nature of His words and works. Thus, the scribes inwardly condemned Him as a blasphemer because He absolved a man's sins (Mark 2:6). They also with the Pharisees discredit Him because He ate bread with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16). They further accused Him of countenancing a desecration of the Sabbath, because His disciples plucked corn on that day (Mark 2:24). The Pharisees and Herodians conspired to take His life (Mark 3:6). His relations declared that He was demented (Mark 3:21). The scribes from Jerusalem ascribed His power over demons to Satan (Mark 3:22). This last charge the Lord said was evidence of a spirit of animosity of such a nature that it could not be forgiven, and would cause the nation to be set aside. So that in these two chapters (2 and 3) there is delineated a complete outline of that implacable hatred to our Lord by the chosen nation which culminated in His death. The hour was not come for His

crucifixion, but the spirit that ultimately condemned Him to be crucified was before His eyes. He was thus a rejected Messiah already, so far as the nation as a whole was concerned. He came to the vineyard seeking fruit, and there was none. But if He could not gather fruit for the Father who sent Him, He would sow seed so that a remnant in Israel might bear fruit for the Husbandman. Accordingly, He virtually abandoned the nation at large, and offered His word to any who had ears to hear it.

Teaching in Parables

Coincident with this recognition by the Lord of a faithful remnant in Israel who would do God's will in contrast with the rebellious nation as a whole, we find that the Teacher and Prophet of Jehovah adopted a new style of address, presenting the doctrine of the kingdom in the form of parables or similitudes. In the parabolic form the truth was presented in a manner easy of retention by those who heard it Who does not recollect with ease the simple yet striking parables of the Gospels? Their meaning is not so apparent, however, and, in point of fact, was only to be apprehended in so far as an explanation or interpretation was given by the Teacher Himself to those in a moral and spiritual condition to receive it. The parables were spoken publicly to the multitude, and their meaning unfolded privately to the disciples only. In Matthew's Gospel there is an ample record of the Lord's statement upon this very point, in which he shows the distinction between the mass of the people and the believing remnant, and that this distinction was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is being fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:10-17). By these words the Lord placed it beyond question that parables were used by Him for the delivery of truths concerning the kingdom in a form which could only be understood upon His own exposition of them to those who received Him by faith. Quaint Thomas Fuller compared the parables to the divine appearance at the Red Sea which was at once light to the Israelites but darkness to the Egyptians. The quotation from Isaiah shows that the adoption of this form of teaching was in view of the judgment imminent upon the nation. In the prophet's day Israel was about to be subjugated to the power of the Gentiles and brought into captivity to heathen kings. In the Lord's day a severer judgment was at hand because the nation rejected and crucified its Messiah. Jerusalem would be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, the nationality of the people destroyed, and a gospel universal in its scope proclaimed. This national judgment, with its far-reaching consequences, was of course foreknown of the Lord, and He communicated the same to His disciples for their instruction before it came to pass, but not to the multitude at large save in parables only, because He was still

presenting Himself to the daughter of Zion in both Galilee and Judea as the promised King. Until the Jews had finally rejected their King and delivered Him to the Romans for crucifixion, the Lord continued to offer Himself to them, although the hardened and hardening spirit that refused Him was ever before His gaze. His ministry in parables of the impending change in no wise interfered with their responsibility to receive Him, seeing they did not understand. Therefore "all these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matthew 13:34), but when they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples (Mark 4:34). The Parable Itself The Servant of Jehovah continued His work of instructing the mass of the people in the things of righteousness, and is again found by the sea doing this work. Previously we read, "And he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them" (Mark 2:13). Now again a very great crowd from the neighbouring towns assembled by the sea, and He whose voice was "as the voice of many waters" ministered to them the precious truths of God. But that they might hear, and that He might speak the more conveniently, He boarded a boat, as He had done before (Mark 3:9), and sitting thus on the margin of Lake Tiberias, He addressed the standing multitude gathered upon the strand, teaching them many things in parables. From this circumstance the series of them is sometimes called the "boat-parables." The Lord spake many, and most probably only a selection of them are recorded in the Gospels. Matthew gives the greatest number, and the seven constitute a panoramic sketch of the kingdom of the heavens in "mystery."

Matthew 13:1-58

1. The Sower 2. Wheat and tares

3. Mustard seed 4. Three measures of meal 5. Hidden treasure

6. Costly pearl

7. Great net

Mark 4:1-41

1. The Sower 2. Seed growing secretly

3. Mustard seed

Luke 1. The Sower (Luke 8:1-56) 2. Mustard seed (Luke 13:1-35) 3. Three measures of meal (Luke 13:1-35) As proof that a selection of these parables was made by the Holy Spirit to conform to the purpose of each of the three Gospels it is sufficient to note that Mark inserts one not occurring elsewhere, 1:e., that of the secret growth of the sown seed, while Matthew only records three spoken in the house to the disciples. This is evidence of differentiated design, not of effort after a dead level of uniformity in the Synoptic narratives.

It will be observed that the first that of the sower — is one of the three common to all. This is the longest of the parables, and its interpretation is given with great particularity. Unlike the others, it is not exactly a similitude of the kingdom, the prominent feature being the One who sows the word of the kingdom, although it is true that the varied results of the sowing are expressed.

It is interesting to observe the tripartite character of the parable. Its subjects are threefold —

1. The sower

2. The seed

3. The soils There are three varieties of unfruitful soil —

1. The wayside 2. The stony ground 3. The thorny patch There is a threefold gradation in the results of seed-sowing on the unsuitable soils —

1. The seed was devoured before germination 2. The seed sprang up, but quickly withered away 3. The seed grew up, but was choked by the thorns There is also a threefold degree of fruitfulness in the seed which fell on good ground —

1. Some produced thirty-fold 2. Some produced sixty-fold 3. Some produced a hundred-fold This is the order of the degrees of fruitfulness given by Mark, but Matthew reverses this order, and Luke only mentions the last — "a hundredfold." In comparing the three versions of the parable by the Synoptic Evangelists a close correspondence is observed between those presented by Matthew and Mark, but of the two that of the latter is the fuller. The principal variations in the second Gospel from the first are as follows: —

1. The addition of "it came to pass (egeneto)" before "as he sowed," 5: 4.

2. The "birds" are called "birds of the air (heaven)," 5: 4.

3. The choking action of the thorns described in Matthew by apopnigo, is expressed in Mark by sumpnigo, the latter term denoting the suffocation caused by the greater number of the thorns, 5: 7.

4. "And it yielded no fruit" is an addition peculiar to Mark 5:7.

5. The good and fruitful seed "growing up and increasing" is also an addition peculiar to Mark 5:7.

Luke’s account is much abbreviated, while at the same time it contains its own peculiar variations (Luke 8:5-8).

1. Of the seed falling by the wayside, it is added that "it was trodden under foot."

2. Of the seed falling on stony ground, it is said that as soon as it germinated it withered through lack of moisture; and the fact of the shallowness of the soil, the heat of the sun, and the absence of root is not mentioned.

3. The thorns are said to grow up along with (sumphuo) the good seed.

4. Luke says that the seed which fell on good ground sprouted (phuo).

5. He is also peculiar in using the compound form of the adjective, "hundred-fold" (hekatontaplasion), Though not occurring in Matthew 13:1-58, this term is found in Matthew 19:29.

20. — The Hearing Ear and the Mystery of the Kingdom

1911 356 "And he said, Who* hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables. And he said unto them, Unto you is given* the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in

parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive* and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply* they should turn again,* and it* should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:9-12, R.V.).

{*1 "He that," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 J.N.D., W.K. add "to know" in brackets as an explanatory phrase.

*3 "beholding they may behold and not see," J.N.D.

*4 "lest it may be," J.N.D.; "lest perhaps," W.K.

*5 "be converted," J.N.D., W.K.

*6 "they," J.N.D.; W.K.} The Lord had by His miracles and signs fully established His title to be heard as the Prophet of Jehovah. But in the result He might adopt the language of Isaiah, and inquire, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" For the nation was like "the deaf adder [asp] that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Jesus, as the anointed King and Redeemer, had called, but there was no response, save blasphemously to ascribe His works of mercy and might to the power of the evil one. The Servant of the Lord did not, however, in view of His repulse both in Judaea and in Galilee, abandon Himself to despair like the despondent Elijah of old, and flee from the place of testimony to Horeb. If the nation at large refused to listen, He, was mindful of the simple and faithful ones who were "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." And from this period onward He addressed His ministry not to the mass as such, but to the individuals who were desirous of divine instruction. "And h’ said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Ears to Hear This phrase was used by our Lord more than once, and in each case His accompanying utterance contained a meaning which did not, so to speak, lie upon the surface, but needed faith and love in the heart, as well as the Spirit’s unction, for its true apprehension. In Matthew an abbreviated form of the words is found, "Who hath ears, let him hear." And in that Gospel it is recorded in one other connection besides in that of the parables. The Lord was speaking to the multitudes concerning John the Baptist and his super-eminence as a prophet, being none other than the messenger of Jehovah and the forerunner of the Messiah, as Malachi had foretold. "And," said He to His audience, "if ye will receive it, this is Elijah which is to come He that hath ears, let him hear" (Matt. 11: 14. 15). Only faith discerned that the King had come in humiliation, and also that the predicted forerunner had preceded Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, not yet, however, to introduce the day of God’s vengeance, but the day of His salvation. Those who had the ears of faith were called to hear this revelation concerning the extended scope of the prophecy of Malachi, and to know that Elijah was yet to come and restore all things, and also that he had come and that the nation "did unto him whatsoever they listed" (Matthew 17:11-12).

Luke also records the phrase in one other association besides in that of the parables (Luke 8:8). The Lord was speaking to the great crowds that went after Him with reference to the stern and uncompromising self-denial and endurance which would be the lot of such as became His disciples. The follower of the humbled Messiah, He declared, must renounce all things. Yet His disciples were the salt of the earth, the sole preservative against the universal spread of the

corrupting influences of evil. And the Lord concluded this saying by the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14:25-35). For all had not faith, and only faith could understand the new teaching that the way of divine service was not yet in the exercise of power but in the endurance of suffering and shame. In Mark this brief but striking call occurs in the seventh chapter as well as in this. There we Barn of the Lord teaching, in contrast with the law of Moses which concerned itself with man's overt acts, that man is defiled by the evil thoughts and motives which proceed from his heart. "He called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand. There is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:14-16).* The saying was weighty, and only the sons of faith, now as well as then, receive this truth by which men are condemned down to the very core of their being. There must be the "ear to hear"; in other words, the experience of Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25 as well as of Romans 3:1-31.

{*The Revisers place the phrase in the margin, but there is considerable evidence for its retention in the text.} In this chapter the phrase occurs again (ver. 23), but it comes with special emphasis at the close of the parable of the sower. And this force appears the more striking when we connect it with the Lord's call for attention at the beginning of the parable. "Hearken," He said, and having portrayed Himself as the Sower, He added, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It was a summons to the individual to free himself from the heedless mass. And as the Lord addressed this appeal to His earthly people, so was His cry reiterated to each of the seven churches in Asia; "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Revelation 2:3). Amid general ecclesiastical declension, the Lord requires individual faithfulness in regarding His word and His warning. Who Hears? Who then were those who heard the Prophet of Jehovah? There need be no doubt regarding the correct answer to this question, since the Lord Himself gave it. Speaking to His disciples, He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see; and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:16). They were His followers, for they had heard Him. As the sheep of the "little flock" they had heard the voice of the good Shepherd (John 10:3; John 10:27). When He was instructing His disciples, He described them as those who heard. "I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Luke 6:27). Again, the Lord said, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21). These had hungered and thirsted after the word of righteousness and were blessed indeed, for by the Prophet's ministry they were filled.

It is instructive to observe that the Lord Himself took the place of subjection. As the Servant of Jehovah He had the opened ear in both His ministry and His suffering, waiting for directions upon Him who sent Him. This spirit of subjection and obedience was according to prophecy: "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair" (Isaiah 50:4-6, R.V.). His ear was open as the true Prophet to hear, and what He heard He communicated to men. Thus He said to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). The believing followers of Jesus, then, were those that "heard," and what they heard they declared, as the apostle John wrote (1 John 1:1). But the nation would not hear. It is true that Israel boasted in their great "Shema," wherein the prophet Moses

recalled them to the privilege and responsibility of the revelations under the law (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29). "Hear, O Israel," Moses exhorted, "the LORD our God is one LORD," following this call with a summary of the ten words. But Israel was the "deaf servant" of Jehovah; and now God had raised up another Prophet, of whom it was written, "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you" (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22-23; Acts 7:37). And as Moses had solemnly adjured the people, "Hear, O Israel," so now One greater than Moses cried, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." What if they did not hear? For those who refused to hearken, that ancient prophecy contained a warning equally solemn. "It shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:19). The Prophet’s Privacy The Lord Jesus, amid His multitudinous and multifarious services for Jehovah in the midst of His chosen people, preserved to Himself seasons of retirement from, or cessation from, public activities, wherein there was opportunity either for personal private communion with His Father (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 9:18; John 6:15), or for intercourse with His friends and followers. On the latter occasions there were peculiarly sweet and choice communications confided by the Heavenly Teacher to His own intimate circle, chosen by Himself "out of the world." After the execution of John the Baptist, and the return of the apostles from their mission journeys, Jesus said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in a boat to a desert place apart" (Mark 6:31-32; Matthew 14:13; Luke 9:10). So also when the Lord saw fit to grant unto the favoured trio a glimpse of His personal glory He led them up into the privacy of the mountain side. "Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart; and he was transfigured before them" (Matthew 17:1-2; Mark 9:2). The Lord had matters for the eyes and ears of His own which were not for the populace. This accords with what on one occasion He said to His disciples, "privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24). The apostles sometimes utilized moments of His privacy to lay before Him their difficulties. They came to Him "apart" to know why they were unable to cast the demon out of a young man (Matthew 17:19; Mark 9:28). And again, at the close of His ministry, when certain of them desired to know more concerning the destruction of the temple, and what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age, they came to Him privately with their questions as He sat on the mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3). These were not exceptional instances, for they had been accustomed to such private tuition, as we read, "without a parable spake he not unto them [the multitude]; but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things" (Mark 4:34).

Here we find the disciples under similar circumstances seeking instruction in the significance of the parable of the sower and others. "When he was alone* they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables." It is interesting to see that others besides the twelve apostles were desirous of being taught, and none of them were denied. And while this teaching may be regarded as exclusive, esoteric, and committed in this manner to these chosen witnesses in order that after the Lord’s ascension it might be promulgated throughout the world, the general truth is important that the ways of God are made known in the hush of the sanctuary rather than in the noise of the camp. The impending destruction of the cities of the plain was imparted, not to Lot in the bustling streets of Sodom, but, to Abraham in the quiet of a torrid noontide at his own tent door.

David in the wilderness with his sheep, not Eliab in the camp of Saul, learned the mind of God about Goliath. So it was that not to the surging crowds by the Galilaean lake, but to the disciples who came to Him as He was alone in the house, the Prophet of Jehovah revealed the truth concerning the peculiar character of the coming kingdom.

{*"Alone" in the sense of being "by Himself," as in Luke 9:18. Compare also Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:47; John 6:15, where Jesus was alone in prayer. In the latter part of this chapter (Mark 4:34) a different expression (kat' idian) is used, signifying "privately" as contrasted with publicly. The latter expression occurs also in most of the other references made above.} The Mystery of the Kingdom.

1911 370 It was not altogether a new thing for divine predictions to be conveyed to men in a form which concealed its import from the many and revealed it to the few. In the Old Testament we read of dreams, of visions, and, though not as frequently, of parables wherein God spoke to man. But we can only refer now to one or two of such instances in which He revealed matters affecting the government of the world. Take, for example, the dreams of Pharaoh. He who gives fruitful seasons, and in His providence fills the hearts of men with food and gladness, foretold events which were of the utmost importance in the administration of the great empire of Egypt. That seven years of phenomenal fruitfulness were at hand, and further that these were to be succeeded by a like period of absolute barrenness, were facts of incalculable value to the statesmen of that land. God who knew and gave these things was pleased to communicate them beforehand to the responsible governing head of Egypt. But the prediction came to Pharaoh in dreams, the significance of which he could not unravel. The heathen monarch and the wisest men of the land were alike constrained to confess their impotence, and compelled to solicit the aid of Joseph, the pious servant of the most high God. He came forth from the dungeon and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams which to human wisdom were otherwise insoluble.

Again, when Israel was displaced and God had granted universal dominion to the Gentiles, we find Him communicating with Nebuchadnezzar, the first head, but in the form of a dream. This forgotten dream presented an outline-sketch of the four great world-kingdoms (Daniel 2:1-49), but, apart from Daniel the prophet, it was unintelligible to the mighty king. In the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's banqueting hall we have another instance of a cryptic message, needing special interpretation; while the visions subsequently received by Daniel himself required to be explained to the prophet by an angel from heaven.

These examples are sufficient to illustrate the nature of what is called in Scripture a "mystery." It may consist of a dream, a vision, a parable or a verbal prophecy, the essential feature being that the divine communication cannot be understood without a subsequent divine communication which explains the first. And it will be found that the Greek word, mysterion, mystery, first occurs in the chapter of Daniel to which reference has been made (Daniel 2:1-49). In the Septuagint version the term is applied repeatedly to the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation. Daniel and his friends "sought mercies from the God of heaven concerning this mystery." "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night." Daniel said, "The mystery which the king asks the explanation of." "There is a God in heaven revealing mysteries." "He that reveals mysteries has made known to thee what must come to pass." Nebuchadnezzar said, "Of a truth your God is a God of gods, and Lord of kings, who reveals mysteries; for thou hast been able to reveal this mystery" (Daniel 2:18-19; Daniel 2:27-30; Daniel 2:47; Daniel 4:6).* It may be seen

therefore that a mystery is a secret thing which would remain such apart from divine revelation a matter to the knowledge and understanding of which initiation is necessary.

{*The quotations are from Sir Charles Brenton’s Translation of the Septuagint, It is "secret" in the Authorized Version.}

Now, as there was the mystery concerning the Gentile monarchies, so, the Lord said, there was a mystery concerning that kingdom which, according to Daniel 2:44 the God of heaven would establish, never to be destroyed. This mystery He set out in His teaching by parables, thereby concealing from the multitude for the time being the meaning which He afterwards revealed to His apostles. For He said, "Unto you is given [to know] the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand." He thus added a solemn warning to the people. Upon the nation at large the sentence of judicial blindness would fall, as Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 6:9-10). For the Light of the world was among them, yet they refused to see light in His light; hence darkness would come among and upon them, and even as He was speaking, the truth as to God’s provision in view of their rebellion was veiled from their eyes in parables.

Just what was signified by the mystery of the kingdom will appear in the interpretation of the parables that the Lord Himself gave. The altered character of the kingdom consequent upon the rejection of the Anointed One and the absence of the King is delineated most fully and categorically in the series of parables recorded in Matthew 13:1-58. Here we only emphasize the essential element of mystery in the Scriptural sense, viz., not that which in itself is difficult of understanding, but rather that which in both its communication and its reception is dependent upon divine revelation, and, as must necessarily follow, that which is only made known to a selected few who are fitted to receive it. The New Testament, associated as it is with the advent both of the Son and the Spirit, contains the revelation of many mysteries. Many matters kept secret from the foundation of the world, many truths concealed in Old Testament prophecies are therein brought to light and made known. We read of the mystery of God, of Christ, of God’s will, of godliness, of faith, of the gospel, of iniquity, of the seven stars, of the scarlet woman, Babylon the Great. The secret rapture of the church is called a mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51), and so its union with Christ the Head (Ephesians 5:32). The setting aside of Israel and the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges in the gospel is a mystery (Romans 11:25). Eye had not seen, nor ear heard these things in the ancient oracles. They are now freely given us by God’s Spirit.

Those Without

Those not following Jesus are described as "them that are without," and no explanation of the parables is offered to them. The term* is one peculiar to Mark, not occurring in Matthew or Luke. It is used similarly, however, in the Epistles, where it refers to those outside the assembly of believers. Thus Paul writes, "What have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within, whereas them that are without God judgeth?" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). He exhorts the Colossian saints to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Colossians 4:5), and also the Thessalonians to "walk honestly toward them that are without" (1 Thessalonians 4:12). One instance of its adverbial use is so striking and solemn that it may be quoted here: "Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and

the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:14-15). This instance is one of its final and irrevocable sense, no passage being possible from one side of the fixed gulf to the other.

{*That is, with the article. The remark does not apply to its more general use without the article as an adverb or preposition.} The Judicial Blindness

Isaiah centuries before had prophesied of the obduracy of the nation and the spiritual darkness that should fall upon it as a people in consequence. The prophet recorded the words of Jehovah to him. He was commanded to "go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." Such was their condition — in the position, and having the privilege, of hearing and seeing, but utterly oblivious to heavenly sights and sounds. The message went on to warn of what would come upon the nation as a righteous retribution of this gross abuse of their privileges. "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10). In the Septuagint version of Isaiah, this insensate condition is declared to be the result of the people's own neglect rather than of a divine infliction, as in the Hebrew text. The Greek version runs as follows: "Go, and say to this people, Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."* {*Sir Charles Brenton's Translation of the LXX. (Isaiah 6:9-10).}

Now, in turning to Matthew's Gospel it will be seen that the Lord, speaking of the complete fulfilment (anapleroo) of this prophecy, quoted from the Greek version and not from the Hebrew text (Matthew 13:13-15). The people had themselves closed their eyes. Mark and Luke (Luke 8:10) only record the reference to the former part of the prophecy which states the condition of Israel hearing and not understanding; while all three agree in showing that the Lord adopted the parabolic form of teaching in view of their insensate moral state.

John also quotes Isaiah's prediction, but in a different connection. It is cited at a later stage in the history of Israel's opposition to their Messiah. Though Jesus did so many signs before them yet they believed not. And since they would not believe, it came to pass that they could not believe. And the Evangelist brings forward the ancient oracle which warned of this blindness which came as a divine judgment upon the nation. "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said, He hath blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:37-40). This quotation, it will be observed, is from the Hebrew text, and is introduced historically immediately before the final act of unbelief the crucifixion of Christ. The truth was there hidden from their eyes, even the eyes of the wise and prudent (Matthew 11:25; Luke 19:42).

Through sovereign grace the gospel was offered to the guilty people by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, as is recorded in the Acts. But there was no response from the nation. In the concluding chapter of this book we have the final appeal of Paul at Rome to the Jews as such; but they closed their eyes and ears to this call also. And the apostle applied to them the witness of the Holy Spirit in the same scripture from Isaiah, quoting as in Matthew the Septuagint version, and laying the

responsibility upon their own shoulders (Acts 28:25-27). The nation was thereupon abandoned. So far as Holy Writ speaks, no further opportunities of repentance were offered them. And less than ten years later, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the Jews scattered over the face of the earth. By the testimony of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of God, Israel had been summoned to hear the message of God. They refused to hear, and the apostle told them in his final address what was the consequence: "Be it known, therefore, unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles; they will also hear" (Acts 28:28). It was sent to such as would hear.

Thus we see that the prophecy is quoted in the Synoptical Gospels and in the Acts to show that the blindness of Israel was due to their own wilful obstinacy, and in the Gospel of John to show that it was the result of the judgment of God. Both aspects are of course true and necessary to a complete presentation of the truth.

21. — The First Parable Interpreted

1912 4 "And he saith unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know*1 all the parables The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side,*2 where the word is sown; and when they have heard,*3 straightway*4 cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been*5 sown in them. And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard*3 the word, straightway*4 receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while*6 then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of*7 the word, straightway) they stumble.*8 And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard*9 the word, and the care of the world,*10 and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And those are they that were sown*11 upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept*12 it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold"*13 (Mark 4:13-20, R.V.).

{*1 "will ye be acquainted with," J.N.D.; W.K.

*2 "beside the way," W.K.

*3 "hear," J.N.D.; W.K.

*4 "immediately," J.N.D.; WK.

*5 "was sown," W.K.

*6 "but are for a time," J.N.D.; "but are temporary," W.K.

*7 "on account of," J.N.D.; W.K.

*8 "are offended," J.N.D.; "are stumbled," W.K.

*9 "hear," W.K.

*10 "cares of life," J.N.D.; "of the age," W.K.

*11 "have been sown," J.N.D.

*12 "receive," J.N.D.; W.K., but it paradekomai here, not lambano as in verse 16.

13 "one thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundred," J.N.D.; W.K.} The apostles came to the Lord to seek enlightenment with regard to the meaning of the parable of the sower. He told them that the mysteries of the kingdom, though concealed from the unbelieving mass, were committed to them. But it was one thing for them to have these mysteries in a parabolic form, and another thing to know the true inwardness of the parables. The ignorance of the disciples upon the latter head stood confessed in their inquiry concerning the parable of the sower. This parable was, in comparison with others, elementary in nature, and introductory in character. If they were unable to comprehend the initial lesson regarding the hitherto unrevealed phases of the kingdom, how much less would they be able to understand further parables of a more advanced and more complex nature? The Lord said to them, "Know (oidate) ye not this parable? how then will ye be acquainted with (gnosesthe) all the parables?"

{*"Have ye not an inward conscious knowledge of this parable? How then will ye acquire objectively, a knowledge of all the parables?" Compare the note on 1 Corinthians 8:1 in J. N. Darby's translation of the New Testament, 3rd Ed., 1884, where the distinction between the two Greek verbs is discussed.} This inability of even the apostles to understand the significance of the parables apart from the Lord's own exposition shows that they were not used as are figures of speech, in the ordinary acceptation of this term. They were not like similes or metaphors or allegories introduced in order to illuminate or embellish or simplify a discourse. The parables, on the contrary, however deeply they might he impressed upon the memory, presented the truth shrouded in a veil, which was impenetrable to the disciples and to the multitude alike. The Prophet lifted the veil for the instruction of His followers; as we read, "Without a parable spoke he not to them [the populace]; and in private he explained all things to his disciples" (Mark 4:34, New Trans.), so that when He said to them, Have ye understood all these things? they were able to reply, Yea, Lord (Matthew 13:51). What the disciples failed to retain of the parables and their interpretations unfolded to them during the term of their Master's ministry, the Holy Spirit (so the Lord promised), should bring to their remembrance after His descent at Pentecost (John 14:26).

It is remarkable that but few of the Lord's own interpretations of His parables are recorded in the Gospels. Those of the sower and of the wheat and tares are given (Matt. 13: 18-23; 3743), as well as that relating to the true nature of defilement (Matthew 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-23). It may also be said that we have the explanation of the parable of the drag-net (Matthew 13:47-50). With regard to the others, however, we are left to seek to understand their meaning in the light of the subsequent revelations of the Spirit, transmitted through the medium of the apostles in the Epistles. The Sower and the Seed

It has been suggested that "the parable of the sower" is not altogether a suitable title for the Lord's first parable, since there is no definite statement of the identity of the sower, while a lengthy explanation is given regarding the behaviour of the seed in the various soils; and that a preferable description would be the parable of the seed and the soils. This remark must have been made without adequate reference and reflection. For the former is precisely the designation bestowed upon it by the Lord Himself. According to Matthew He prefaced His interpretation by the words, "Hear ye the parable of the sower." And evidently the parable is so described by the Lord to indicate that it unfolded the relationship He Himself was assuming towards the kingdom of God in its altered character. He, so to speak, laid aside the sword of the King and Judge and took up the word of the Prophet and Teacher. This new function, as about to be exercised, possessed also a

special feature which the parable made clear. This feature was that the work of the Sower would, to outward seeming, be a partial failure. When Messiah reigns in power His rule will be successful, without exception, in subduing all things to Himself. When the Sower sowed the word, three-fourths would be absolute failure, and the remainder fruitful only in varying degrees. The Sower therefore is the subject of this parable, and, in agreement with the second parable, it may be understood that "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" (Matthew 13:37). Subsequently the apostles, in their ministry of the truth, became sowers themselves in a secondary sense. For example, Paul used this figure when writing to the Corinthians "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Corinthians 9:11; cp. also 1 Corinthians 3:6). The Lord's declaration that He was among them as the Sower implied that His errand of seeking fruit in Jehovah's vineyard was futile, as it was definitely expressed in another of His parables (Luke 13:6-9). It was not yet the glorious year of jubilee to which the ancient type pointed when there should be no need of sowing (Leviticus 25:11); nor was it that millennial day of extreme fruitfulness when, according to the prophecy, "the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed (Amos 9:13). But it was a day to "sow beside all waters" — a day when the Great Husbandman must, in fulfilment of the purposes of God, wait patiently for the precious fruit of the earth. It was, moreover, a day of shame and suffering for the Servant of Jehovah, when the Sower must sow in tears; yet, in the words of the Psalmist, "though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6, R.V.).* For if He was the patient Sower, He was also the Lord of the harvest.

{*This beautiful stanza is variously translated: "Surely (going) he goeth and weepeth, bearing a load of the seed; surely (coming) he shall come with joyful song, bearing his sheaves" (W. Kelly). "Il va en pleurant, portant la semence qu'il répand; it revient avec chant de joie, portant ses gerbes" (J. N. Darby's French version). The latter is rendered in English thus: "He goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for scattering; he cometh again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves."}

Israel then, having been found barren and unfruitful, the Lord came bringing that which would produce fruit, and this good seed He scattered broadcast, upon good and had soils alike. He had come to serve, and, as the Perfect Servant, He left the results of His work with Him who sent Him, according to the promise of Jehovah concerning His word of grace, "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11). In the strength of this assurance the Prophet of God sowed in the morn His seed, and in the evening withheld not His hand. In Mark the seed is called the word simply, without any qualification; but in Luke we read more definitely, "The seed is the word of God." This phrase predicates the divine origin of the word. It is of God. "I have given unto them thy word," the Son said to the Father. The word of God has the germ of life within itself. It is living and operative. It is incorruptible and eternal. It possesses life, and it bestows life. In the Gospel by Luke where the kingdom of God is treated in its world-wide aspect, this designation is on this account the most appropriate. But in Matthew we have not the generic but the specific term. The seed is there described as the "word of the kingdom." This phrase covered the subject of the word, while that of Luke looked to its Author.

Christ’s word had special and particular reference to the kingdom. We learn therefore from the First Gospel that in the parable of the sower the Lord made direct allusion to His own teaching on the topic of the kingdom. And it is well to remember that while the instruction in regard of the hindrances to the germination and fruitfulness of the seed is of general application to spiritual matters at all periods, primarily it referred to the gospel of the kingdom, preached by the Lord and His apostles. On comparing the accounts in Matthew and in Luke, it will be further noted that the former emphasizes the necessity for understanding the word, and the latter the necessity of believing it. The following extract refers to these differences in mode of expression between the two Evangelists.

"There is, of course, a great deal in common between the two; but the Spirit had a wise reason for using the different expressions. It would have been rather giving an opportunity to an enemy, unless there had been some good grounds for it. I repeat that it is ’the word of the ’kingdom’ in Matthew, and of ’God’ in Luke. In the latter we have ’lest they should believe,’ and in the former ’lest they should understand.’

"What is taught by the difference? It is manifest that, in Matthew, the Holy Ghost has the Jewish people particularly in His mind, although the word is going out to the Gentiles in due time; whereas, in Luke, the Lord had particularly the Gentiles before Him. They understood that there was a great kingdom, which God was about to establish, destined to swallow up all their kingdoms. The Jews being already familiar with the word of God, their great point was understanding what God taught. They had His word already, though superstition and self-righteousness never understood it (you might have been controverted had you said to a Jew, You do not believe what Isaiah says); and a serious question came, Do you understand it? But if you looked at the Gentiles they had not the lively oracles, so that among them the question was believing what God said; and this is what we have in Luke. The point for a Gentile was that, instead of setting up his own wisdom, he should bow to what God said.

"Hence you will observe that, looking at people who had not the word of God, and who were to be tested by the gospel going out to them in due time, the question was believing something that had not been brought out to them before. In Matthew, speaking to a people who had the word already, the great thing was to understand it. This they did not. The Lord intimates that, if they heard with their ears, they did not understand with their hearts. So that this difference, when connected with the different ideas and objects of the two Gospels is manifest, interesting, and instructive.

"’When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.’ Another solemn truth we learn from this — the great thing that hinders spiritual understanding is religious prejudice. The Jews were charged with not understanding. They were not idolaters, or open infidels, but had a system of religion in their minds in which they had been trained from infancy, and which darkened their intelligence of what the Lord was bringing out. So it is now. Among the heathen, though you would find an evil state morally, yet at least there would be that kind of barren waste where the word of God might be freely sown, and by grace, be believed. That is not the case where people have been nurtured in ordinances and superstition: there the difficulty is to understand the word."* {*"Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew," by W. Kelly, London, 1896, pp. 285-7.}

Wayside Hearers

1912 20 Both Mark and Luke refer to the various classes of hearers in the plural, but Matthew specifies the individual, "This is he which received seed by the wayside." The former lay down what is true generally, while the latter applies the truth particularly and personally to those who heard the word. In this case the result of the sowing is purely negative. The seed falls upon a hard and unreceptive heart: it does not even germinate, but is removed immediately by the spiritual enemy of man. The cause of the failure is not in any degree ascribed to the Sower or to the seed. These, on the contrary, are perfect, without defect of any kind. But the ground was hard and beaten unploughed, while the birds of the air were alert to steal the good seed. The trodden pathway across the Galilean hillside is an apt simile of multitudes of mankind, then and now. Out of the heart of man are "the issues of life." It is the avenue of his being. Duty and enterprise as well as pleasure and pain, all throng daily in ceaseless procession along the highway of the heart. The continual succession of these earthly objects, each claiming concern, if not concentration of mind, wears down the heart into the ruts of a dull routine. When truth from above falls in such a street, it lies unheeded, and is "trodden under foot," as Luke says in the parable.

Under these circumstances, the word being sown in a heart irresponsive to its claim, and oblivious of its value, a personal and active foe of the truth appears and snatches it away. This foe is named Satan in Mark; the devil diabolos) in Luke; and the evil or wicked one in Matthew. And it is noticeable that in the threefold power which hinders the growth and fructification of the seed Satan is placed first. The Lord shows by the three classes that 1. the power of the devil removes the seed (the birds) 2. the power of the flesh prevents the seed rooting (the rocks) 3. the power of the world prevents the seed fruiting (the thorns) The Pharisees had blasphemously charged the Lord with being in alliance with Satan (3: 22-30); the Lord here declared Satan to be the foremost enemy of the word of the kingdom, who "immediately," so energetic in his opposition is he, catches away the word. In Luke, where he is represented as the devil, the adversary of man, in contrast with the Saviour of men, his object in stealing the word is given — "lest they should believe and be saved." In Matthew it is as the wicked one that he snatches away the good seed. This expression seems to emphasise the moral contrast between the kingdoms of light, and of darkness, and their respective heads.*

{*In the only two parables interpreted, this and that of the tares, the Sower and Satan are placed in strong antithesis, thus forming an indirect but crushing reply to the accusation of the Pharisees.} The wayside hearers then are the careless and indifferent persons, too absorbed in other things to receive the truth in the love of it. The Athenians seem to have been, among others, an example of this class (Acts 17:15-32). They had habituated themselves ever to be telling or hearing some new thing. The novelty of the gospel, therefore, awakened a passing superficial interest in the preaching of Paul, but no more. Heathen philosophy, like formal Judaism, was unreceptive of the gospel of Jesus.

Stony Ground Hearers The main difference between this class of hearers and the preceding, with which it is coupled by the adverbial phrase, "in like manner," is that in the former instance the hardness and impenetrability were found on the surface, but in this case the density occurred at a little distance beneath. In outward appearance the exterior of the soil was actually more promising, but the resistance by the rocky subsoil to the growth of the seed was none the less effectual. Under normal conditions the sun’s rays should have caused the seed to root more firmly and deeply as it struck downwards in search of moisture. But under these circumstances the heat

exercised a withering influence, hastening the total destruction of the growth.

These persons are characterized by superficiality. When they hear the word, immediately (Matt., Mark) they receive it with joy (Matt., Mark, Luke). The conscience, that fierce self-accuser within the heart, is clearly not awakened. Repentance does not rejoice, as these are said to do, but sits in sackcloth and ashes. Confession of sins is made in tears, not with joy. Peter's audience, when they heard the word on the day of Pentecost, were "sawn asunder" in their hearts.* These in the parable, however, receive the word because of the pleasure it affords by its novelty, or its beauty, or the like. The result is a rapid growth which by its fair promise may deceive some, but such profession, as soon as tribulation or persecution on account of the word arises, quickly withers away.**

{*The word "gladly" (Acts 2:41) is an acknowledged interpolation. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, but not prior to repentance (Galatians 5:22); for examples of rejoicing following faith, see Acts 8:8; Acts 16:34.

**In Matthew and Mark they are said to be stumbled (skandalizo) by affliction and persecution; while Luke, giving the side of individual responsibility, says they fall away or depart (aphistemi). It may he noted that this is an early intimation by the Lord of the persecution for the word's sake which would be the lot of His disciples.}

There were many such shallow fickle hearers in our Lord's days; there have been many such since. It is written that the common people heard Him gladly, but the priests soon persuaded them to ask Pilate to spare Barabbas and to crucify Jesus. A sign in Jerusalem, and many crowded to follow Him! A "hard saying," and many turned back to walk no more with Him (John 2:23; John 6:60-61)! They "endured for a while," but it is a little while only, even as they rejoiced in the testimony of John the Baptist "for a season" (John 5:35). Many put their hands to the plough, but quickly looked back, proving their unfitness to produce fruit. And the Lord, in the interpretation of this parable, unveiled the cause of this failure. The hindrance was within — the unbroken spirit, the adamantine heart. "To this man will I look," saith Jehovah, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Thorny Ground Hearers This would appear to be a more promising class than either of the former. The seed germinates, and grows and develops to a certain degree. But it is nevertheless unfruitful, on account of a powerful external influence. The thorns grow more vigorously than the good seed, and eventually suffocate it.*

{*"In this case "have heard" (aorist) is used (verse 18), instead of "hear," as the baneful effect of the thorns does not immediately follow the sowing, as in the former instance.} The Lord explained what the thorns signify. They set forth the adverse influence which present things may exercise upon eternal things — a possible influence so great as to extinguish and exclude the latter entirely from the human heart. This influence is not manifestly hostile like that of affliction and persecution in the previous class; but it is none the less deadly, and much more dangerous because of its insidious nature. The thorns were growing too near the seed; a mile away it would not have mattered; and consequently they were able secretly, but effectually, to rob the good seed of its necessary light, air, moisture, and nutrition from the soil. Similarly, the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, if allowed the supremacy in the heart, choke the good seed, and unfruitfulness is the

dire result.

Thorns are emblematical of the world outside of Eden. The thorns introduced through the fall of the first Adam formed the insignia awarded by his children to the last Adam. The kingdoms of man and of God are in a state of irreconcileable enmity. And here the Lord shows that the employments, the successes, and the enjoyments of this present age may have a blighting and destructive effect upon the work of the word of God within a man.

Mark records the fullest description of these worldly forces. Luke summarizes them as the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." Matthew mentions only two of these three, which, however, he amplifies — "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." The second Evangelist has a yet ampler category, adding, moreover, that the mischief is wrought through their entering into the heart, where the word of God should be hidden (Psalms 119:11) — "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word."

These hearers lack singleness of eye and heart. The attention becomes absorbed by the incessant occupations of a busy world, by the distracting anxieties of everyday life and by the excitements of a restless and reckless age. Such divided efforts to serve God and mammon invariably result in luxuriant thorns and withered wheat. The "cares" have a particular reference to the "poor man’s toil how to live at all, to keep the wolf from the door," the struggle for a daily subsistence, the cares of this life, which, if not met in faith, hinders the thriving of the spiritual word in the heart." The affluent are specially susceptible to the "deceitfulness of riches," particularly when the love of money accompanies its possession (1 Timothy 6:9-10). The "lusts of other things "cover all the ambitious strivings after temporal objects, however innocent the objects may be in themselves, to which all conditions of men are liable, and which may fill the heart to the consequent exclusion of what is divine.

Fruitful Hearers The main object of sowing is the subsequent reaping. And fruitfulness is the indisputable evidence of effective growth. The Lord was preeminently the Sower, and, as He said, others reaped (John 4:34-38). Pentecost and onwards, were reaping times, as also, in a fuller measure, the coming day of glory will be. And in all cases the divine Husbandman alone is a competent judge of the quality and quantity of the fruit (John 15:1; John 15:5; John 15:8), though, in a general way, we may be able to recognize the fruitful effects of the word (Colossians 1:6; Php 4:17). In this instance the word is heard in a prepared heart — in an "honest and good heart," as the Lord said (Luke). And in examining the three Gospels it will be observed that three inward actions are stated to precede the fruit-bearing.

1 The word is understood (Matt.).

2 The word is received (Mark).

3 The word is held fast (Luke).

1. It has already been pointed out that lack of understanding was specially attributed to the nation of Israel, who had Moses and the prophets before the coming of the Lord. And it is from the First Gospel therefore that we learn that in order to bear fruit it was necessary to understand (suniemi). This was so in the case of the apostles themselves. After His resurrection the Lord opened their minds that they might understand the scriptures, particularly in that case, those relating to His

death and resurrection (Luke 24:45). Those disciples who understand what the will of the Lord is are those who know what things are pleasing in His sight, and by doing such yield fruit to His praise.

2. In Mark, the word is received into the heart, that is, it is taken to oneself, welcomed and cherished. The truth is received not in a formal sense as in verse 16, where a different Greek word is used, but in the love of it. The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word of the gospel in all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so; "therefore "we are told, "many of them believed" (Acts 17:12-13).

3. Further, it is necessary to keep, or to hold fast, the word. This expression implies the energy of active resistance against all opposing influences. Spiritual fruit-bearing has its particular enemies. In view of these, therefore, there is an individual responsibility to use a special endeavour to preserve a sense of joy in the word and a love for it in the heart. To do so demands spiritual energy. But there are degrees of fruitfulness in the good ground. All do not bear fruit in equal profusion. The power of Satan, and the seductions of the world, which altogether extinguish the growth in other cases, are here shown to have the effect of reducing the amount of fruit borne. Some, the Lord said, bring forth fruit thirty-fold, and some sixty-fold, while others, like the seed Isaac sowed (Genesis 26:12), yield a hundred-fold.

Luke only mentions the full degree of fruition, and it is there explained that seed on good ground brings forth fruit "with patience" (8: 15). A hundred-fold is the "perfect work" of patience or endurance (James 1:3-4). There must be not only well-doing, but patient continuance in it* (Romans 2:7). The faithful disciple is called to endure a "great fight of afflictions," for tribulation and patience are inseparable adjuncts to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the exiled apostle in Patmos testified (Revelation 1:9). Those in Philadelphia whom the Lord commended because they had "kept the word of his patience" (Revelation 3:10), are surely such fruitful ones as He contemplated in His parable of the Sower (Luke 8:15).

22. — Shining in Public: Growing in Secret

1912 40 "And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to*1 be put under the bushel, or under the bed,*2 and not to be put on the stand?*3 For there is nothing hid, save that it should*4 be manifested; neither was anything made secret,*5 but that it should come to light. If any man hath*6 ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you: and more shall be given unto you.*7 For he that hath,*8 to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

"And he said, So*9 is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed*10 upon the earth; and should sleep and rise*11 night and day, and the seed should spring up*12 and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth*13 fruit of herself*14 first the blade, then the*15 ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe,*16 straightway he putteth forth*17 the sickle, because*18 the harvest is come" (Mark 4:21-29, R.V.).

*1 "Does the lamp come that it should," J.N.D.

*2 "couch," J.N.D. In W.K.'s "Exposition of the Gospel of Mark," 1907, there is a strange misprint — "under the candle," p. 68, line 2. It is correct in the original "Remarks," Bible Treasury, Vol. 5

(1864), p. 116.

*3 "Set up on the lamp stand," J.N.D., W.K.

*4 "which shall not be," J.N.D., W.K.

*5 "nor does any secret thing take place," J.N.D., W.K.

*6 "one have," J.N.D.; "man have," W.K.

*7 "and there shall be [more] added to you," J.N.D.; "and unto you [that hear] shall more be added," W.K.

*8 "whosoever has," J.N.D.

*9 "Thus," J.N.D., W.K.

*10 "the seed," J.N.D., W.K.

*11 "Rise up," J.N.D., W.K.

*12 "sprout," J.N.D., W.K.

*13 "bringeth forth," W.K.

*14 "of itself," J.N.D., W.K.; ("of its own accord," McClellan).

*15 "an," J.N.D., W.K.

*16 "produced," J.N.D., W.K.; ("alloweth," McClellan).

*17 "sends," J.N.D.; "putteth in," W.K.; ("sendeth," McClellan).

*18 "for," J.N.D., W.K.} This section is one which, upon consideration and comparison, will be found to afford, like many other passages throughout the historical narratives, a striking illustration of the varying purpose of the several Gospels. With the object of gathering what instruction we may on this particular point it is proposed to make a brief reference to the context of the parable of the Sower, comparing the records in Matthew and Mark as to their designs. In the First Gospel (Matthew 13:1-58) the parable of the Sower is followed by six others, each of which is specifically stated to be a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. The obvious fact that this group of parables numbers seven, a numeral which in scriptural usage signifies completeness and adequacy of representation, coupled with the further fact, easily ascertained by inspection, that the period covered by the series of parables extends from its beginning to the close, that is to say, from the sowing of the seed to the harvest at the end of the world [age] (Matthew 13:39; Matthew 13:49), points unmistakably to the conclusion that the selection and arrangement of these parables was made with the definite object of presenting a synopsis of the various phases which the kingdom of the heavens would assume in consequence of the rejection of the King.

Now, in Mark’s narrative, we have, in connection with the parable of the Sower, what is altogether different, and, as we shall see, distinctive. Here it is followed by, not six, but two parables only, the first of which is found nowhere else in the Gospels, while the second (that of the mustard seed) is one of the six following this parable in Matthew. Moreover, these two parables are separated from

that of the Sower by two sayings of the Lord which in the First Gospel are recorded in entirely different associations.*

{*In Luke the parable of the mustard seed is much more widely separated from that of the Sower (cf. Luke 8:4-15; Luke 13:18-19), its exceptional position being there assigned to it for topical reasons specially referable to that Gospel.}

Having noted these important differences, let us now proceed to inquire what their significance may be. And in the first place it will be evident that the meaning of the variations in the records must, in each case, lie in close relation to the main purpose of the inspired Evangelist. For, be it observed, the "harmony" of the Gospels is not to be sought, as is frequently done, by the construction of a single continuous narrative, composed by combining the accounts of the four writers to the utter destruction of the individuality of each of them. On the contrary, the true "harmony," using the word now in the sense of the consistency of the Gospel with itself, will be discerned by the discovery of the manner in which the various historical episodes are disposed by each of the four biographers in order to set forth his special design. Hence it is that in this particular inquiry the differences in the several narratives are of greater importance than the resemblances. These differences then are the subject of our present study.

It will be admitted that the object of Mark was to compose a biography of the Lord Jesus in His character as the Anointed Servant and Prophet of Jehovah. And we may therefore expect to find that, in order to display Him in this aspect, the nature and characteristics of His service and ministry will be more prominently and fully expressed than in the other Gospels, and that this will be more especially the case with regard to that modified form of teaching as to the kingdom which He adopted because the nation had, in effect, refused Him as the Messiah. The Lord’s Ministry and its Effect

Now, it will at once be observed that in this fourth chapter all the parables relate to the Lord’s ministry and its effects. In each of the three parables the seed is the central object of the picture. In the first the diverse results of sowing the seed are shown; in the second the seed grows spontaneously; and in the third the seed develops from a state of outward insignificance to one of prominence. These parables, then, are correlated delineations of that ministry of the good news of the kingdom of God which was begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was continued by the apostles and their successors; and on this account these parables, as they are here arranged, could appear in no other Gospel with the same propriety as in that which sets forth Jesus as Jehovah’s Servant. In the series of Matthew 13:1-58 we have the new earthly system which was about to arise presented variously, e.g., by the field, the measures of meal, the great tree, the hidden treasure, the costly pearl, and such figures; but in Mark we have brought forward the power which accomplishes the outward effects rather than the thing itself which is produced. The third parable of the Second Gospel is only an apparent exception to this generalisation, the spreading tree being introduced to show the magnitude of the visible results of the presence and operation of the word of God in the world in contrast with its appearance at the beginning. In brief, the main theme of Matthew 13:1-58. is the kingdom itself, and that of Mark 4:1-41. the gospel or word of the kingdom.

Bearing in mind, then, that this section of Mark is designed to teach what is the nature of the ministry of the new covenant by Jehovah’s Servant (in general terms, of course, not in detail as in

the Sermon on the Mount), we proceed to inquire concerning the meaning of the two sayings of the Lord which are interpolated between the first and second parables. And it will be seen that they have a direct bearing upon the truth brought out in the immediately preceding verses. In these we have that part of the Lord's ministry which was couched in a parabolic form. And this mode of discourse was employed, as we learn from the Lord Himself, in order that the mystery of the kingdom might be hidden from the unbelieving nation at large, although it was revealed by special interpretation to the disciples (Mark 4:10-13; Mark 4:34). Now the sayings which follow guard against a misconception which this form of teaching might cause in the minds of the apostles. They were not to assume that, because the Master had begun to speak publicly in parables, these wonderful communications of the Great Prophet would always be enveloped in obscurity. If there was darkness abroad as to divine knowledge, the darkness was not in or from the Sower, but in the people themselves. He was the true Light, come into the world to lighten every man. Is it not the function of light to shine abroad in radiant testimony — whether this light exists absolutely in the Prophet, as it did, or in the apostles, the sons of light, as deriving it from Him? So that the veiling of the truth in parables by the Lord was but a temporary measure.

These sayings of Jesus therefore are not introduced immediately after the parable of the Sower at haphazard; on the contrary, they have a direct relation to the main theme of the chapter. They assign a responsibility to the hearers of the word to communicate to others what they themselves receive. The truth must not be covered from view. Though the character of the coming kingdom was concealed from those whose will was opposed to its reception in the heart, the ultimate object of the Lord's ministry was that the gospel might be spread abroad, not hidden under a bushel or a bed. The light was to be placed on a lampstand. And in proportion to the zeal of His servants in imparting the truth to others, further revelations would be made to them. The Lamp and the Stand, the Bushel and the Couch The Lord, in this saying here recorded, made reference to the common objects of a Galilean household to impress upon His disciples their responsibility with regard to what they heard. A lamp was among the essential furniture of the poorest home, and where means forbade the possession of more than one there the necessity was the most apparent that for its greatest usefulness it should be set upon a stand and not be obscured beneath a couch or extinguished under a bushel measure. Let the lamp be placed upon its appropriate stand,* and it would shed its light upon all in the house (Matthew 5:15), as well as upon all who might enter (Luke 8:16).

{*The light was to shine from the lampstand. In Revelation 2:3 the seven churches are set forth by the figure of the seven golden lampstands. Ephesus hid its light and is warned that the stand will he removed unless it repents (Revelation 2:5).}

Here then we find the Lord preparing His followers for the missionary work to which He had called them, and to which He would soon send them forth, first to the cities of Israel and then to the ends of the earth (Mark 6:7-13). Light was given them that it might shine to others. John the Baptist, the forerunner, was a burning and shining lamp (John 5:35); now the testimony of the kingdom was transferred to the apostles. They were His witnesses, and what He told them in the darkness they were to preach in the light, and what they heard in the ear they must proclaim upon the housetops (Matthew 10:27). The essence of Christ's gospel was its publicity, and also, as was subsequently developed, its universality. Its ultimate scope was to all men and not to a few only. And the Lord declared, referring generally to divine communications, that nothing was concealed except to be

manifested eventually, and everything made secret for a time and for a purpose would assuredly be brought to light in due course. The dimness of the typical shadows would disappear in the light emanating from the perfect Priest and Sacrifice. That which was dark and involved in the predictions of the Old Testament would be fully elucidated by application and fulfilment in the New. The Lord Himself was not a lamp, but the LIGHT, shining in a darkness which was not dispelled but was deepened thereby (John 1:5). But to those who would receive it He had come to reveal the unknown. In His teaching was fulfilled the double prophecy of the Psalmist: "I wilt open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world" (Psalms 78:2; Matthew 13:35). And the apostles, in their turn, did not obscure or conceal the light of testimony, but by the Spirit preached God’s wisdom and taught the heavenly calling of the church previously hidden from all ages and generations (Colossians 1:26; Ephesians 3:9). Paul, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God, addressing the Ephesian elders, reminded them that in his ministry he had kept back nothing that was profitable, and that he had not shrunk from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20; Acts 20:27).

1912 56 This saying of the Lord therefore has reference, not to the eventual discovery of secret sins, but to the character of the period begun by His own ministry, which was an epoch of disclosure and promulgation of divine truth previously concealed. The Prophet of Jehovah was bringing out of His treasure-house "things new and old," and in view of the consequent importance of such an occasion He reiterated His word of warning, first addressed to the multitude at large, now spoken to the disciples: "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear."* In the first case there was the general responsibility applying to all Israel to hear their Messiah for their individual enlightenment, but in the second case there is the further responsibility of those who have heard in the former sense to hear in such a manner as to be able to communicate faithfully and fully to others what they heard. This agrees with the final message to the church and the individual in the Apocalypse, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come" (Revelation 22:17).

{*The careful student of Scripture will not fail to observe that in the Gospels the verb "to hear" in the original is in the present tense, implying the habit of hearing, "let him have the habit of hearing"; but in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 the aorist tense is used throughout, implying a "single, transient act." There the call is "to hear "the particular address of the Lord to the several assemblies.}

What is the special significance of the reference to the bed and the bushel? If the bed may be considered to point to self-ease and self-indulgence, the bushel, or corn-measure, may indicate those domestic and other duties, legitimate in themselves, but which, equally with selfishness, may seriously interfere with an effective testimony. But, whatever may be the exact meaning, it is certain that both duty and recreation are liable, apart from necessary precautions, to obscure or even to extinguish the witness of discipleship. And by such a lapse from faithfulness, the truth, divinely revealed for diffusion throughout the world, is virtually placed again in a place of concealment. In another context the Lord specifically warned against such secretion of the light, "No man when he hath lighted a lamp putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but upon the stand, that they which enter in may see the light" (Luke 11:33). In contrast with others mentioned in a subsequent parable, the "wicked and slothful servant" having received the talent went away and hid his lord’s money to his own reprobation.

Heedfulness in Hearing

Another saying immediately follows that relating to the lamp, and this is introduced by the phrase of frequent recurrence in this section, "And he said unto them."* For the disciples it was pre-eminently the day for them to sit at the Master's feet "to hear." Moreover, in their hearing they were to beware of the leavening "influence of the teaching of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matthew 16:12). They were not to be carried about by every wind of human opinion as to who He, the Son of man, was. "Take heed," said He, "what ye hear," supplementing this warning as to the matter of their hearing, by another as to the manner of it: "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke 8:18).

{*It is interesting to note the marked repetition in this chapter of the words "And he said." They occur no less than ten times (verses 2, 9, 11, 13, 21, 24, 26, 30, 35, 40), the last two however being not, like the rest, introductory to a paragraph, but in the course of the narrative.} The Lord next applied the principle of divine righteousness to their future ministry of what they heard. God would not be unrighteous to forget their work and love and service in this respect (Hebrews 6:10). In proportion to their zeal and energy in transmitting what they received to others, they should receive still further communications of truth. Let them therefore use the corn-measure not to cover up the lamp, but in useful service to others. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you, and more shall be given unto you." According to the ancient proverb, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:24-25). In the terms recorded by the Evangelists, grace was giving a revised version of the "lex talionis." The Lord was not saying to them, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth," but laying upon them a newer and nobler injunction, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they* give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

{*It is not "men" here, as in the A.V., but the expression is impersonal, "they shall give," not defining the rewarders. Compare "they shall receive" (Luke 16:9).}

Those to whom "more is given "are those who hear, as it is expressed in the A.V. This "hearing" implies a reception of the new teaching in the truest and deepest sense of the word, receiving the testimony as of God (John 3:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Such persons are the good-ground and fruit-bearing hearers. These enter into possession of the word. They make it their own by faith. They have it. And the Lord added, "He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Was not this so with the wayside hearer? The good seed was immediately snatched away, since it lay upon the surface. In a formal sense this class of hearer had the word; in a vital sense he had it not. The infallible evidence of vitality is fruit-bearing, and we are taught in this section that "ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) is one of the forms of spiritual fruition. The word enters the heart of the disciple by the ear (Romans 10:17), and is transmitted from thence to the eyes of others by the lamp of testimony for Christ, shining out, as this does, in every good work and word (2 Thessalonians 2:17). The Spontaneity of the Seed's Growth

Another saying of the Lord is next introduced in the Gospel, and this is of the nature of a parable. And, as has been previously stated, it is noteworthy that this parable is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture. Dealing, as it does, with the inherent vitality of the word of God, its beautiful

appropriateness in this section is not difficult to observe when it is remembered that the general subject of this chapter is the ministry of the kingdom.

Such a view, however, is not always held or sought. "What follows [the parable in question] has the special interest of being the only parable peculiar to St. Mark, one therefore which had escaped the manifest eagerness of St. Matthew and St. Luke to gather up all they could find of this form of our Lord's teaching." This remark, taken from a popular commentary, illustrates the disparaging manner in which the professed friends of the Gospels are apt to speak of them. It is assumed in this comment that the Evangelists compiled their histories after the manner of a schoolboy essay, without any purpose or special design, eager only to record every item they could collect or remember, stringing their paragraphs together with an utter disregard of chronological order. According to this degrading theory we are asked to believe that of Matthew's seven parables (Matthew 13:1-58) Mark was ignorant of five, though he knew one which had escaped both Matthew and Luke; and that the latter (Luke) was only acquainted with three out of seven, one of which he inserted in one connection and two in another (Luke 8:1-56; Luke 13:1-35). In opposition to this unworthy hypothesis, which regards each of the Gospels as imperfect and fragmentary, we believe that the Spirit of God superintended both the inclusion and the exclusion of the facts of the Sacred Biography, and also the arrangement of the narrative, so that the particular design of each of the Gospels is secured. We believe, in short, that the writers were inspired of God (2 Peter 1:21), and also their writings (2 Timothy 3:16).

Returning from this digression, let us briefly recapitulate the main features observed in our examination of this chapter. We saw, first, the varied and but partially successful results of sowing the word of the kingdom portrayed in the parable of the Sower, the meaning of which the Lord communicated in private to His disciples. This is followed by some of the sayings of the Lord to His followers, assigning to them in metaphorical language the responsibility of duly and diligently publishing abroad for the benefit of all what they had learned in secret. Now, further instruction upon the same theme is added in the form of a parable to show the apostles that the propagation of the gospel depended not so much upon the skill and efficiency of the labourers who do no more than cast the seed upon the ground, as upon the self-contained vitality of the seed itself, it being the word of God. This parable, like the earlier one of the Sower, is founded upon the phenomenon of growth in the vegetable kingdom, the main features in this case being that during the period between the sowing and the reaping manual labour is excluded so far as the parable is concerned. It is thus with the kingdom of God, the Lord said. A man scatters seed upon the land. He then pursues his other occupations, waking and sleeping, night and day; but apart from any intervention on his part, and without his possessing any real knowledge of the mysterious processes which were active within the seed, it sprouts and germinates and develops. Automatically the fruit is produced; first the blade appears, then the ear, and finally the fully ripened corn. Thereupon the time of harvest having come, the husbandman resumes work, using now the sickle to gather the grain. This pastoral picture presents an analogy of the kingdom of God, especially in the form in which it was introduced by the Servant of Jehovah in view of His rejection. The millennial kingdom of the future will be founded upon the righteous judgments of the King; but the present moral kingdom is founded upon the teaching of the Lord the Prophet. And the great lesson taught here is that the word of the Lord carries with itself a power to effect the divine purpose altogether apart from external agencies. The seed is shown to have its foes in the thievish birds, the torrid sun, the

luxuriant thorns; while the light of the lamp may be dimmed or destroyed by the bushel or the bed. But the Lord assured the hearts of His followers that, in spite of the activity of its enemies and the feebleness of its friends the word of the kingdom will inevitably make progress and prevail. So it came about, as we read, that in the days of the apostles "the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). And so Paul wrote to the Colossians of "the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:5-6, R.V.). The Seed left to Grow

Thus while the duty of the servants of Christ was to let the truth shine in their actions, and to measure it out generously in their words, they were without power to produce any living result from their work. Let Paul plant and Apollos water, the increase is of God alone (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The spirit and the life are in His word. It is the word itself, not the ministry of it, that works within those that believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). This was a comforting assurance for the timorous disciples, seeing that everything in connection with their Messiah was going contrary to their expectations. They herein learned that the word of the Master would ultimately succeed, and however unpromising the day of sowing might seem, the day of harvest would follow at its appointed time. Such a truth as is conveyed in this parable would, on the one hand, encourage them to trust in God to work out His plans by the invisible and invariable agencies of His word and Spirit, and, on the other hand, condemn any feelings of vanity and self-satisfaction, as though the preachers of the gospel by their own power or godliness caused its spread among men.

It has been a matter of debate among students of the Scriptures whether the "man" in this parable was intended to represent the Lord Himself or His servants. Those who contend for the latter view point out that it cannot be imagined of the Lord that "He knoweth not how" the seed grows, nor that He leaves it to take care of itself. On the other hand, others urge that it could not be predicated of the servants of Christ that they will put in the sickle and reap the corn in the day of harvest.*

{*These paradoxes are evidence that the parables of our Lord are not in all cases designed to form, in their subordinate details at any rate, complete illustrations of the divine truth. And indeed this, in the nature of things, could not be, any more than a type could perfectly represent the Antitype. If, however, we see the main principle of the parables the apparent contradictions will disappear. It is thus also with some of our Lord’s proverbial sayings. For instance, we are told that our almsgiving should be in secret and unseen of men (Matthew 6:1-4), but, in seeming opposition to this we are also told to let our light so shine that men may see our good works (Matthew 5:16). If in these two cases we look for the underlying principles the two exhortations are seen to be in perfect accord. So, on the one hand, it is "as if" the Husbandman has left the seed to grow as it may; on the other hand, we know that when the apostles went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord was working with them, confirming the word by the signs that followed (Mark 16:20).} The truth is that neither the one nor the other of these interpretations is exclusively correct. The exact meaning lies, as it so often does in Holy Writ, between the two extremes. The Lord was conveying the important principle that in the ministry of the word its growth and ultimate fructification depended upon the intrinsic vitality of the word itself, irrespective of the personality of the minister. The central thought of the parable is the service, not the servant. This spontaneous activity of the seed’s growth is equally true of the preaching of the Lord Himself and of His delegates. But what a beautiful example is here afforded of the unobtrusive humility of Jesus! In this self-effacement of

the Servant of Jehovah, we are permitted to behold one element of the perfection of His service. Consumed with zeal for the glory of God, yet seeming to labour in vain and spend His strength for nought (Isaiah 49:4), He committed the results of His ministry to Him who gave Him the word to declare (John 17:8; John 17:14). Having sown the seed, He waited patiently for the fruiting time. We cannot but observe how peculiarly appropriate this feature of the Lord's ministry is in the Second Gospel, where alone it is so strikingly recorded by parable.

Such a spirit of meek dependence and patient perseverance in service in view of the long-distant harvest is, by implication, to be acquired by all those whom the Lord sends forth to serve. The apostle Paul had this outlook. Writing to the Thessalonians, he thus expressed himself, "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). His eye was upon the distant future day of "bringing in the sheaves," like his Master, who, in the pathway of the Faithful Witness, had His eye upon "the joy that was set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2). In this manner the spirit of true service first known in Christ was in measure reproduced in the apostles, and perpetuated in those who believed on Him through their word (John 17:20). In such a sense there is genuine "apostolical succession" in service, though not in ecclesiastical authority. So far as labour "in word and doctrine" is concerned, the words of the well-known epitaph apply, "God buries His workmen, but carries on His work." The servant will continue to sow until the day of harvest, but all the while the germination, the growth, and the ripe grain are incessantly wrought by an invisible and infallible Agent.

23. — The Surprising Growth of a Tiny Seed

1912 69 " And he said, How shall*1 we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable*2 shall*1 we set it forth?3 It is like a*4 grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be*5 less than all the seeds*6 that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up,*7 and becometh greater than all the herbs,*8 and putteth out*9 great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.*10

"And with many such parables spake*11 he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it: and without a parable spake*11 he not unto them "but privately*12 to his own disciples he expounded*13 all things" (Mark 4:30-34, R.V.).

*1 "should," J.N.D.; "are we to," T. S. Green.

*2 "with what comparison," J.N.D.; "under what comparison," T. S. Green.

*3 "should we compare it," J.N.D.; "are we to set it," T. S. Green.

*4 "as to a," J.N.D.; "as unto," McClellan; "as a," T. S. Green.

*5 "is," J.N.D., T. S. Green.

*6 "all seeds," J.N.D.

*7 "and when it has been sown, mounts up," J.N.D.; "cometh up," McClellan; "and when it has been sown, it grows up," T. S. Green.

*8 "all herbs," J.N.D.; "becomes larger than all the herbs," T. S. Green.

*9 "produces," J.N.D.; "maketh," McClellan; "puts forth," T. S. Green.

*10 "birds of heaven can roost under its shadow," J.N.D. ""dwell," McClellan; "are able to roost under its shade," T. S. Green.

*11 "spoke," J.N.D., W.K., T. S. Green.

*12 "in private," J.N.D., W.K.; "apart," T. S. Green.

*13 "explained," J.N.D., W.K.; "interpreted," McClellan; "explained every thing," T. S. Green. This section is introduced by the phrase, "And he said." But whether the audience then addressed by the Lord consisted only of His disciples, or comprised also the multitudes at large we are not specifically informed. It is not, however, extravagant, judging from the nature of the questions which precede the parable, to assume that the Lord was speaking to the apostles. A point bearing upon the character of His ministry, as the parable does, would hardly be laid before promiscuous listeners in the crowd. The Lord had chosen the twelve that they might be "with Him." They were His personal attendants, and He constantly associated them with Himself in His service. When emergencies arose He at times consulted them as to what should be done. Not that He needed advice from any, but to question them as He did was to educate them in the understanding (1) Of their own natural inefficiency in matters of the kind, and (2) of the vast resources at their Master’s command. For example, when He saw the hungry multitudes He said to Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6). Again, we often find that, during His itinerary He graciously included them with Himself when expressing His intentions for the future, e.g., "Let us go into Judaea again" (John 11:7); "Let us go over unto the other side [of the sea]" (Mark 4:35); "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem" (Matthew 20:18). On this occasion the Lord said, "How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth?" How gracious this speech was! What did the simple fishermen know of the real nature of the coming kingdom? Yet in this manner He acknowledged them as His fellow-servants, and even as more than this, for a "bond-servant knoweth not what his lord doeth" (John 15:15). They were admitted to the intimacy of His friendship, and He assumed that the object of His love would be the object of their love also, as He said on one occasion to them, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep." This beautiful expression uniting the apostles with the Servant of Jehovah in divine ministry is only found in the Gospel of Mark. Matthew and Luke both give the pronoun in the singular: "Whereunto shall I liken it? "(Matthew 11:16 "Luke 13:18; Luke 13:20). And in point of fact the Lord, as we know, provided the similitude Himself, needing no prompting from the twelve; yet it is good for us, as it was for them, to learn the lowly grace of the Saviour who put the matter so that the apostles might learn that they were chosen to share His service of declaring the kingdom of God. The Parable This parable of the grain of mustard seed has the distinction, shared only by that of the Sower and that of the wicked husbandmen, of being recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. It is short and simple in character, teaching by illustration what widespreading results may follow from a small and unpretentious beginning. A grain of mustard seed was proverbially minute in size; and on this account was, on another occasion, chosen by our Lord as a simile when referring to the least modicum of faith a person might exercise and yet remove mountains therewith (Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6). Here the basis of the parable is the mustard seed. This a man took and sowed upon the earth ("in his field," Matthew; "in his own garden," Luke). But in spite of its relatively small size the seed grew until it

exceeded in magnitude the herbs, and was worthy of being classed among the trees of the field. In the shadow of its spreading branches the birds of the heaven, which once might easily have devoured it as a seed, found shelter and shade. The mustard of the parable is generally supposed by students of Scriptural botany to be the variety known as sinapis niger, from which the popular condiment is obtained. Though small in this country, the shrub, in the more southern latitudes in which Palestine is situated, attains a considerable size. Travellers report having observed it growing as high as a man on horseback. This is no great height for a tree, but it must be remembered that the main feature of the similitude is not the vast bulk of the tree, but the relative minuteness of the seed when compared with its subsequent development.* What from the size of the seed might be expected to grow no larger than a garden herb, in point of fact becomes a tree. Neglect of this consideration has led some to seek to identify the tree of the parable with members of another botanical family.

{*Since writing this article I have read with interest the subjoined paragraph in a well-known book of Eastern travel: "We are not to suppose that the mustard seed is the least of all the seeds in the world, but it was the smallest which the husbandman was accustomed to sow; and the tree, when full-grown, was larger than the other herbs in his garden. To press the literal meaning of the term any further would be a violation of one of the plainest canons of interpretation. This ample size, with branches shooting out in all directions, yet springing from the very smallest beginning, contains, as I suppose, the special meaning and intention of the parable. It is in this sense only that the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. Our Saviour did not select it because of any inherent qualities, medicinal or otherwise, which belonged to it. True, it is pungent, and penetrating, and fiery, and searching, and must be bruised or crushed before it will give out its special virtues; and one might go on enumerating such qualities, and multiplying analogies between these properties of mustard and certain attributes of true religion, or of the Church, or of the individual Christian; but they are foreign to any object that Jesus had in view, and must therefore be altogether fanciful. Such exposition dilutes the sense, and dissipates the force and point of His sayings, and should not be encouraged." — The Land and the Book, W. M. Thomson, D.D., new and revised edition, 1911, pp. 406-7.} The Tree as a Scriptural Metaphor

Trees were of comparatively rare occurrence in the Palestinian landscape, and by reason of this fewness were objects of greater prominence. And various striking metaphors used in scriptural language are founded upon them. It must now suffice to refer to two of the senses in which such allusions are made. A tree is used (1) as an emblem of fruitfulness; and from this point of view the tree of the field was said to be "man’s life "(Deuteronomy 20:19); it is used also (2) as an emblem of greatness; "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Psalms 37:35). These two qualities might possibly be found combined in the same tree, but not necessarily so; and it is important to bear in mind these distinct characteristics of fruitfulness and of greatness in the consideration of this parable. Of the fruit trees mentioned in the Bible perhaps those of most frequent occurrence are the ones named by Jotham in his parable of the trees desiring a king (Judges 9:7-18), viz., the olive with its fatness, the fig with its sweet and good fruit, and the vine with its wine, cheering God and man. Each of these, as is well known, is employed on many occasions in figurative reference to the people of God and their responsibility to hear fruit for Him. The "blessed" man of the first Psalm is also compared to a tree with unwithering leaf, bearing fruit in its season. And the Lord Jesus, using the same metaphor, solemnly declared that good

trees bring forth good fruit, and also that every barren tree shall be hewn down and cast into the fire (Matthew 7:16-20; cp. also Matthew 21:17-22).

Now it is clear that in this parable of the mustard seed the former of the two senses named is not implied, since fruitfulness is not the point at issue here, though it is in both of the preceding parables. But, as we have already remarked, a tree may also be regarded as an object of verdant beauty in an arid country, all the more noticeable because of its conspicuous size in comparison with commoner and lesser shrubs and herbs; and hence, emblematically, it may be regarded as an object of eminence. In the Old Testament a tree, viewed in this aspect, is used, in more than one instance, as a symbol of political power and earthly greatness. Thus, the Assyrian empire was compared by one of the prophets to a cedar of Lebanon, excelling in height all the trees of the field, the fowls of heaven nesting in the boughs, and great nations dwelling in the shadow. And the prophet applied the same simile to Pharaoh and the hosts of Egypt (Ezekiel 31:1-18). Again, the rapid rise and the vast extent of the Babylonian empire were presented to its king, Nebuchadnezzar, in a dream under the figure of a tree which "grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the branches thereof" (Daniel 4:1-37). And in the New Testament we read, at this point, that the Great Prophet likened His kingdom to a small seed becoming a great tree, evidently teaching thereby that the kingdom was to develop into an earthly power conspicuous in the eyes of men by the magnitude it would attain in comparison with its initial exiguousness. The Little Becoming Great In all three of the parables narrated in this chapter, the ministry of the kingdom of God by the Servant of Jehovah is presented under the figure of the growth of seed. In the first it is shown that fruitfulness depended upon the suitability of the soil into which the seed was cast; in the second the parable illustrates how the growth and eventual fruitfulness of the seed was independent altogether of human aid. In the third parable, however, quite a different feature is prominent. Nothing is said of fruit for God which will be of so much account in the day of harvest. It is not the Godward side of the kingdom which is brought forward in this instance, but the man-ward. The rapidly-growing tree is the aspect which the kingdom was to assume in human eyes speaking of man generally. For man, apart from any divine revelation, would be able to appreciate the outward development and marvellous expan sion of what was originally as insignificant in appearance as a grain of mustard seed.

Though the interpretation of the parable given by the Lord to His disciples is not recorded in the Gospels, the general facts of the remarkable growth of the kingdom in the days of the apostles, through the spread of the word of the gospel, may be gathered from the later scriptures. And we need not, for our present purpose, refer to the testimony of other history as to subsequent times. At the time of the parable, it was truly the "day of small things," and the disciples were but "a little flock," yet it was the Father’s good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32), and this divine purpose could not fail of accomplishment.

It seemed a small thing in the eyes of men when the Saviour of the world was found as the Babe in Bethlehem’s manger. It was asked with scorn whether any good tidings could come out of Nazareth. The labours of Jehovah’s Servant appeared to the eye of flesh to be for nought. But the preaching of the gospel, at first restricted to the cities of Israel, was even in the days of the apostles carried into all the world to every creature under heaven (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). And, according to the Lord’s own word, men came from the east and the west and the north and

the south, and sat down in the kingdom. God chose the weak things of the world to the confusion of what was mighty. And the preaching which began at an obscure village of Galilee spread in a couple of generations to the confines of the known world (Colossians 1:6; Colossians 1:23). Thus the tiny seed became the landmark of the countryside.*

{*Some expositors, Archbishop Trench, following others, for instance, have suggested that the mustard seed was selected as a figure of the word of the gospel because of its fiery, pungent nature. This suggestion, it may be supposed, is based, surely without adequate reason, upon another metaphor used in the prophecy of Jeremiah: "Is not my word a fire?" Jehovah asks (Jeremiah 23:29). This suggestion, however, is feeble and far-fetched. If the sense were applicable in the parable, it would also apply elsewhere in the Gospels; and we must then understand that when a person’s faith is weak enough to be likened to a grain of mustard seed (Matthew 17:20), it has become fiery and pungent. This consideration sufficiently shows that the idea is too extravagant to be commended.} Birds Finding Shelter and Shadow

Branches of trees provide for birds a natural shade from the burning rays of an Eastern sun, as well as a suitable site for their nests. This simple phenomenon, familiar to all, is frequently alluded to in the Old Testament (Psalms 104:12; Ezekiel 17:23; Ezekiel 31:6; Daniel 4:12; Daniel 4:21). It is also introduced in this parable of the mustard tree, which, it is said, "putteth out great branches, so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof." The birds find a harbour of refuge among the leafy branches.

What is the signification of this part of the parable? It has already been noted that we do not possess a record of the interpretation given by the Lord to His disciples. It remains, therefore, in this case, as in some others, to seek what light may be afforded by other parts of the scripture, and especially by the immediate context.

Take then the two parables that immediately precede this one. In each of these seed-time and harvest constitute the beginning and the ending of the tableau. The seed is sown with the object that it may ultimately bear fruit. But in the third case the question of fruitbearing does not come into view in the parable. Here the salient feature is the degree of the tree’s growth at its maturity when compared with its original size as a seed. In this stage it becomes the haunt of independent agents, which do not originate from the seed as fruit would do, but are altogether separate from the tree as an organism. The birds find protection in the tree, but in no sense do they form an integral part of it. As a seed, they were its natural enemies, and the first parable shows that the good seed was in certain instances devoured by the birds. This act of destruction the Lord interpreted to mean that the word of the gospel when preached was sometimes carried away by Satan. If then the birds of the air mentioned in the first parable represent the emissaries of the devil, we may, by easy analogy, regard them in the third of the same series as representing powers of evil. This parabolic intimation of future greatness has passed out of prophecy and become a familiar item of ecclesiastical history. The powers of the political world persecuted the church in its infancy, but upon its astonishing development, numerically and geographically, they ceased to persecute, and sought, not in vain, to patronise the power that could no longer be despised for its insignificance. Thus Christendom became a great world-system, the resort, the lodging-place of the forces of evil. This apostate condition of the professing church is delineated in vivid colours at the close of inspired testimony, and the language there employed echoes the

figure of the birds employed in this parable. The declaration made in vision concerning this great system is, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2, R.V.). That the birds set forth agents of wickedness appears therefore to be the simple and unforced explanation of the parable. But such epithets cannot be applied to many of the interpretations offered of the passage. To say that it teaches how the gospel supplies shelter and protection from worldly oppression and the power of Satan is surely to distort the imagery in a manner that cannot be acceptable to the earnest student. Nor is Dean Alford's somewhat vague explanation of the parable more satisfactory. He says, "We must beware of imagining that the outward church-form is the kingdom. It has rather reversed the parable, and is the worldly power waxed to a great tree, and the churches taking refuge under the shadow of it."* The Dean sees that the tree cannot display the true church of Christ, and he alleges that it does set forth the worldly power under which the churches take refuge. There is here a confusion of ideas which arises from assuming that the church and the kingdom are synonymous terms. The latter is the heterogeneous mass of professors, as depicted in several of the Lord's parables. In other words, Christendom, not the church, is the kingdom in its existing form, though the Dean would have us "beware of imagining" such a thing. The kingdom is not the incorruptible church but the mixed system which it became at a very early date, and which the Lord will finally cleanse by removing out of it all stumbling-blocks and persons that practise iniquity (Matthew 13:41).

{*Greek Testament, 4th ed., Vol. I., p. 135.}

We may conclude therefore that the most consistent explanation of the parable is that the tree is emblematical of the outward profession of Christianity, particularly in those vast proportions which the system has assumed among the various human institutions for many centuries, while within this extensive organisation are harboured many evil persons and principles which are totally opposed to the spirit of its Founder.

Measures and Manners

What a fund of truth accompanied the Prophet of Jehovah! There was truth concerning Old Testament mysteries, concerning the Messiah's mission, His ministry, His sufferings, and death, and concerning the kingdom-glories of a future day, as well as much beside concerning the Father and His love. And it was a part of the mission of the Servant of the Lord to communicate these things to His disciples. This He did, so that at the close of His public service He could say, addressing the Father, "The words which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:8). But at this juncture in Mark's Gospel we learn an important principle regarding the manner in which these communications were made by our Lord, and at the same time we may recognise that the principle is the same as that which characterised divine revelations in former days. During the forty centuries preceding the coming of the Messiah God had spoken to His people in divers measures and divers manners (Hebrews 1:1). And these varying portions and methods of instruction throughout the ages were such as in the great wisdom of God were suited to the need of men at the respective epochs, and also such as prepared the hearts of men to expect with a growing intensity the advent of the Redeemer. In accordance therefore with this principle of dispensational accommodation, the Heavenly Teacher, in speaking the word to His disciples, considered their capacity and the degree of their spiritual development, and adopted that succession of "measure

and manner" in His teaching which was best suited for them. The parable and its interpretation was the medium employed by the Lord to impart the "word of the kingdom "in the proportion that their minds and hearts were ready to receive them, thus giving them "meat in due season." "With many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear." Their capacity for hearing was the measure.

We thus see that the Lord recognised spiritual growth in His hearers. On one occasion He had many things to say, but the apostles were then unable to bear them (John 16:12). When, however, the Spirit of truth came at Pentecost they were led forwards into all truth. But in the Epistles, as in the Gospels, we find that individual progress was considered in the ministration of the truth. Paul fed some with "milk," and others with "meat" (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12). Wisdom the same apostle spoke only among the perfect [full-grown] (1 Corinthians 2:6). And a believer's responsibility for walk is said to be in proportion to his individual measure of attainment (Php 3:16).

It may therefore be accepted that now, as then, there are progressive stages in the divine life, and the word of God is unfolded to the individual believer to suit the varying capacity. When the Lord by His Spirit teaches knowledge and makes men understand wisdom, He does not impart an ordered and codified system of divinity, but presents the truth by degrees, "precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10). To His disciples the Lord constituted Himself the sole judge of what and of how much it was best for them to know. And His mode of communicating the word of the kingdom was by parables, as Mark writes, "Without a parable spake he not unto them." This style of discourse was after the manner of the ancient prophets of Israel, concerning whom Jehovah said, "I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes" (Hosea 12:10, R.V.). The people at large heard the parables, but lacking faith, they could not understand, and remained in darkness as to the divine purposes. But to His own immediate circle of followers, the Lord expounded everything in private. For to those who "had" more was given, according to His own word. Hence this section closes with the statement, "But privately to his own disciples he interpreted all things."

24. — The Servant's Word Stilling the Wind and the Sea

1912 83 "And on that day, when even was come,*1 he saith*2 unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude,*3 they take him with them,*4 even*5 as he was, into the boat.*6 And other boats*6,7 were with him. And there ariseth a great storm of wind,*8 and the waves beat*9 into the boat,*6 insomuch that the boat*6 was now filling.*10 And he himself was in the stern, asleep on a cushion:*11 and they awake him,*12 and say unto him, Master,*13 carest thou not that we perish?*14 And he awoke,*15 and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still!*16 And the wind ceased,*17 and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?*18 And they feared exceedingly,*19 and said one to another,*20 Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41, R.V.).

*1 "evening was come," J.N.D.; "it was evening," McClellan; "evening came on," T. S. Green.

*2 "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

*3 "having sent away the crowd," J.N.D.; "leaving the crowd," T.S.G. "leaving the multitude," McC.

*4 "with [them]," J.N.D.; omit "with them," T.S.G., McC.

*5 Omit even," J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

*6 "ship," J.N.D.; "bark," T.S.G.

*7 Add "also," J.N.D.; add "besides," T.S.G.

*8 "comes a violent gust," J.N.D.; "comes on a great squall," T.S.G.

*9 "were breaking," T.S.G.

*10 "so that it already filled," J.N.D.; "was already filling," T.S.G.; "insomuch that the boat was already filling," McC.

*11 "sleeping on the cushion," J.N.D.; "sleeping on the pillow," T.S.G.; "on the pillow asleep," McC.

*12 "awake him up," J.N.D.; "rouse him," T.S.G.

*13 "Teacher," J.N.D., McC.

*14 "we are perishing," J.N.D.; "we are being lost," T.S.G.

*15 "awaking up," J.N.D.; "woke up," T.S.G. McC.

*16 "Silence, be mute," J.N.D.; "Hush, be still," T.S.G.

*17 "fell," J.N.D.; "abated," T.S.G., McC.

*18 "Why are ye (thus) fearful? How (is it) ye have not faith?" J.N.D.; "Why are ye thus faint-hearted? How is it that you have not faith?" T.S.G.; "Why are ye cowardly? Have ye yet no faith?" McC.

*19 "(with) great fear," J.N.D.; "were afraid with great fear," T.S.G.; "were sore afraid," McC.

*20 "to each other," T.S.G.} The general subject of the ministry of the kingdom is continued in this section. The parables and the sayings of the Lord narrated up to this point show the characteristic features of the new preaching, and what would be the effects of this preaching in the world. The account of the miracle that now follows shows, by illustration, to what insurmountable dangers the witnesses of the kingdom will be subject, and, moreover, what striking deliverance out of such dangers those that trust in the humble and lowly Messiah will experience. This incident with its painful impressiveness was a needed training for the twelve, and formed a part of what may be truly called their "education for the ministry." The apostles had that day been alone with the Messiah in the house where they were privately inducted into the mysteries of the kingdom, but now they were called to accompany Him across the stormy sea, and in the course of the perilous journey to witness a demonstration of His omnipotence staying its "proud waves." Ashore they were taught that the word of Christ would, in spite of thievish birds and scorching sun and choking thorns, and apart from human agency and aid, grow secretly, silently, slowly, but surely, until the time of its maturity and fruitfulness; at sea they learned that the same word was effectual to quell into instant submission the mightiest forces of nature. In the parables the newly-called "fishers of men" were instructed what dangers beset the service of the gospel of the kingdom; and in the miracle what dangers confront the servants themselves, though at the same time they learned

what an all-powerful Deliverer was with them. The Evening of a Laborious Day

It was written in ancient time, "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening" (Psalms 104:23). This indeed is the common lot of humanity, and the incarnate Lord accepted the conditions fully. Only His arduous and unremitting service in the days of His public activities was peculiar in this respect, that it consisted of the alleviation of man ’s physical and spiritual suffering. This beneficence comprised His healing works and His illuminating and quickening words. Of many busy days and weeks and months of the Lord’s ministry we are given no record whatever in the Gospels (John 21:25). But the day of this narrative was a particularly busy one. So far as we are able to recognise the chronological sequence, its events included among other incidents elsewhere recorded, those contained in this Gospel from chap. 3: 20 to the end of this chapter (4).* To consider now no more than Mark’s account, we have (1) the contest with the Pharisees which, Matthew tells us, arose out of His expulsion of a blind and dumb demon (Matthew 12:22-24); (2) the expostulatory visit of His mother and His brethren; and (3) the proclamation to the multitudes as He sat in the boat of the similitudes of the kingdom and their subsequent interpretation to His followers in the house.

{*Some think that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered early on the same day, but this chronological point is not a matter of great moment in our present inquiry.}

After these things, when evening had come, the Lord said to His own disciples, Let us cross over to the other side of the lake. Many mighty things had been said and done in favoured Capernaum that day. The good seed of the kingdom had been duly sown. That word was now left by the Sower to germinate and fructify. Previously in this same town the Lord had wrought many deeds of mercy in the evening shadows (Mark 1:32-34); but not so on this occasion. After the time of speech, the night drew on — the time to "keep silence," as well as the time for rest, the time "when no man can work." He therefore bade His disciples to sail across the lake in search of retirement on its more solitary shores. The apostles, having dismissed the crowds who apparently were still waiting to see and hear more of the Great Prophet, obeyed His word and launched forth in their little boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, accompanied by other little boats.*

{*"As he was" (ver. 36). This phrase implies that the Lord being then on board, they forthwith put to sea, not waiting to make further preparation. So Bloomfield and Swete. The Greek phrase also occurs in 2 Kings 7:7; 2 Kings 7:10 (LXX.). A similar but distinct expression is found in John 4:6; 1 Corinthians 7:26; 2 Peter 3:4. See J.N.D.’s notes on these passages in his New Translation. Here the twelve "take" the Lord; the same verb is also used (paral.) of the Lord taking them (Mark 9:2; Mark 10:32; Mark 14:33), and again of the Lord taking them to Himself at His coming (John 14:3; translated "receive"). Cp. also Acts 15:39. The boat was sufficiently large to hold them all (see Mark 6:30; Mark 6:32; Mark 6:45), so that the "little boats" probably contained some of the more enthusiastic of the public; acting as a self-constituted escort.} The distance to the other side, as the crow flies, was but a few miles, and under ordinary circumstances the journey might have been quickly accomplished. But a great hurricane suddenly arose, and the waters of the lake were quickly agitated into furious and mighty waves which dashed over and beat into the little bark, so that it was rapidly being filled. Some of the disciples, as Simon and Andrew and James and John, were local fishermen accustomed to the navigation of the lake, and they had no doubt encountered many a tempestuous night in the pursuit of their calling. But this storm was of such

severity that their strength and skill were alike baffled, and they, as well as their less experienced colleagues, were filled with alarm. Their Master, wearied with the toils of the day, lay asleep on a cushion in the stern, amid all the turmoil and confusion of the terrified crew, and also amid the noise and discomfort of a tossing boat upon a billowy sea. Nothing is more illustrative of a state of peace than the sleep of the living. Here was such a spectacle, though in strange circumstances. The active faculties of divine beneficence were all quiescent, while the disciples were in a state of frenzied excitement. In the boat the prone Man of Sorrows was at rest; in the pitch darkness around was a scene of the wildest uproar and riotous contention between the forces of air and sea, threatening each moment to swamp the frail vessel and its precious burden. The twelve were at their wits' end. Calmness and courage deserted them. They lost all confidence in their own seamanship, but what was more serious still, they lost faith in their sleeping Master. Why did He sleep in the hour of their need? They awoke Him therefore with querulous cries, an overpowering anxiety pervading every heart. Some said one thing and some another. But with them all there was thee despairing refrain of selfish interest, "We perish." "Those whose words are reported by Matthew expressed the conviction that He had the power to help them, for they said, "Lord (kurie), save us; we perish "(Matthew 8:25). Others complained of His indifference to their welfare, seeing He slept in the face of their peril; they said, "Teacher (didaskale), carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:39). Others again were apparently more completely overcome by their fears. These showed their intense importunity by repeating His title of address, "Master, Master (epistata), we perish" (Luke 8:24). The first words of our Lord were a reproof to His disciples, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew). He then arose, responsive to their cry of distress, and immediately alleviated their fears. Speaking in His own right as Lord of the sea and the land, He addressed both the winds and the waves; for "the sea is his, and he made it," and He "walketh upon the wings of the wind." There was no rod of delegated authority stretched towards the troubled elements, as in the case of Moses at the Red Sea. Neither was there a smiting of the waters with the mantle of the prophet's office, as in the case of Elijah at the Jordan. In the majesty of omnipotence He issued His brief but peremptory mandate — to the roaring hurricane, "Silence!" to the surging billows, "Cease, be at rest!" The response of both wind and sea was immediate and perfect. Man, nominal head of the earthly creation, for the most part, had no "ears to hear" the voice of the Son of God, but the inanimate forces of nature yielded their instant and implicit obedience. The rushing storm-blast became the soft zephyr, the mountainous wave sank to a gentle ripple. In the simple but sublime words of Matthew and Mark, "there was a great calm." But the service of the Lord did not end with the stilling of the tempest. There was a violent agitation in the breasts of those who formed the ship's company. The Lord had a word for the mental conflict also. This personal deliverance from imminent destruction afforded the apostles a profitable lesson in more than one particular. The incident revealed to them much concerning their Master; it also brought to light much concerning themselves. The former revelation the Lord had set before them in His miracle; the latter He proceeded to fasten upon their memories by His word.

Along with a lack of faith in Christ, the twelve exhibited a selfish concern for themselves which did not become the disciples of the lowly Nazarene. Moreover, they assumed that He was regardless of their danger, for they said, Dost Thou not care that we are perishing? The ungracious question arose, in point of fact, from a spirit of cowardice. This spirit He at once rebuked, even before silencing the winds and the waves, in the words already quoted, "Why are ye so cowardly, O ye of little faith? "He did not chide them for appealing to Him for help, but He would have them know that

they were doubly wrong, (1) in being filled with fear, and (2) in being of little faith.

Hence when the calm ensued at His word, and the evidence of His interference was displayed to their senses, He reproached them by further questions, in which He repeated the charge of cravenheartedness, saying, "Why are ye cowardly? Have ye not yet faith?" Surely His ministry and His miracles in Galilee, of which they were chosen witnesses, afforded ample ground for their confidence. Yet in this crisis they had failed to trust Him. From Luke we learn that the Lord put to them a further question which revealed another aspect of their failure. He said to them, "Where is your faith? "They were following Jesus because they professed to believe in Him; where then was their professed faith in Him on this occasion? Their faith should be ready for use in emergencies such as this. If they had ears to hear, let them hear; if they had faith, let them believe. The apostles were dumbfounded at what they saw, and they had no reply to make to the questions of the Lord. They were awed into silence, as on a later occasion (John 21:12). Filled with great fear, they could only express their amazement one to another, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Jesus in the Storm This miracle is one of the few which were wrought in the presence of the disciples only, most being public occurrences. But this case was for the especial benefit of the apostles, and in the record of it we are permitted to observe three things concerning our Lord —

1 The Man sleeping 2 God commanding 3 The creature obeying

(1) The incident is remarkable by the fact that there is, beside this, no other specific reference in the Gospels to the sleep of Jesus. That the Lord did take rest is without doubt implied in such passages as Mark 1:35; but here the homeless Son of man, who Himself said He had not where to lay His head, is set before us asleep in an open boat during a raging tempest.

True manhood was there, and, moreover, the Man of perfect trust who, even in these singular circumstances of peril, exemplified the words of the Psalmist, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou, LORD, alone makest me to dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:8). As a man whose mind was stayed on Jehovah, He slept the sleep of absolute confidence in God, and was in this respect a contrast both with Jonah sleeping in guilty shame, and with the disciples sleeping for sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2) But while on the one hand we see the weariness of the Servant of Jehovah after the toils of the day, on the other we witness His instant readiness at a call for aid to serve yet more. And, again, we behold a further wonder: not only was the Servant of Jehovah in the boat, but Jehovah Himself was there. For He who spoke with such authority to the winds and the waves was indubitably God; and the One who spoke thus was He who slept and awaked at the cry of distress. This was indeed the God of Israel, for as the Psalmist said, none but Jehovah is "mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psalms 93:4). It was a great revelation. And, no doubt, in after years, as the disciples recalled the thrilling experiences of this night, as they looked again in memory from the tossing billows to the face of the placid Sleeper, from the fury of the creature to the repose of the Creator, they recalled also the later words of the Lord: "That in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

(3) Here also was the rare spectacle of the inanimate creature obeying the voice of its Creator (John 1:3). Such obedience is of course observable continually in the operation of what are known as the laws of nature, though these phenomena, by reason of their regular repetition from age to age, have diminished in wonder to the majority. But the sudden stilling of this storm was unmistakable evidence that there was a voice which was heard above the roar of the wind and the waves, and which was supreme in command. This divine Voice emanated from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, and was audible to His terrified disciples.

What a revelation was thus made to the followers of Jesus! What a Master was theirs! What a One to love and follow, to reverence and adore but not to doubt! The Jewish Remnant Safe Amid the Storm of Oppression

Many of the mighty works of Jesus are described as "signs." Indeed, in the Gospel of John this term (semeion) is invariably applied to the miracles, showing that the same work may be viewed as a sign as well as a miracle, and from yet another standpoint as a "wonder." The term, "sign," in the expression, "the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3), was used in the sense of a portent of what was in the future. And, employing the word in a similar signification, the disciples asked the Lord what was the sign of His coming (Matthew 24:3). In view of these considerations, it is not altogether unwarrantable to seek for a didactical, as well as a historical, purpose in the record of this miracle, which would then, as a sign, depict some national or other deliverance of the future upon a larger scale than the actual incident on the lake.

Now, for example, we find in Isaiah prophecies of a promised deliverance from the crushing power of a national enemy, and the language of the prophet in its imagery contains striking allusions which are allied in character with the history of this miracle (Isaiah 8:5-18).

Jehovah warned of the power of the king of Assyria, whose aid Ahaz was seeking, and compared his oppressive inroads into the land of Israel to a flood of waters which should overflow, reaching even to the neck (vers. 7, 8). But while this overwhelming calamity would come upon the nation as a whole, there would be a faithful and godly remnant who would be delivered. And the pledge of this deliverance was that the virgin’s Son, Immanuel, is with them (ver. 10). The land is Immanuel’s, and He will be in the midst of His people as He was with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and as Jesus was with His disciples on the sea. The pious are therefore exhorted not to fear with the fear of the ungodly, but to "sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary" (Isaiah 8:12-14).

Now what was taught in precept by Isaiah was exemplified by this practical exhibition of the Lord’s power in the storm. In both the prophecy and the Gospels there is training for faith in view of a dark and cloudy day ahead, when to sight alone it would appear that inevitable destruction was before the little flock. Indeed many of the apostles who witnessed this miracle lived to see the Roman armies overwhelm the holy city in unutterable horrors, and to see their ungodly nation scattered to the four winds of heaven, while they and other believers were preserved amid all these calamities; for "the Lord was with them." But Isaiah did not refer to the Roman power but to the Assyrian, though the assurance of the protecting Christ for the pious and persecuted remnant is equally applicable in both cases. In a day yet to come the enmity of that northern, foe of the people of God will break forth again, and his armies like an overflowing scourge will sweep through the "glorious land." In that day of direst distress there will be the occasion for the little flock of godly ones to trust

implicitly in Immanuel. He most truly will be with them, though His delivering power may seem to slumber. However, there will then be those who will cry out in the language of a prophetic Psalm, "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? . . "Rise up, for our help, and redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake" (Psalms 44:22-26). In response to this appeal, the Man of Bethlehem, whose "goings forth have been of old, from everlasting," will become their peace, and will deliver them from the Assyrian (Micah 5:1-6), whom He will destroy by the "breath of his lips," and cast headlong into Tophet (Isaiah 30:31-33).

We also find the main features of this miraculous deliverance used figuratively in another place by Isaiah. He portrays the gathering together of many nations against the people of Israel to swallow her up like a mighty sea-storm. But God rebukes the enemies of His people, and, as it was upon the Galilean lake, what at eventide was trouble, in the morning was "not": "Ah, the uproar of many peoples which roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rushing of the nations that rush like the rushing of the mighty waters; but he shall rebuke them. . . . At eventide behold terror, and before the morning they are not "(Isaiah 17:12-14).

Other analogies occurring elsewhere may be recollected by the students of scripture, but those mentioned above are doubtless sufficient to suggest the line of comparison. The Needless Fear of the Disciples The behaviour of the disciples on this occasion was such as called forth the strictures of the loving and gracious Lord. The tenor of their complaining words showed that the coward's fear had seized upon them. Hence His sharp reprimand, "Why are ye cowardly, O ye of little faith?" This reproof may seem to us stern and even excessive until we remember what the disciples, with little excuse, forgot — the power and love of the God of Israel, and also that this power and love was present in the boat in the person of Jesus. They, as alas, we too may do, overlooked the unanswerable reasoning of faith, "If God be for us, who (or, what) can be against us?" To fear a foe much mightier than oneself is not reprehensible, but to fear without occasion — when one is invincible, is cowardice indeed, and such a spirit is stigmatized in scripture. It is solemn to learn that the "fearful" (cowardly)* are classed with the "unbelieving" in the enumeration of those condemned to the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). An evil conscience makes a coward. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). To fear God is well, and this is enjoined throughout Scripture; and in the sequel we read that the disciples "feared exceedingly," when they beheld the effect of the word of Christ upon the stormy sea. This was a wise fear, for they were then conscious of what unworthy thoughts had possessed them in the immediate presence of Infinite Power and Goodness. It was the fear of reverence, not the cowardice of unbelief, which it had displaced in the hearts of the disciples.

{*That is, those who are habitually cowards in spiritual matters. The same Greek word is used by the Lord to the disciples as is used in Revelation 21:8. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, though cognate terms are found in John 14:27, "Let not your heart . . . be afraid"; and in 2 Timothy 1:7, "God gave us not a spirit of cowardice." A different word altogether is more commonly employed for "fear."}

Fear is opposed to the normal spirit of the follower of Christ, which is one of strength and courage and resolution. This bold and vigorous confidence is described in the well-known lines of T. Kelly.

"The cross — it took our guilt away, It holds the fainting spirit up It cheers with hope the gloomy day, And sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave, And nerves the feeble arm for fight;

It takes its terror from the grave, And gilds the bed of death with light."

Little Faith In addressing His disciples the Lord said, "O ye of little faith." He recognised that they were not absolutely devoid of faith, for they appealed to the Master for help; it was, however, but a very little faith, for they conceived that they were perishing, although Jesus was with them. Faith must be feeble if it cannot trust until the cause of anxiety and alarm is removed. For them the storm was stilled that their apprehensions might be quieted, so that their faith did not rise to the level of that of Paul, who was confident of being brought safely through the storm. In the hour of peril, they lacked that strength of faith which could sit still in quietness and confidence, as the prophet enjoined (Isaiah 30:7; Isaiah 30:15). But their little faith which wrought this fear had a further evil consequence. In their selfish distress, they so far forgot themselves as to utter upbraiding words to their Master. Such language is always improper upon the lips of a servant to his master, but much more so when addressed to such a Master as He was. "Carest thou not that we perish?" Was He then like some hireling shepherd who abandons his charge and flees when the wolf comes, because he cares not for the sheep? Theirs was the selfish, petulant spirit of Martha of Bethany, who so rudely said to Him, "Carest thou not that my sister has left me to serve alone? " This evil suspicion of the divine nature is directly descended from those doubts of God's goodness first insinuated into the heart of man by the serpent in Eden (Genesis 3:5). It is a sinful human failing to doubt the God who cares even for the oxen and the birds of the air, and who has expressly invited dependent men to cast their care upon Him who cares for them (1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Peter 5:7). And the disciples joined the common throng of humanity in suspecting the love of God; and in their unbelief they reproached the Servant of Jehovah, saying in the hour of trouble, "Carest thou not that we perish?" In this event we may see that ancient scripture in course of fulfilment which anticipated the cry of the Messiah upon the earth, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me" (Psalms 69:9; Romans 15:3). But how sad to observe that in this instance these reproaches emanate from His apostles! By this mistrust of their Master they were found among those who added to the sorrows of Him who had to say, "Reproach ha th broken my heart" (Psalms 69:7; Psalms 69:20). Yet as to this phase of their complaint He "opened not his mouth," making no mention of it for the ear of man, enduring this unmerited suspicion as part of the yoke of His servitude to Him that sent Him. And of this form of meek submission to the will of God, the Spirit of Christ had already spoken through the psalmist, "For thy sake I have borne reproach" (Psalms 69:7).

25. — The Pitiable Plight of Legion

1912 148 "And they came to the other side of the sea,1 into the country of the Gerasenes.2 And when he was come out of the boat,3 straightway there met him out of the tombs4 a man with5 an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs:4 and no Man 1:6 could any more7 bind him, no, not with a chain;8 because that9 he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent10 asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces:11 and no man had strength to tame him.12 And always,13 night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting14 himself with stones. And when he saw15 Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped

him;16 and crying out17 with a loud voice, he saith,18 What have I to do with thee,19 Jesus, thou20 Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not.21 For he said22 unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man.23 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion;24 for we are many" (Mark 5:1-9 R.V.).

1 "lake," T.S.G.

2 "Gadarenes," J.N.D.

3 "immediately on his going out of the ship," J.N.D.; "when he was gone out of the ship," W.K.; "as he left the bark, there met him forthwith," T.S.G.; "when he was gone forth," McC.

4 "graves," McC.

5 "possessed by," J.N.D., T.S.G.

6 "one," J.N.D., W.K., McC.

7 "was able," J.N.D.; "could bind him," W.K.

8 "not even with chains," J.N.D., W.K.; "not even with a chain was any one hitherto able to bind him," T.S.G.; "not even fetters availed any longer," Swete. The malady had grown so that coercive measures had become futile, having been often tried in vain.

9 omit "that," J.N.D., W.K., T.S.G., McC.

10 "torn asunder," J.N.D., W.K., McC.; "snapped," T.S.G.

11 "were shattered," J.N.D.; "shivered," T.S.G.

12 "no one was able to subdue him," J.N.D.; "no one could subdue him," W.K.

13 "continually," J.N.D., McC.; "ever," T.S.G.

14 "mangling," T.S.G.

15 "But seeing," J.N.D.; "And on seeing," T.S.G.

16 "did him homage," J.N.D.; "did obeisance to him," T.S.G.

17 "cried out," McC.; omit "out," J.N.D.

18 "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

19 "What hast thou to do with me," T.S.G.

20 omit "thou," J.N.D., W.K.

21 "do not torment me," T.S.G.

22 "had said," T.S.G., McC.

23 "Come out of the man, unclean spirit," W.K.; "Come out, unclean spirit, from the man," T.S.G. " "Come out," etc., McC.

24 "Legion is my name," J.N.D., T.S.G.

After the supernatural calm of winds and waves that ensued upon the word of Jesus, the remainder of the night was most likely spent by the occupants of the boat upon the waters, and in the morning-light they landed upon the shore of what was called the country of the Gerasenes. If upon the sea they encountered the fury of the storm, they now encounter upon the land the mad and ungovernable fury of a man under the influence of a malign and demoniacal power. Satan, we know (Job 1:1-22) raised the storm of wind which slew the children of Job; and, though it is not so stated, Satan, who was to bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, may have brought about the tempest on the lake in one of his futile attempts to destroy the Son of man. But at any rate, here in the wilderness of Gadara was a sad example of the enthralling and debasing power of the devil over the sons of men. This diabolical influence was exemplified on both sides of the lake. In Capernaum, the town from which they sailed, a demoniac was found in the synagogue itself (Mark 1:23-27). Here one* runs to meet them, whose dwelling was in the tombs, himself the abode of unclean spirits.

{*The demoniac had a companion, as noted below. But in these remarks the more notable case only is considered.} In Mark's account three main facts are specified about this man's state: —

(1) He dwelt in the tombs;

(2) He exercised superhuman strength, so that it was impossible to restrain him by fetters and chains;

(3) He was a self-tormentor, inflicting injuries upon his own body. To these facts another may be added from Matthew's Gospel: —

(4) He was so excessively fierce that no one could pass that way. A further addition is made from the Gospel by Luke: —

(5) He wore no clothes, and he had been "possessed" by demons for a long while.

These facts combine to show what an utter wreck this man had become through the malicious and uncontrollable power of evil by which he was ruled. He was an exceptional case; his whole tripartite nature — body, soul and spirit — was affected.

Body. The man tormented and injured himself physically. He gashed himself with stones. He had lost all the self-respect that nature itself teaches, wandering shamelessly in nakedness, finding shelter in the caves of the hillside, which were the sepulchres of the dead.*

{*mnemeion is used of tombs hewn in the rocks, as well as of those built above ground, as in Matthew 27:60; Luke 11:47.}

Soul. The language the demoniac used to the Lord showed that he had abandoned his own personality. His own will and his individual responsibility were lost, so that the demons speak and act in and by him: "My name is Legion; for we are many," was his reply to the question of Jesus.

Spirit. The highest part of human nature within him was dethroned. That "inspiration of the Almighty," the in-breathed spirit whereby man, as distinguished from the brutes, is capable of religious feeling, is shown to be debased also; so much so that there was an utter disregard for even the most ordinary and most easily-obeyed prohibitions of the law of Moses. According to that

law in which without doubt he had been well instructed, even a momentary contact with that which was dead defiled (Numbers 19:16). This man was so lacking in the feelings of an Israelite, as well as in those of a man, that he made his abode in the sepulchres. His spirit was in revolt against the divine will and paid no heed to the injunctions of God’s word. But the deplorable effects upon the Gadarene of his "possession" may be looked at in another way by viewing the maleficent influence of the demons from the five standpoints already named, the effects being practically identical, though differently arranged. This influence is shown by the Gospel narrative to be destructive

(1) of the religious sense. By dwelling among the tombs, he cut himself off entirely from the worship of Jehovah as enjoined by the law.

(2) of the sense of his duty to the laws of social and civil government. He would not, nor could not be restrained by chains or fetters, any more than by the love of home or of friends or of fellow-citizens.

(3) of the sense of his duty to himself physically.He voluntarily injured himself, though he was responsible to care for the body as the servant of his higher nature.

(4) of the sense of his duty to others. Instead of loving his neighbours, he was "exceeding fierce," and, like some ravening beast, terrified them by his savage aggressiveness.

(5) of the sense of decency and propriety. "He wore no clothes" is the significant description of his appearance. The gloom of this picture is deepened by the fact that it was the manner of the man’s life which is portrayed here. This was no sudden outbreak of evil passion, but the symptoms had been such for "a long while." They had become habitual. And he was wont night and day to express his forlorn and hopeless misery by loud, inarticulate cries.

What the Deliverance of Legion Proved

It is clear that in this case of Legion* we have an impressive example of what a man may become when under the direct influence of the evil one. By his miraculous deliverance wrought before their eyes the apostles were instructed that the word of the kingdom of God (which they were about to preach) was directed to the emancipation of captives such as he from the kingdom of darkness. It was another stage in their education as servants of Christ. The Lord had now shown them by parable and miracle the various characters which the opposition of Satan to the ministry of the gospel would assume. In His parables He taught that his emissaries would steal away the good seed when sown, scatter tares among the wheat, and make the grown tree a habitation of evil. On the lake they had to learn how Satan would awaken the tempestuous passions of lawless men for the destruction of the servants of the kingdom of God. In all these cases, however, they were at the same time assured of the ultimate triumph of the word of the kingdom. Here the converse side of the invincible nature of the gospel is exemplified. An extreme instance of Satan’s cruel power over men is seen to be amenable to the word of the Servant of Jehovah. With but a sentence He set the poor bond-slave free. So that the word of Christ is shown to conquer by its active power in deliverance from evil as well as by its passive resistance to the insidious* corrupting forces of wickedness.

{*"The term "legion" in its strict application was used for a division of the Roman army, containing about six thousand men. Here it evidently signifies a great, but undefined number, and probably

suggests also the fear and dread with which the Roman scourge was regarded by the conquered. Mary Magdalene was possessed with seven demons (Mark 16:9), but this man and his companion were possessed with a much larger number, though not necessarily with six thousand. For an example of an English military term used similarly in a general, indefinite way, see —

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies, But in battalions."}

Further, this narrative displays how far removed the spirit of evil, rampant in the Gadarene, was from the Spirit of Christ. The character of the deeds of the possessed are stated in lurid detail, and they are opposed in nature to the deeds of the Servant of Jehovah. Works of darkness and destruction characterise the man indwelt by unclean spirits, while works of life and mercy characterise the One indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Gadarene, dominated as he was by Satan, afforded a perfect contrast with the Prophet of Jehovah. The Son of man had come not "to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56), but the demoniac was under the control of the Evil One who "cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy" (John 10:10). He was destroying himself, and his impulse was to destroy others of his kind also. This destructive tendency is the true Satanic nature, as Scripture reveals it. Saul, under the influence of an evil spirit, sought the death of David, the anointed of Jehovah (1 Samuel 19:9-10). In the Apocalypse, Satan, or one of his chief agents, is named Apollyon, that is, the Destroyer (Revelation 9:11) a name in contrasted significance with that of Jesus the Saviour of men. Satan is destructive of that which is good, but Jesus is destructive of nothing but what is evil. For the Son of God was manifested that He might annul both the devil and his works (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8). And the Servant-Prophet demonstrated this purpose of His in the country of the Gadarenes by the deliverance of this notorious victim of Satan. Was this deliverance the action of one in league with Beelzebub? On the contrary the miracle, by its divine power and by its beneficent nature, was a perfect reply, in deed, not in word and argument, to the blasphemous cavils of the Pharisees and scribes who said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils [demons] casteth he out devils [demons]" (Mark 3:22).

Legion's Homage to Jesus

1912 163 The primary effect of the presence of Jesus upon that desolate shore was to draw the demoniac to Him. When he saw the Lord at a distance he came running, with great cries. Did he come in a paroxysm of fury, intending to do Him a mischief? or did he come with eagerness to seek deliverance from his miserable condition? Whatever may have been his original impulse, in the presence of Jesus he prostrated himself before Him, doing Him homage, and saying with a loud voice, What have I, enslaved of Satan as I am, to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? art Thou come to punish me before the time? I earnestly entreat Thee before God, do not torment me. In these words of the demonised man we may recognise: —

1. a sense of his personal uncleanness 2. an acknowledgment of the Incarnate Deity 3. a knowledge and fear of future punishment 4. the absence of any appeal for mercy.

We will consider these points seriatim.

(1) In the first place, the demoniac, by the phrase, "What have I to do with thee?" expressed his own feeling of the incompatibility of darkness and light. He was conscious that there was nothing in common between himself and Jesus. This question occurs elsewhere in both the Old Testament

and the New with a similar significance. For example, it was used by Jephthah to the king of Ammon, by David to the sons of Zeruiah, by Elisha to Jehoram, by the Lord to Mary at Cana of Galilee (Judges 11:12; 2 Samuel 16:10; 2 Samuel 19:22; 2 Kings 3:13; John 2:4).

Here, however, the narrative at this period shows that unholiness recognised the Holy. One; uncleanness confessed its contrariness to divine purity; deception and lying shrunk from the presence of Him who was the Truth. Belial could have no concord with Christ.

(2) The demoniac prostrated himself before Jesus and did Him homage (proskuneo). It is the only recorded instance of demons acknowledging the Lord Jesus in this way. (See also Mark 15:19; Luke 24:52; John 9:38).

Moreover, the Gadarene addressed Him aloud as Jesus, Son of the Most High God, condemning utterly by the use of this title the false charge of the Pharisees that Jesus was under the control of the prince of the demons. And it is striking to observe what was the particular divine title used by the demonised man. For the "Most High" occurs in special connections in the Scriptures. It is the title of supreme sovereignty in the earth, and is particularly associated with the promises of divine rule during the millennium when the evil agents of Satan will be removed from the earth and Beelzebub himself confined in the bottomless abyss.

We find this association early in Genesis. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, met Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:18-20). This event appears to prefigure the millennial day when the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever (Daniel 7:1-28). Again, Balaam, through "the knowledge of the Most High," prophesied of the same time (Numbers 24:16). The prophetic Spirit in the psalmist employs the same title in songs the theme of which is the reign of Jehovah in the coming age (Psalms 91:1; Psalms 91:9; Psalms 92:1); and incidentally the subjection of the Evil One is alluded to in this scripture which declares that Messiah shall tread upon the lion and adder, and trample under foot the young lion and the serpent (Psalms 91:13). The "Most High," therefore, throughout the range of scripture, is an expressive title of God as the Sovereign Ruler in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17), and the demoniac confessed Jesus as the Son of the absolute Lord of the universe, even as the Pythoness owned Paul and Silas to be the servants of the Most High God (Acts 16:17). And they thus anticipate the divine decree that all infernal beings shall bow the knee to Jesus and confess Him Lord to the glory of God the Father (Php 2:9-10).

(3) As in the case of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum there was a manifest dread of the judgment of God, and of the consequent punishment of evil: "T adjure thee by God, torment me not." The unclean spirits knew that punishment must inevitably fall upon them, and, moreover, that the Father judgeth none, but that their sentence must come from the Son of the Most High, who is the appointed Judge of all.

Fear therefore characterised this utterance, not the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, but that fear of the chastisement of evil with which Satan always inspires man. Fallen Adam said at once to God, "I was afraid, and hid myself." Fear also is inseparable from idolatry, which is demon-worship (Deuteronomy 32:17). And is this a matter of wonder when the demons themselves believe God and shudder? They who are the cause of torment to others, dread it for

themselves (Matthew 18:34; Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:10).

(4) This confession made by the Gadarene was of the power but not of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; for His mercy was not sought in it. It was the confession not of a contrite sinner but of an evil spirit. The apostle John wrote, "Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God "(1 John 4:2-3). To confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is to seek Him as the Saviour of sinners, since this was the purpose of the incarnation. But no word fell from the lips of the prostrate man beseeching for mercy and forgiveness. The publican in the temple, and blind Bartimaeus, cried for mercy, and were heard; for grace and truth had come for the deliverance of such. But apostate spirits are already doomed and beyond the pale of mercy. They wait only for the execution of their just sentence. Nevertheless the gracious Lord extended His mercy to this miserable man though not to the unclean demons.

Unclean Spirits In the Gospel narratives the terms "unclean spirits" and "demons" are in many instances used with reference to the same case. Thus, we read that the daughter of the Syrophenician woman "had an unclean spirit," and that she besought the Lord that He would "cast forth the demon out of her daughter" (Mark 7:23-30). Again, in the account of the boy at the foot of the mount of Transfiguration, we are told that when he was coming to Jesus "the demon dashed him down and tare him grievously. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the child "(Luke 9:42). Without citing other instances, these will suffice to show that the terms are used synonymously. The unclean spirit, therefore, was a demon. In other words the form taken by the demons in the cases of possession recorded in the Gospels was that of unclean spirits. They exercised their evil influence upon their subjects as invisible agents. This will also occur in a coming day, as the prophet John foretells from the vision he saw. He says, "I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons working signs which go forth unto the kings of the whole world to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:13-14). In a further vision he saw Babylon, the apostate church of the future, to be the "habitation of demons, and the hold of every unclean spirit "(Revelation 18:2).

Two Demoniacs, or One? The corresponding account in Matthew states that two persons afflicted by demons encountered the Lord on this occasion: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes there met him two possessed with devils, coming forth out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass by that way (Matthew 8:28).

It has been frequently observed by students of the Gospels that it is a peculiarity of the First Evangelist to note plurality in certain incidents which are narrated in the singular by others. For example, Matthew mentions two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34), while Mark and Luke only name one (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). He also mentions two cases in connection with the Lord’s progress into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-5), where the other Evangelists speak of one only (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:29-35; John 12:14-15). The naming of one only in these cases is not a denial or contradiction of the record by the other Evangelists, the greater including the less; but it may fairly be taken to imply that in the cases of the two demoniacs in Gadara, and of the two blind men at Jericho, one of the two was more notable than the other, and on that account was selected for mention in Mark and Luke. At any rate the presence of two persons in these particular instances

was an important feature in itself, since it established the fact that there was more than a single witness to the genuineness of the miracle. This form of corroboration was calculated to meet the prejudices of the Jews based upon their law of evidence which demanded two or three witnesses in a matter of valid testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16). The following instance out of many others shows this Jewish character of the First Gospel. In the record of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, Matthew shows, by naming both the ass and the colt, how punctiliously the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5). This is one of the points of detail we might very naturally expect, in accordance with its general scope, to find elaborated and emphasised in this Gospel, the purpose of which is to prove from the Scriptures that "Jesus is the Christ." In the companion narratives a more general reference was sufficient. The following quotation* expresses the same view of the question. "We know from elsewhere there were two [demoniacs]. The Gospel of Matthew, not in this only, but in various other cases, speaks of two persons "as, I suppose, because this fact fell in with his object. It was a recognised principle in the law, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established; and he among the Evangelists on whom, so to speak, the mantle of the circumcision fell — he it was who, speaking in view of the circumcison, gives the required testimony for the guidance of those in Israel that had ears to hear. Nothing of the kind was before Mark. He wrote not with any special aim of meeting Jewish saints and Jewish difficulties; but, in truth, rather for others that were not so circumscribed, and might rather need to have their peculiarities explained from time to time. He evidently had humanity before him as wide as the world, and therefore singles out, as we may fairly gather, the more remarkable of the two demoniacs."

{*Lectures introductory to the Gospels, by W. Kelly, 2nd ed., pp. 173-4.} 26. — Legion Delivered and the Swine Destroyed

1912 180 "And he besought him much1 that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there on the mountain side2 a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And he gave them leave.3 And the unclean spirits came out,4 and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down5 the steep1 into the sea, in number about two thousand; and they were choked in the sea.7 And they that fed them8 fled, and told9 it in the city,10 and in the country.11 And they came12 to see what it was that had come to pass.13 And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with devils14 sitting, clothed15 and in his right mind,16 even him that had the legion: and they were afraid. And they that saw it17 declared unto18 them how it befell him that19 was possessed with devils, and concerning the swine. And they began to beseech20 him to depart from their borders.21 And as he was entering22 into the boaT1 he24 that had been possessed with devils besought15 him that he might be with him. And he suffered him not,26 but saith27 unto him, Go to thy house28 unto thy friends,29 and tell them30 how great things the Lord hath31 done for thee, and how he had32 mercy33 on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel" (Mark 5:10-20, R.V.).

1. "greatly," McC.

2. "just at the mountain," J.N.D.; "by the mountain," McC., T.S.G.

3. "Jesus immediately allowed them," J.N.D.

4. "going out," J.N.D., W.K.; "went out," T.S.G.

5. "ran violently," W.K.; "rushed headlong," McC.; "dashed down," T.S.G.

6. "steep slope," J.N.D.; "steep place," W.K.; "over the precipice," McC.

7. "stifled in the lake," T.S.G.

8. "those that were feeding them," J.N.D.; "feeders," T.S.G.

9. "reported," J.N.D.; "carried the report," T.S.G.

10. "town," T.S.G.

11. "villages," McC.

12. "Went out," J.N.D., W.K.

13. "taken place," J.N.D., W.K.; "happened," T.S.G.; "that was done," McC.

14. "see the possessed of demons," J.N.D., W.K.

15. "apparelled," McC.

16. "sensible," J.N.D.

17. "had seen [it]," J.N.D.

18. "related to," J.N.D.; "detailed to them how," T.S.G.

19, "had happened to the [man]," J.N.D.

20. "beg," J.N.D.; "pray," W.K.

21. "coasts," J.N.D., W.K.

22. "was going," McC.

23. "went on board ship," J.N.D.; "was come into the ship," W.K.; "was going on board the bark," T.S.G.

24. "the man," J.N.D.

25. "prayed," W.K.

26. "did not allow," T.S.G.

27. "says," J.N.D., T.S.G.

28. "thine home," J.N.D.; "home," McC.

29. "home to thine own people," W.K.

30. "report," T.S.G.

31. "has," J.N.D.

32. "has had," J.N.D.

33. "had pity," T.S.G. In the conversations which took place on this occasion, especially as they are reported by Mark and Luke (who refer to one only of the two Gadarene demoniacs), there is evidence of the significant fact that the personality of the possessed man was overridden by the indwelling demons. It is not intended to investigate the psychological effects of this fact. The result, however, is noted because of its serious importance; and while this condition no doubt exists in every case of possession, it is here thrown into unusual prominence, since not a single demon but many had entered into this man. We have, therefore, alike in the dialogue and the narrative, the use both of the singular number (indicating the man himself) and the plural (indicating the evil spirits). The phrases used and the speakers are shown in the following statement:

Singular Number:

(1) By the man to Jesus: "What have I to do with thee?" "Torment me not" ""My name is Legion."

(2) By Jesus to the man: "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*"; "What is thy name?"

{*It is to be observed that Jesus first addressed the unclean spirits in the singular number, implying that there was a unity in the company, which possibly acted under a leader. Luke in his narrative also speaks in the singular number first, using the plural subsequently: "For he commanded the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him; and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the bands asunder he was driven of the devil into the wilderness." "And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss" (Luke 8:29; Luke 8:31, R.V.).

Plural Number:

(1) By the man to Jesus: "We are many."

(2) By the demons to Jesus: "All the demons besought him, saying, Send us into the swine that we may enter into them."

(3) By Jesus to the demons: "Jesus gave them leave." He said unto them, "Go," using the plural form of the verb (Matthew 8:32). The two forms, singular and plural, are to be seen in close juxtaposition in verses 9 and 10: "And he asked him (sing.), What is thy (sing.) name? And he (sing.) answered, saying, My (sing.) name is Legion; for we (plur.) are many. And he (sing.) besought him much that he would not send them (plur.) away out of the country." The Lord addressed the man as the responsible person, asking him, "What is thy name?" and He also distinguished between the man who was oppressed and the evil powers which possessed him, saying, "Come forth out of the man, thou unclean spirit." The man is regarded as tenanted by the evil spirit. This distinction and identification is found in another connection of an opposite nature. As this case was one of a man indwelt by unclean spirits for purposes of evil, so we learn from the Epistles that those who believe the gospel of salvation (Ephesians 1:1-23) are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, who is assuredly distinct in His personality from those whom He indwells, bearing witness indeed, as He does, with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). At the same time He, in a blessed way, identifies Himself with us, helping our

infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. The Lord Himself declared to His followers, referring to their testimony, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20).

Such facts as these shed some light upon the higher part of man’s complex nature, and show that it is subject to that comprehensive law enunciated by the apostle Paul, when he said, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16)?

Into the Swine but not the Abyss The demons who feared the time of future torment had their requests to prefer to Him whom they knew and addressed as the Son of the most high God. They acknowledged His supreme authority even as Satan did when he came before Jehovah in the matter of His servant Job (Job 1:1-22).

Here they besought the Lord that He would not send them out of the country, and, as Luke states, that He would not command them to go into the deep, or the abyss (Luke 8:31). The abyss is the Scriptural term for the place of confinement of evil spirits. The word in the original Greek is translated "bottomless pit" in the Apocalypse (Revelation 9:1-2; Revelation 9:11). From thence the "beast" will arise who will make war upon the two witnesses and overcome them (Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8). According to the same series of prophecies, Satan will be imprisoned in the abyss during the thousand years of glorious peace under the reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3).

Possibly the abyss is the place of constraint, mentioned by Jude, in which certain evil angels have been already placed: "And the angels which kept not their first [proper] estate but left their own habitation, he path reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6).

There was at any rate an evident fear on the part of these evil spirits, lest they should be forthwith condemned to confinement in the abyss, and thus be prevented "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

They admitted that Jesus had authority to eject them, for, as Matthew reports, they said, "If thou cast us out" (Matthew 8:31); and their desire was to enter the unclean swine, as if to exhibit and gratify their love of destruction. As Satan disguised himself as the serpent for subtlety (Genesis 3:1-24), and, to deceive the unwary, now transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), also walking about as a roaring lion to devour the unresisting (1 Peter 5:8), so here the unclean spirits sought permission to enter the herd of unclean swine. "Suffer us," they said, thus owning, like Satan of old (Job 1:1-22), their impotence apart from the Supreme Will. The Lord acceded to their request, and immediately they abandoned their human prey, and took possession of the herd of swine, wherein to display their destructive aims and thus to inspire men with a fear and dread, apart from which they have no power over them. Their maleficent propensities were at once exemplified; for the whole herd of animals was irresistibly impelled down the steep cliffs and perished in the sea. This destruction of property by Satanic influence acting through secondary causes is not without its parallel in Old Testament times. In the history of the calamities which came upon Job we are permitted to see that the sudden losses of his flocks and herds and children were attributable to the malice of Satan. To outward seeming the Sabeans captured the oxen and sheep; the Chaldeans carried away his camels; the fire from heaven burned up his

sheep; the hurricane slew his sons and daughters; but all these casualties arose, as we learn from the inspired narrative, from the evil plottings of Satan which were permitted by Jehovah, who, however, overruled them all for the eventual and enhanced blessing of the patriarch. In the instance at Gadara the fate of the swine forms a plain and unmistakable example of the tendencies and objects of Satan and his demons. The violent end of the beasts was but an analogy of the ultimate end of those who are under the direction and power of darkness. Only in the absence of that superior nature which man possesses in contrast with the brutes, destruction followed immediately after the entrance of the demons into the swine. They at once rushed to their death. In the case of man the end is similar though it may be reached more slowly. Whatever men may be deceived to think, the object of the evil one is to destroy, while that of the Holy One of God is to deliver and save. The question of the loss incurred by the keepers of the swine, who were probably faithless Jews, is not discussed in the Gospels, neither is the question whether this loss came upon them by way of retribution for keeping the unclean animals contrary to the law of Moses. Indeed the "utility" argument, sometimes used as an objection that this destruction of animal life should be permitted by the gracious Saviour, is irrelevant; since the wholesale loss of property has ever been of frequent occurrence through those inexplicable catastrophes which form such noticeable features in the inscrutable ways of divine Providence. Until we know the ultimate intention of Sovereign Wisdom, we are not in a position to understand nor to discuss the righteousness of such events, or of the miracle in question. Without knowing, faith is confident that all is working for good.

It may be added that another point concerning this and analogous cases is made clear by this incident. Demon-possession has a specific character. It is not, as some would allege, a form of disease nor the result of overpowering sinful propensities; the behaviour of the animals when possessed proved the contrary. They were not carried away suddenly by some disease nor as suddenly filled by a swinish perversity to compass their own destruction. The truth was that the power of Satan was acting in a special manner to destroy them. The Delivered Man

Those who witnessed the mad rush of the swine over the precipice spread the news in town and country, and numbers ("the whole city," Matt.) flocked to Jesus to see the Author of this thing. They beheld not only the Prophet of Nazareth but the wild untameable man of the hill-tombs. In the latter they could not but observe the pacific change wrought by the Lord’s word. They found him sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. He now possessed that demeanour characteristic of the mental sobriety (sophosune) which is enjoined in the Epistles as a necessary element of Christian character (Romans 12:3; 1 Peter 4:7; et al.). The inward influence of that hateful power for evil and self-destruction had been withdrawn. The man was now under the benign and gracious influence of the meek Man of sorrows whom demons fear and obey. The voice that had hushed the riotous elements the previous night had spoken peace to this troubled spirit. And he who had hitherto resisted all human efforts to curb his violence is seen to have succumbed to the word of the Master.

Thus the deliverance was complete; and this mental and physical emancipation is an illustration of the liberating effect which the gospel ever exercises upon the whole man who comes to the Saviour. There is a spiritual liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. The Lord Jesus delivers the believer from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13), from the course of this age, from the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2),

bringing him from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). The Grossness of Gadara

1913 195 When the inhabitants of the district beheld Jesus who had delivered the demoniac, but who was, in their estimation, the destroyer of their swine, they were unanimous in expressing their desire that He should leave the neighbourhood immediately. It was an ungracious, and indeed an insolent, petition, but it was granted, as was that of the demons when they besought Him that they might enter the swine and not be consigned to the abyss. Like Legion, the besotted Gadarenes said, in effect, What have we to do with Thee? There was with them an utter absence of appreciation of either His power or His grace. And they preferred to remain undisturbed with their naked, howling, demonized men and with their filthy swine. This callous spirit was really a gloomy but accurate reflexion of the attitude of the whole nation towards the Messiah, who "came unto His own, but His own received Him not." And the Lord expressed His sense of this refusal in His lamentation over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37). They did not desire His presence, and were ready enough to raise the cry, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." It is happy, however, to remember that there were exceptions to this general feeling. While those at Gadara besought Him to depart, those at Capernaum, seeing His miracles, "stayed him that he should not depart from them" (Luke 4:42). And while at a certain village of Samaria the inhabitants refused to receive Jesus (Luke 9:53), at Sychar, another Samaritan town, they besought Him that He would tarry with them (John 4:40). But whatever the attitude of the few, the spirit of Gadara prevailed throughout the favoured land. The Lord had entered the domain of the strong man and spoiled his goods, as the people could not but admit. In spite of this, such was their obstinacy, that they did not desire that this Deliverer from the great and cruel oppressor should dwell in their midst. This rejection of absolute goodness in the person of Christ was the culminating feature of the sin of man. It proved that he not only did what was evil, but hated what was good. The will and the affections were equally alienated from God.

However debased man may become, he is still capable of pride. The degraded Gadarenes were well satisfied with themselves, and wished for no help. To overvalue self is to undervalue Christ. "He who thinks he hath no need of Christ hath too high thoughts of himself. He who thinks Christ cannot help him hath too low thoughts of Christ." The Witness for Decapolis The delivered man, on seeing Jesus enter the boat to cross the sea and leave the country, besought the Lord that he might accompany Him. Who can wonder at this desire? The poor fellow owed everything to his Deliverer. And what a relief was his to be freed from the power of such tormentors. And how safe he would feel in the presence of Jesus from any further attacks of the demons. Now he had a pure heart and a right spirit, and nowhere could their renewed aspirations find such satisfaction as in the Person at whose feet he sat. He, like so many others then and since, was irresistibly attracted to the Prophet of Nazareth, and he was ready to leave everything to follow and be with him. But the Lord had other duties for him. The Servant of Jehovah, in the spirit of omniscient wisdom, regarded the future of this delivered demoniac as it affected the service of the gospel, and not according to the personal inclination of the suppliant. Here was a district which prayed to be relieved of the ministrations of the incarnate Son of God. To this offensive request the lowly Nazarene acceded. But it was a feature of the divine plan for man’s eternal blessing that when God’s "Faithful and True Witness" was rejected and slain, the place of testimony in the world should be filled by those who, having received of His "fulness," were His loving and loyal followers.

Such a phase of divine service is indicated here by the post of duty which the Master assigned to this recipient of His mercy in Gadara. He was to remain as a witness. If the gross darkness of Decapolis comprehended not the shining of the Light of life, it should still have a light-bearer in the person of the healed demoniac. So the Lord said to him, "Go to thy home unto thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee." His home he had formerly abandoned for the charnel-house. His friends he had outraged by his violence. His domestic circle, including these friends and acquaintances, had witnessed his excesses under the demoniacal influence, and to these he was now bidden by the Lord to return that they might judge of the reality of the change wrought in him. As the Lord sent the cleansed lepers to the priest that the genuineness of their healing might be authoritatively attested, so the Lord sent this man to his house that his friends might have opportunity of judging by his conduct what a complete deliverance was his, and moreover that they might hear for themselves from his own lips, eloquent in the enthusiasm of his gratitude, what the Lord had done for him. He was to testify to the Lord’s power and to His mercy. For it was a great thing for Jesus to deliver him from the power of Satan with a word, and it was also a merciful thing inasmuch as the man had wilfully and wickedly abandoned himself to the power of the evil one.

Such a simple strain of gratitude is acceptable to God. For we find in the Psalms that "great things done" will be the keynote of the song of thanksgiving adopted by the blessed and delivered remnant of Israel when they enter into their millennial joys, as it also was when Jehovah brought back the exiles from Babylon: "When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongues with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalms 126:1-3). The man owned the right of the Lord to direct his movements, and obeyed His commands. He thus became a preacher of Christ in ten cities (Decapolis), where he rendered a testimony which resembled the present preaching of the gospel. For while preaching is not itself a miracle, it is essentially a testimony founded upon a divine work. The witness concerning the miracle created a sensation in the district, for we read "all men did marvel," as it is the way of man to do at things he can neither comprehend nor imitate. But such an emotion does not affect either the heart or the conscience. This characteristic is several times recorded of the unthinking populace (Matthew 9:33; Luke 11:14; John 7:21), but not of them only, for it was true of the Pharisees and Herodians when they received the Lord’s wise answers to their cunning questions (Mark 12:17), as well as of the apostles when they beheld the storm stilled at the word of Jesus (Matthew 8:27; Luke 8:25). On the other hand, the word is applied to our Lord, for we read that Jesus marvelled at the obdurate unbelief of men’s hearts (Mark 6:6), an application which may well form a topic for our meditation. The Sign to Israel

There are elements in the narrative of the Gadarene miracle which appear to have a striking analogy to the future history of Israel, and this imparts to it the character of a sign. In scriptural teaching from early days, idolatry is considered a form of demon-rule and demon-worship (Deuteronomy 32:17; Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:15; Psalms 106:37). The apostle Paul thus speaks, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God," and going on to refer to the Corinthians eating that which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, he adds, "I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). And what the Gentiles did as idol-worshippers, Israel had done (Ezekiel 20:7-8), and will yet do again. Idolatry, which had

been intermittent in the chosen land, was established as a national rite by Jeroboam and continued as such until the captivity. From that time until the present the nation has preserved itself from the pollutions of idolatry. But according to prophecy the abomination of desolation shall yet stand in the holy place, and the apostate mass of the Jews shall yet unite in the worship of Antichrist and his image. Israel will again become Gentile in religion. The Lord set out this future lapse of the Jews into idolatry parabolically. He said, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man it walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then it saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when it is come it findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth it and taketh with itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43-45). This prediction has not yet been fulfilled, but according to it, the unclean spirit of idolatry expelled from the nation some five centuries before the advent of Christ will return, and in a sevenfold greater degree defile and abase the people in the uncleanness of idol-worship.

Using, therefore, the language of this narrative, the herd of swine — the unclean majority or mass of the Jews — possessed by the powers of darkness, will be irresistibly impelled to their own perdition. Wheresoever the [unclean] carcase is, thither will the eagles [of judgment] be gathered together" (Luke 17:37). Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord cast the seven demons, well represents the delivered remnant of that day. The undelivered ones perish in their uncleanness before the millennial dawn. For in the important prelude to the reign of peace, both mercy and judgment will be in exercise. And while the idolaters are swept away, the nation will be purged from the uncleanness of idolatry in accordance with the prophecy of Zechariah: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zechariah 13:1-2). With this a prophecy in Ezekiel agrees. There Jehovah promised the people: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25; see also ver. 18). The following extract* has reference to this aspect of the narrative, "The world beseeches Jesus to depart, desiring their own ease, which is more disturbed by the presence and power of God than by a legion of devils. He goes away. The man who was healed — the remnant — would fain be with Him; but the Lord sends him back (into the world that He quitted Himself) to be a witness of the grace and power of which he had been the subject.

"The herd of swine, I doubt not, set before us the career of Israel towards their destruction, after the rejection of the Lord. The world accustoms itself to the power of Satan — painful as it may be to see it in certain cases — never to the power of God."

{*Synopsis of the Books of the bible, by J, N, Darby, p. 318.} 27. — The Petition of Jairus

1913 211 "And when Jesus had crossed over1 again in the boaT1 unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered3 unto him: and he was by the sea. And there cometh4 one of the rulers5 of the synagogue, Jairus by name;6 and seeing him,7 he falleth8 at his feet, and beseecheth9 him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death:10 I pray thee, that thou come11 and lay thy hands12 on her, that she may be made whole,13 and live. And he went14 with him; and a

great multitude15 followed him, and they thronged16 him" (v. 21-24, R.V.).

1. "having passed over," J.N.D.; "was crossed over," McC.

2. "ship," J.N.D.; "bark," T.S.G.

3. "crowd gathered," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "multitude gathered,"

4. "comes," J.N.D., T.S.G.

5. "chiefs," T.S.G.

6. "by name, Jairus," J.N.D., T.S.G.

7. "when he saw," McC.

8. "falls down," J.N.D.; "falls," T.S.G.

9. "besought,"McC.; "beseeches," T.S.G.

10. "at extremity," J.N.D.; "at her last gasp," T.S.G.

11. "[I pray] that thou shouldest come," J.N.D.; "I pray thee come," McC.; "it is that thou mayest come," T.S.G.

12. "lay hands," T.S.G.

13. "healed," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved," McC.

14. "went away," McC., T.S.G.

15. "large crowd," J.N.D.; "great crowd," T.S.G.

16. "pressed on," J.N.D.; "were thronging," T.S.G. At this point in the course of the gospel narrative, events in Capernaum are introduced which illustrate yet another phase of the ministry of Jehovah's Servant, exercised in connection with Israel. It will be recalled from what precedes that (1) the parables in the fourth chapter, (2) the stilling of the storm in the presence of the apostles alone, and (3) the healing of the demoniac in Gadara beyond Jordan, all combined to instruct the followers of Christ concerning the singular nature of the ministry of the kingdom. Taking the three points as enumerated, it is shown (1) that the word of God as preached by the Lord would not be immediately and invariably successful in fruitbearing, (2) that the difficulties and opposition to the gospel would sometimes be so great that the servants of the kingdom would be in danger of complete destruction, (3) and that the witnesses of Christ may expect to be left alone in a world that had rid itself of the presence of the Servant of Jehovah Himself.

Evidence is now furnished by the raising of Jairus's daughter of the positive nature of the Lord's gracious mercy in His ministry which was then proceeding. Jesus was the Lord of life and death. And let Israel be so dead in all spiritual perception as to be oblivious to the advent of the Messiah, He would, in answer to faith, bestow life upon the dead. Moreover, if only touched in faith He was ready to respond in healing power to the weak and ailing. The Lord came to save Israel's life, though the condition of the nation in reality proved to be death when He came. But beside this main purpose such was the fulness of grace that wherever there was faith in the midst of the

surrounding crowd, healing flowed forth from the Fountain of mercy present.

Another new feature of divine ministry is introduced in that the incident shows that the Lord was accessible on behalf of others. A person whose name (in contrast with the usual practice in the Gospels) is recorded,* approached the Prophet to solicit mercy for his daughter. In the instances mentioned previously, the Lord dealt directly with the persons whom He blessed, and though it is recorded that the inhabitants of Capernaum brought their diseased to Jesus for healing (1: 32), and that the sick of the palsy was borne to Him by four, nothing is stated of any intercession being made by the interested friends of the afflicted. Here the parental anxiety of Jairus for his only daughter who lay dying is manifest in the earnest solicitude of his petition for her recovery. We are shown how Jesus graciously responded to this request; but most striking of all is that part of the narrative which contains the words of comfort and assurance addressed to the agitated father upon the receipt of the news that his daughter had died before Jesus reached the house: "Be not afraid, only believe."**

{*Luke also records the ruler's name, but not Matthew. The Hebrew equivalent of Jairus occurs in Numbers 32:41, and Deuteronomy 3:14.

**It has been suggested that Jairus was one of the rulers who came to Jesus on behalf of the centurion who built a synagogue at Capernaum (Luke 7:5). This is no more than conjecture, but if true, the Jewish ruler had not the faith of the Roman soldier, who expressed the confidence that the Lord need not come to his house but could heal his servant with a word only.}

We thus have illustrated that feature of the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah which is of such value in a world of suffering and sorrow, still groaning beneath the distressing effects of the presence of sin. The previous portion of the Gospel demonstrated that the word of Jesus had power to heal disease, to deliver from Satan, and to still the storm. Here it is displayed that the Servant had come to administer the word of comfort which was suited to sustain the wounded spirit until the actual deliverance is effected. Such words of support and cheer are specially needed by those who walk by faith, and not by sight. The Chronological Order

It may be of some interest to inquire in what chronological order this miracle occurred; though it is admitted that as a general rule the exact order of occurrence is a point of subsidiary importance in the reading of the Gospels, and in many instances the notes of time given in the narratives are altogether inadequate as determining factors in settling the chronology. In examining such indications of relative order as exist in this case, it is found that by Mark and Luke the healing of Jairus's daughter is placed in immediate juxtaposition to the Lord's return from Gadara, while in the First Gospel the two events are separated by the healing of the sick of the palsy, the call of Levi, the feast in his house, and the conversations with the Pharisees and with the disciples of John the Baptist. Is it then possible to ascertain the exact sequence of these various events? In the narrative of Matthew it is shown distinctly that the Lord's words to John's disciples about the piece of cloth and the wine-skins were immediately followed by the petition of Jairus. It is there stated that "while he yet spake these things unto them, behold, there came a ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead" (Matthew 9:18). Now this interview with the disciples of the Baptist was held in Levi's house where the newly-called apostle had made a feast in honour of Jesus, inviting many publicans and sinners to be present. And it was the social standing of these guests which awakened the contempt of the Pharisees (Matthew 9:11-13). Now it is to be

noticed further that the objection made by the Pharisees to the character of these guests immediately preceded the visit of John’s disciples. This is determined by the connective phrase, "Then

(tote) come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the ’Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" (Matthew 9:4). At this juncture, therefore, while the conversation was proceeding in Levi’s house, Jairus came, and in response to his request, Jesus left the "house of feasting" to visit the "house of mourning." The cure of the sick of the palsy and the call of Levi precede the feast, in Matthew’s account.* They are there interpolated for topical reasons, since the strict order of occurrence (in the case of the first two events) is shown by Mark and Luke to have been before the Lord crossed the sea of Gadara. Although in all three Gospels the notice of the feast which Levi made immediately follows that of his call, this position in no way proves that the feast was arranged on the same day. Some time would be necessary to make preparations and to invite the guests. But though the call and the feast were not immediately consecutive in the happening of events in Capernaum, they are placed together in the narrative to show that one was the outcome of the other; the feast expressed the gratitude of the tax-gatherer to Him who had called him.

{*In Mark 2:15-22 the feast and the encounter with the Pharisees are named earlier in the narrative, and thus out of chronological sequence. Such an arrangement is unusual with this Evangelist. In the words of another, it is "one of the exceptional dislocations, if not the only one, in Mark; for it would appear from Matthew 9:18, that while the Lord was speaking of the wine and the bottles the ruler Jairus came about his daughter."} The Lord’s journey across the sea to the country of the Gerasenes does not appear to have occupied more than twenty-four hours. He seems to have left Capernaum towards the evening of one day, and returned in the course of the next. And the sequence of the events that immediately ensued was probably as follows, the last four taking place in the house of Levi: —

1. The return from Gadara by boat 2. The welcome of Jesus by crowds on landing 3. The feast in the house of Levi 4. The criticism of the Pharisees 5. The question by the disciples of John the Baptist 6. The application of Jairus concerning his child

Dying or Dead? In comparing the three accounts of this incident it is observable that the words of Jairus to the Lord appear to be reported differently. In these reports Matthew and Mark give the language used by the ruler, while Luke records them in the third person: thus we read: —

Matthew — "My daughter is even now dead" (9: 18) Mark — "My little daughter is at the point of death" (v. 23) Luke — "She lay a-dying" (8: 42). The ostensible difference is that according to the first Evangelist Jairus told the Lord that his daughter was actually dead, but according to Mark and Luke it would seem that she was at death’s door. This variation is in itself an unimportant one, especially as we learn from the Gospels that a messenger brought the news of the child’s actual death, while Jesus was on the way to the ruler’s house — a circumstance, be it observed, not named by Matthew who represents the daughter’s death from the outset of his narrative.

Apart from an explanation, this difference is valuable inasmuch as it proves the absence of collusion between the several Evangelists; but the antagonists of the Gospels have made much of this so-called discrepancy, alleging that their credibility is weakened if not destroyed thereby. But it

is quite possible to justify both expressions, and to produce more than one reasonable explanation of the difference in phraseology. As already remarked, the Synoptic Gospels were evidently not written in collaboration to satisfy the demands of critics that they should be in exact mechanical alignment. And indeed the remarkable brevity of these memoirs is such that difficulties like that now under consideration are inevitable. The severe compression of both matter and style is phenomenal. Consider the comparative length of the Gospels as biographies. In an ordinary octavo Bible, with double columns of references, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke occupy about forty pages each, John about thirty, and Mark about twenty-five pages only. And these slight pamphlets constitute the sole authentic memoirs of the life and ministry of the Incarnote Son of God whose public service was characterised by incessant activity. How insignificant these seem in point of size when compared with the ponderous biographical tomes of the world’s nonentities! Confessedly, brevity is one of the striking features of the divine Gospels.

Bearing this characteristic in mind it will be admitted to be impossible, under such stringent restriction, that the whole of the minor details necessary to a complete picture of a given incident should be recorded. A selection must be made, subject, of course, to the purpose of the narrative; and the briefer the allotted space the more extensive the exclusion must become. Thus each Evangelist in his selection (under the superintend ence of the Holy Spirit) was governed by the special object before him, and not by the details recorded by his fellow-evangelists, with whose compilation he may or may not have been familiar. In other words, each writer was, in this sense, independent.

1913 229 Now in the incident under consideration, if we were in possession of the whole of the events of that day the particulars recorded would fall into their due chronological order, and the apparent discordance would disappear. However, without claiming that the following hypothesis has a historical basis, an examination of the various accounts will reveal phrases which afford strong probability to the explanation advanced. And this explanation, it is believed, will be sufficient to meet the demands of even this case, which has been described as "the most perplexing difficulty in the whole of the Gospel history."

1. In the accounts of Mark and Luke we read that Jairus came to the Lord after He had landed and while He was still near the lake: "And he was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, etc."; "And as Jesus returned, the multitudes welcomed him; for they were all waiting for him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus," etc. (Mark 5:21-22; Luke 8:41). In the absence of direct proof to the contrary, it seems clear that before the Lord went to the feast of Levi He received the petition of the ruler who besought Him "much" to come and lay His hand upon his little daughter who was at the point of death.

2. Matthew describes the Lord as seated in Levi’s house and instructing the disciples of John the Baptist on the question of fasting when Jairus presented his request: "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a ruler and worshipped’ him, saying, My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him" (Matthew 9:18-19). It has already been noted that this interrupted interview with the Baptist’s disciples took place in the house of Levi, it would seem therefore that Matthew, in his account, is not referring to the occurrence chronicled by the other two Evangelists, but relates how the anxious ruler sought the Lord’s presence a second time. If this was so, we must suppose that the

Lord did not respond at once to the first prayer of Jairus, even as in His perfect wisdom He did not immediately respond to the urgent message of the sisters of Bethany concerning Lazarus. Therefore while Jesus was at the feast, Jairus renewed his petition in somewhat altered terms. He had become impatient at the seeming delay of the Master. She who at his first application was at her last gasp had by this time died. This he may have judged from her condition when he left her. At any rate he seems on the second occasion to have worded his request from this point of view. "My daughter is even now dead," was his plea this time. Yet even in this extremity. there remained in his heart hope and trust in the Great Physician, for he added, "Come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." The Lord tarried no longer, but "arose" (an expression not found in the parallel passages) and followed him. The fact of the damsel's death was subsequently confirmed by the messenger. The child was dead, and the mourners were already in the house; why should the Master be troubled further? Thus ran the message.

Viewed in this light, the terms of the petition of Jairus as stated by Matthew are in perfect accord with those recorded by Mark and Luke, and no further remarks are necessary. But it may be added that some have questioned whether the precise meaning of the original phrase in Matthew is conveyed by the usual rendering, "My daughter is even now dead." It is to be remarked that the verb used here is eteleutesen and not the same as that employed by the messenger (apethane); moreover, the adverb is not nun, but arti, which may be translated, "just about to happen" (Revelation 12:10). There is not the precision in the coincidence of time indicated by arti as by vv 5. Such a distinction between these adverbs may be observed in John 2:1-25. Speaking at Cana of the waterpots, the Lord said to the servants at the marriage feast, "Draw out now (nun)," 1:e., draw out at this very moment. Later, the ruler of the feast, having tasted the wine, said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now (arti)," 1:e., until the conclusion, as opposed to the commencement of the feast. There is less exactitude of time implied in the latter than in the former instance. But it is doubtful whether this distinction in usage is invariably observed in the New Testament, and it is only named here for the consideration of students.

Many translators have attributed this greater latitude of meaning to this adverb in the phrase in question, as if Jairus had said, My daughter by this time has come to her end. This is in agreement with Mr. Darby's rendering, "My daughter has by this died." In a footnote to the Translation he adds, " arti is what comes up to nun, says Suidas, quoted by Wetstein in loco; as autika, what in the future joins now. Mark has 'is at extremity'; Luke 'was dying'. Nor has 'now died' any other sense, only it is less clear. It is, however, quite possible that Matthew may give the result of the servant's message and all. It may be translated, 'has just now died,' or, 'has even now died.' Chrysostom and others give it as in text" [that is, "has by this died"]. In another place* Mr. Darby wrote: "arti etel., 'now at her end,' 'dead by this.' We know that the father received the news that she was actually dead on the way. arti is the point up to which time reached, nun the thing exists already."

{*Collected Writings, Vol, 24. p. 209.} The Father's Petition

It is noticeable that the prominent person in this episode was not one of the common people, as was the case in the events narrated in the former part of this Gospel history. Jairus, the petitioner, was a man of social and religious eminence, and moreover of that class from which the active opposition to Jesus sprang. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were honourable exceptions, but

of the rest, it was once scornfully asked, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (John 7:48). Here then the Lord's mercy to the ruler shows that He is rich towards all who call upon Him, and that the testimony of good works which Capernaum was so obdurate in refusing (Matthew 11:23) ranged throughout all grades from the chiefs of the synagogue downwards.

Jairus, coming to Jesus in his distress, did him reverence by falling at His feet, a mark of respect the more striking, coming, as it did, from a person of local distinction such as a ruler of the synagogue was. The trouble of Jairus concerned his affections as a parent. He had one only daughter about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying. He therefore kept beseeching the Lord that He would come to his house and lay His hand upon her and heal her. Did the ruler recollect that in that very town not so long before, Jesus had entered the house of Simon where his wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and taking her by the hand, lifted her up and healed her? At any rate such was the request he made. But Jesus did hot immediately go to the sick child; for He was never swayed by secondary considerations. Personal friendship did not hurry Him to the sick man at Bethany, and his sorrowing sisters (John 11:3; John 11:36). His movements then, as ever, were regulated as to time and place only by the glory of God which would accrue. In this case He who would pause in His progress at the cry of a blind beggar by the roadside was not to be induced to alter His plans because a chief of the synagogue knelt at His feet. The ruler might have supposed that the party of tax-gatherers at Levi's house might very well wait until his own case was dealt with. But Jehovah's perfect Servant was above all such motives of worldly policy. He Himself was learning obedience by the things He was suffering; here was an opportunity for Jairus also to learn a lesson of patience and submission to the will of God. And thus his sorrow and anxiety over his daughter would be turned to account in his spiritual development. He would become possessor of that inward peace which is the result of patient submission to the divine Will. For this priceless boon we shall all do well to pray: —

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of Thy peace."

Jesus then arose from the table of Levi, and accompanied the sorrow-stricken ruler. The disciples of the Lord went with Him, and a crowd of people also followed him and thronged Him as He passed through the narrow winding thoroughfares of Capernaum.

Studies In The Gospel Of Mark 28. — The Woman's Touch of Faith

1913 244 "And a woman1 which had2 an issue3 of blood, twelve years, and had suffered many things4 of many physicians, and had spent all that she had,5 and was nothing bettered,6 but rather grew worse,7 having heard the things8 concerning9 Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment.10 For she said, If I touch11 but his garments,12 I shall be made whole.13 And straightway14 the fountain of her blood15 was dried up; and she felt in16 her body that she was healed17 of her plague.18 And straightway19 Jesus, perceiving20 in himself that the power proceeding from him had gone forth, 21 turned him abouT1 in the crowd, and said, Who touched23 my garments?24 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging25 thee, and sagest thou, Who touched me? And he looked26 round about to see her that had done

this thing. But the woman fearing27 and trembling, knowing what had been done in her,28 came and fell down29 before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole;30 go in peace, and be whole31 of thy plague32" (Mark 5:25-34, R.V.).

1 "certain woman," J.N.D., T.S.G.

2 "had had," J.N.D.; "had been in," T.S.G.

3 "flux," J.N.D., T.S.G.

4 "much under," J.N.D.; "undergone much at the hands of," T.S.G.

5 "everything she had," J.N.D.; "her all," McC.; "all her means," T.S.G.

6 "had found no advantage from it," J.N.D; "was nothing profited," McC. ; "was in no way bettered," T.S.G.

7 "had got worse," J.N.D.; "grown worse," McC.; "became worse," T.S.G.

8 "the things," omitted by J.N.D., McC., T.S.G.

9 "of," McC.; "about," T.S.G.

10 "clothes," J.N.D.; "outer garment," McC.; "mantle," T.S.G.

11 "shall touch," J.N.D.

12 "but his clothes," J.N.D.; "if it be but his outer garment," McC.; "even his clothes," T.S.G.

13 "healed," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved," McC.

14 "immediately," J.N.D., McC.; "forthwith," T.S.G.

15 "her fountain of blood," J.N.D.; "the issue of her blood," T.S.G.

16 "knew in," J.N.D.; "was made aware by," T.S.G.

17 "cured," J.N.D., T.S.G.

18 "from the scourge," J.N.D.; "of the scourge," T.S.G.

19 "immediately," J.N.D., "at once," T.S.G.

20 "knowing," J.N.D.; "made aware," T.S.G.

21 "the power that had gone out of him," J.N.D.; "his healing virtue was gone out," McC.; "of the power that had issued from him," T.S.G.

22 "turning round.," J.N.D.; "turned round," T.S.G.

23 "has touched," J.N.D.

24 "outer garment," McC.

25 "pressing on," J.N.D.; "thronging," McC.; "closely thronging," T.S.G.

26 "was looking," T.S.G.

27 "frightened," J.N.D.; "afraid," McC., T.S.G.

28 "what had taken place in her," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "that which was done unto her," Mc.100.

29 "threw herself," T.S.G.

30 "healed thee," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "saved thee," Mc.100.

31 "well," J.N.D.; "sound," T.S.G, 32 "scourge," J.N.D., McC. On the way through Capernaum to the house of Jairus the Lord was approached by a weak and ailing woman who sought and found healing for her body by secretly touching the border of His garment. How plenteous and overflowing is the mercy found in Him! It is like the fruitful bough of Joseph, "whose branches run over the wall." The Spirit of power and mercy in Him was "like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:2-3). The Touch and the Push This woman came to Jesus, so far as the Gospel narratives inform us, without any intervention on the part of other persons, and she thus affords an instance of what simple, direct, personal faith in Christ may effect. Her case was sad and desperate, as well as distressing (Leviticus 15:19-27). Her issue of blood had continued for twelve years without relief, though she had spent all her living upon physicians. They took their fees and she took their potions, yet she was nothing bettered but rather grew worse. The continual drain upon her life’s blood weakened and dispirited her, but the news of the marvellous works of healing wrought by the Prophet of Nazareth awakened new hopes within her. She resolved to seek His face, and implore His mercy. But the crowds that beset Jesus and followed Him thwarted this purpose. Besides how inopportune the moment! Who was she to hinder the Master when upon such an urgent errand on behalf of the ruler of the synagogue?

There are usually difficulties and obstructions of some sort in the way of a needy person seeking the aid of the Saviour. But faith is only quickened and strengthened by the presence of obstacles. And it was so in this case. Seeing that a formal interview with the Teacher was impracticable under the circumstances, surely something less would suffice. She believed that the plenitude of His power was such, that the slightest contact with Him would be sufficient for her recovery. So the woman kept on saying in her heart, "If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be made whole." She knew that, according to the Mosaic prescription, when a sacrifice was brought to Jehovah for an unclean Israelite, the offerer laid his hands upon the animal, and it was acceptable and vicarious for him. In some inexplicable manner the virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice was communicated to him who touched it. She determined therefore to touch Jesus in order that the power of healing so abundant in Him might be communicated to her.

Thus faith wrought within the heart of this suffering woman, and she, weak as she was, struggled through the crowd, and, coming up be hind Jesus, she contrived to touch the fringe of His garment, edged, as probably it was, with its riband of blue (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12). The heavenly mercy which had come down to earth at once responded to the touch of faith. Immediately she was healed and felt within herself an accession of new life and strength. And profiting by her example, many others were subsequently encouraged to seek to obtain

blessing in a similar manner, and they, like her, did not seek in vain (Matthew 14:36). For it was the day of grace now, not of law. Sinai, the symbol of that great legal system instituted under Moses, affrighted the people of Israel. There was fire and darkness and tempest to deter any that would approach; and then there was death in a touch, for if so much as a beast touched the mount it was to be stoned (Exodus 19:10-13; Hebrews 12:18-21). But Jehovah set no such bounds to mount Zion. Grace said, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). Who Touched Me? This miraculous recovery from a wasting disease obtained by the woman in a surreptitious manner did not, however, escape the perception of Jesus. He knew (as He knew epignous] the unuttered thoughts of the Pharisees and scribes, and as He knew all things) that power had gone out of Him. His service, therefore, was not a blind mechanical distribution of merciful power. The power truly went forth from Him,* but with it was blended love and interest and compassion. And this constituted a revelation of God to man, for it exemplifies in a striking manner the operation of the providential powers of God in the terrestrial creation. The mighty forces of nature in their silent and systematic movements do not form a gigantic mechanism merely but are directed and controlled by divine love and wisdom to the accomplishment of the purposes of divine beneficence.

{*We read that He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38).} The Lord who responded so readily to the touch of faith by an act of healing did not require for His own information the answer to His question, "Who touched my clothes? He inquired primarily, we may suppose, for the instruction and enlightenment of the woman herself; secondarily, for the benefit of His disciples and the attendant crowd; and finally, for the profit of all readers of Holy Writ. The disciples viewed the question of the Lord from the standpoint of "common sense," which is always a source of deception in divine things. Faith, not common sense, was certainly required in this case where the whole of the circumstances were the reverse of "common." They ignored the unique personality of the Questioner, or Peter and the others would not have said in that deprecatory manner, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus distinguished between the touch of faith and the jostle of idle curiosity. It has been said, "Flesh presses; faith touches." The multitude were there to hear or see some new thing. They were impelled by the common craze for novelty. Such a superficial desire could be satisfied for the moment by any unusual event — by the occult wonders of Simon Magus, by some strange natural phenomenon, by a fairy tale, by anything out of the common. But the touch of the woman was of a different order. The contact of her finger gave expression to a deeply-felt need for the interference of Jehovah’s mercy on her behalf. It also expressed the confidence that the requisite mercy of Jehovah was available for her in the person of Jesus, and nowhere else in this sad and disappointing world. The Lord recognised what motive impelled the woman to touch His robe, and He said with gentle gracious dignity in answer to the harsh ungracious remarks of His followers, "Someone did touch me; for I perceived that power went forth from me" (Luke 8:46). "This was not a result of His taking careful note of peculiarities of action and character manifested to the eye by those around Him, but of His perceiving in His spirit and knowing in Himself the unuttered reasonings and volitions which were taking shape, moment by moment, within the secret souls of men, just as clearly as He saw physical facts not ordinarily appreciated except by sensuous perception." The woman began now to enter upon the second stage of her lesson. She had learned the Saviour’s omnipotent mercy; she was now to learn His omniscient love. "She saw she was not hid." In the language of the Psalmist — Whither should she flee from His Spirit? Adam

and Eve under the trees of Eden learned the futility of seeking to conceal themselves from the divine eye, and so did Nathanael under the fig tree. David’s psalm expresses the same experience in lofty diction (Psalms 139:1-24). The friends of Jesus learn His attribute of omniscience to their blessing, but His adversaries to their shame and confusion. Of the latter many will, in a coming day, call to the mountains and rocks in their terror, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). But how salutary for the followers of Jesus to live habitually in the consciousness that His eye is ever upon them. It was in this consciousness that conscience-stricken Peter was ultimately brought to rest, when he confessed to the Lord, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). The woman, flushed with the joy of a wondrous healing, saw now that Jesus was aware of her cure, and that His question, though couched in general terms such as might apply to any in that crowd, was addressed especially to her and indeed to no one else. She came therefore to the Lord to confess to Him what she had done, and she went "fearing and trembling." For she now knew she had done a bold thing, and she feared what the consequences might be. In the fact of His knowledge of her secret act she had gained a glimpse of the divine majesty of Him whose garment she had touched. And while He was so holy and so mighty, how unworthy was she! Was she not, according to the prescription of Jehovah’s sacred law, a polluted and defiled woman (Leviticus 15:19)?* Had not the stern prohibition gone forth that if either man or beast touch the mountain of Jehovah’s holiness, it should be stoned (Exodus 19:12-13)? Jehovah who came down on mount Sinai of old was now in Capernaum; and the woman, as she came to Jesus, feared and trembled, for though she had become the vessel of His power, she knew not, as yet, the word of His grace — that He was there in the midst of the poor of His land to heal and bless and save.

{*A Pharisee would have regarded her action as an intolerable insult. Witness the scornful comment of Simon upon the conduct of another woman: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him; for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39),}

She who had stolen behind Him to gain her blessing, now fell down before Him and told Him all the truth. And the disciples of Jesus heard her declare "for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately." The faith in her heart was thus supplemented by the confession of her lips in the hearing of all present. And this combination of faith and confession, illustrated in this instance, is, in the Epistles, enforced doctrinally as the twofold requisite from man for his blessing through the gospel: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:10-11). The Reward of Confession

1913 259 It was not the purpose of the Lord Jesus that His mighty works should be done "in a corner," but openly and before all the people. Accordingly the public confession of the woman was made. She then received the additional and inestimable benefit of the assuring words of the Lord addressed personally to her. She learned from His own lips that her application to Him for healing was not unwelcome, and that His gift of mercy was not made grudgingly but with His whole heart. Her fears were calmed and her soul set at rest. And the words spoken were such as would be her inward strength and stay when the Messiah was no longer present. The Lord said to her:

1. Daughter, be of good comfort, 2. Thy faith hath made thee whole (saved thee);

3. Go in peace, 4. Be whole from thy plague. The last phrase occurs only in Mark. The tense (perfect) of the verb employed was a guarantee for the future. It indicated the thorough nature of the cure and precluded a recurrence of her trouble. The words implied, "Be permanently whole [hale, healthy] from thy plague."

(1) The considerate words of comfort used by the Lord are illustrative of that tender compassion of His, ever in active exercise towards those who sought Him in their distress. He knew the intense mental depression which accompanies protracted physical suffering, and especially so when, as in this case, the disease repeatedly baffles human attempts to cure. The heart is sick with oft-deferred hope, and the debilitated frame is further weakened by the added burden of nervous anxiety and worry. But while "heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop, a good word maketh it glad" (Proverbs 12:25).

There are many instances of the Lord removing such feelings of distress by His word. To the trembling woman before Him, whether her fears were the indirect result of the wasting disease from which she had now been freed, or whether they arose from her apprehension that she had offended the Great Physician, He addressed her with the words, both tender and strength-giving, "Daughter, be of good comfort." The term of address, "Daughter," recalls His words to the weeping women who bewailed and lamented Him as He was led to the place of crucifixion. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28). To the bowed woman, He said, not "Daughter," but, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity," though He also spoke of her, referring to her faith, as "a daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:12; Luke 13:16). But this occasion is the only recorded one on which the Lord used this title of "Daughter" simply, and it soothed the woman's tremors and fears. She caught a glimpse of that "perfect love which casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

(2) It is here recorded for the first time in the course of this Gospel that faith is the means of obtaining blessing. There is no encouragement of any superstitious veneration for the tassel of His robe which was touched. The Lord declared to the woman in the hearing of all that the faith within her had saved her, or made her whole. Her cure was not a right which she could have claimed as an Israelite, but the blessing was accorded to her because she had exercised faith in Jehovah's Servant. This faith of hers the Lord undoubtedly "saw," as He did that of the paralytic and his friends (Mark 2:5); only in this case by His words to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee," He made it clear to all concerned that faith on the part of the recipient is essential whether the salvation is physical, or moral as in the case of another woman (Luke 7:50). The report of the sayings and doings of the Prophet of Nazareth had spread abroad throughout Galilee, but with little effect upon the people generally. Isaiah might well ask in prophetic view of this time, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" But this woman had believed the report, for we read, "having heard the things concerning Jesus she came in the crowd behind and touched his garment." And having believed the report, the strength of the arm of Jehovah for healing was revealed to her and in her (Isaiah 53:1).

Faith in the heart may express itself in a variety of ways — in importunate earnestness, like Abraham pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah, or in patient endurance of suffering, as in the cases of Job and Joseph. Here the mute appeal of the woman's touch shows how eloquent before God the very silence of faith may be. In like manner the dumb posture of Hannah did not escape the

pitying eye of Jehovah (1 Samuel 1:1-28). For it is with the heart man believes, whatever the mode in which faith expresses itself before man.

It is worth noticing that the word sozo, usually translated in the New Testament "save," is employed in its general sense of deliverance in regard to the healing of this woman in all three accounts: Matthew 9:21-22; Mark 5:28; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48. It is also applied to the restoration of the daughter of Jairus, Mark 5:23; Luke 8:50; to the healing of Bartimaeus, Mark 10:52, Luke 18:42; of the Gadarene demoniac, Luke 8:36; of the Samaritan leper, Luke 17:19; of many that touched Jesus, Mark 6:56; of the impotent man at the temple gate, Acts 4:9; of the cripple at Lystra, Acts 14:9. In these instances the Greek word is translated "made whole," or, "healed." The disciples, speaking to the Lord concerning Lazarus, also made use of the word, and in this passage it is rendered "do well," or, "recover": "If he sleep he shall do well" (John 11:12).

(3)The utterance by our Lord of this form of benediction, "Go in peace," is only recorded in one other instance in the Gospels, and there, as on this occasion, it is associated with the faith that saved. To the woman who sought the Lord in Simon the Pharisee’s house for the forgiveness of sins He said, as He did to this woman who came to Him for a temporal benefit, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). On account of this connection we are fairly entitled to regard these words as of greater significance than the ordinary farewell salutation of the East, such as we find in Exodus 4:18; Judges 18:6; 1 Samuel 1:17, 1 Samuel 20:13; 1 Samuel 20:42; 2 Kings 5:19; Acts 15:33. The Lord was infinitely above human conventionality in speech, such as James condemns (James 2:16). He had come to "ordain peace" for His people in the best and surest sense.

Peace, as it is here regarded, is an inward possession of the soul. It is the antithesis of fret and anxiety which, in its gravest forms, may arise within a person from the sense of guilt before God or from the fear of death. Divine assurance alone can dispel this anxiety; hence peace is the sequel of faith, and is associated with the mind and heart. Confidence and calmness are connected in the oft-quoted promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). And, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:7).

Here the woman who came to the Lord in fear and trembling is bidden to depart in peace. The Prince of peace bestowed His royal boon upon her whose spirit had been broken by sorrow of heart (Proverbs 15:13); while He, at the same time, proved Himself to be the Jehovah of prophecy giving first strength and then peace: "The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace" (Psalms 29:11).

(4) In the phrase already noted as peculiar to Mark’s Gospel, "Be permanently recovered from thy plague," we observe another of those minute touches which emphasise the special object of this Evangelist. Mark was inspired of God to show how thoroughly the divine Servant did His work. And it is in his Gospel therefore that it is recorded that the people said of Him, "He hath done all things well" (7: 37). The cure of this woman is an instance in point; hers was not a temporary relief but a complete deliverance from the disease which had afflicted her throughout the previous twelve years.

1913 276 "While he yet spake,1 they came from the ruler2 of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead:3 why troublesT1 thou the Master any further? But Jesus, not heeding5 the word spoken,6 saith unto the ruler7 of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe. And he suffered8 no man to follow with9 him, save Peter, and James and John the brother of James. And they come10 to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he beholdeth11 a tumult,12 and many13 weeping and wailing greatly.14 And when he was entered in,15 he saith unto them, Why make ye a tumult,16 and weep? the child is not dead,17 but sleepeth.18 And they laughed him to scorn.19 But he, having put10 them all forth, taketh21 the father of the child and her mother and them that were with him, and goeth in22 where the child was.23 And taking24 the child by the hand,25 he saith unto her, Talitha cumi;26 which is, being interpreted, Damsel,27 I say28 unto thee, Arise.29 And straightway30 the damsel rose up,31 and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway33 with a great amazement.32 And he charged them much34 that no man35 should know this; and he commanded36 that something37 should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:35-43, R.V.).

{1 "was yet speaking," J.N.D., T.S.G.

2 "chief," T.S.G.

3 "has died," J.N.D.

4 "worriest," McC; "dost thou give further trouble to," T.S.G.

5 "having heard," J.N.D.; "overhearing," McC., T.S.G.

6 "the saying as it was spoken," McC.; "the speech spoken," T.S.G.

7 "synagogue-chief," T.S.G.

8 "allowed," T.S.G.

9 "accompany," J.N.D., T.S.G.

10 "he comes," J.N.D.

11 "sees," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "seeth," McC.

12 "uproar," McC.; "stir," T.S.G.

13 "people," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "folk," McC.

14 "howling," McC.; "making great outcry," T.S.G.

15 "entering in," J.N.D.; "when he was come in," McC.; "on going in," T.S.G.

16 "Why be ye in an uproar," McC.; "Why are you making a stir," T.S.G.

17 "has not died," J.N.D.

18 "sleeps," J.N.D.; "is sleeping," T.S.G.

19 "derided him," J.N.D.; "jeered him," T.S.G.

20 "having turned out," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "when he had put," McC.

21 "takes with [him]," J.N.D.; "takes with him," T.S.G.

22 "enters in," J.N.D., McC.; "enters," T.S.G.

23 "lying" added, J.N.D.

24 "having laid hold of," J.N.D.; "laid hold of," McC.; "having grasped," T.S.G.

25 "the hand of the child," J.N.D., T.S.G.; "the child's hand," McC.

26 "koumi," J.N.D.; "coum," McC.; "kumi," T.S.G.

27 "Girl," T.S.G.

28 "bid," T.S.G.

29 "Rise," T.S.G.

30 "immediately," J.N.D.; "forthwith," T.S.G.

31 "arose," J.N.D.; "rose again," McC.

32 "astonished with great astonishment," J.N.D.

33 "straightway" omitted, J.N.D., T.S.G.

34 "strictly" added, McC.

35 "one," J.N.D., McC., T.S.G.

36 "desired," J.N.D.; "spike," McC.; "bade," T.S.G.

37 "there," McC.}

There had been what appeared to the impatient and distressed ruler many vexatious delays to the visit of Jesus to his house where his sick daughter lay. It would seem, as already noted, that Jairus* made two separate applications to Jesus before He acceded to the request and accompanied him. The crowd that gathered in the narrow streets — that multitude who, not knowing the law, were regarded by the rulers as accursed (John 7:49) — made progress slow and difficult. The episode of the healing of the woman appeared to be a further impediment in the way of the Master's mercy for him. And now while Jesus was pronouncing His final benison upon the woman (cp. Genesis 26:29) some arrived from the ruler's house with the sad tidings, anticipated but dreaded by him, that death had supervened. "Thy daughter is dead" was the message, closing, as he supposed, the last door of his hopes. He felt like Martha and Mary of Bethany, and might have expressed his feelings in their language, "Lord, if thou hadst been there, my daughter had not died."

{*Jairus sought the Lord himself on behalf of his daughter; Martha and Mary sent a message about Lazarus; but the mercy to the widow of Nain was unsought by her. So diverse are the channels of divine blessing!} In the estimation of the messenger* who delivered the message, the incident of the appeal to Jesus was of necessity closed. There now was no more to be done. "Thy daughter is

dead: trouble not the Teacher" (Luke). And as if the distracted father was seeking to attract the attention of Jesus while He continued speaking to the woman, some said to Jairus, "Why art thou still troubling the Teacher?"

{*Luke speaks of one messenger only, probably the chief; while Mark mentions some, including his companions. Though the Cushite only was sent to David to announce the death of Absalom, Ahimaaz accompanied him at his own request (2 Samuel 18:1-33.)}

They gave expression to what would be the practical matter-of-fact opinion of the populace, if not of the apostles also, "What could the prophet of Nazareth do when death had seized its prey?" Believing He could do nothing, they would trouble Him no further. But, as an old writer quaintly puts it: "Here were more manners than faith; Trouble not the Master.' Infidelity is all for care, and thinks every good work tedious. That which nature accounts troublesome is pleasing and delightful to grace. Is it any pain for a hungry man to eat? O Saviour, it was Thy meat and drink to do Thy Father's will; and His will was that Thou shouldest bear our griefs, and take away our sorrows. It cannot be Thy trouble which is our happiness that we must still sue to Thee." The Comforting Word to Jairus The rendering of the Revisers here, "But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken," etc., has been justly questioned, since it is in direct conflict with the context. Jesus did heed the word spoken to Jairus and spoke in reply to counteract it, as the verse shows. The verb, parakouo, translated "hear" in the Authorised Version, occurs also in Matthew 18:17, where it is rendered "neglect to hear." But in this connection (Mark 5:36) many scholars see sufficient ground for rendering it "over-hearing," as the Revisers have done in their margin, and McClellan in his translation. The general sense of the word seems to be that Jesus heard what the speaker did not intend He should hear, but He ignored the literal remark, and said what expressed His own purpose and allayed the anxiety of Jairus. Referring to this passage W. Kelly wrote, "It is doubtful whether the marginal 'overhearing' should not rather have taken the place of the Revisers' text, not 'heeding,' which would have suited if the Lord had said nothing. But He heeds the word spoken enough to bid the synagogue-ruler, "Fear not, only believe."* {*The Revised New Testament," Bible Treasury, Vol. 13. p. 301.} The Lord who prayed for Simon Peter that his faith might not fail in the hour of temptation and trial (Luke 22:32) also knew what untoward influence would be exercised upon Jairus by the tidings of the messengers and their abandonment of hope. "Perhaps the father's hope would have perished too and no room have been left for this miracle, faith, the necessary condition, being wanting, if a gracious Lord had not seen the danger, and prevented his rising unbelief. 'As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.' There is something very gracious in that as soon as.' The Lord spake upon the instant, not leaving any time for a thought of unbelief to insinuate itself into the father's mind, much less to utter itself from his lips, such as might have altogether stood in the way of a cure, but preoccupying him at once with words of encouragement and hope." In like manner He said to another father, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

Thus He strengthened the wavering faith in the ruler's heart by His word of comfort and assurance, "Fear not, only believe," adding, according to the narrative by Luke, "She shall be made whole." The Mourners Who Scoffed The Prince of Life passed onwards to the house of death. Mourners were already there, making a great tumult with their weeping and wailing. It is a divine injunction to "weep with those that weep," and examples are not wanting in scriptural history. The house of, Joseph and his brethren mourned for the death of Jacob with a "very great and sore lamentation"

at Abel-mizraim (Genesis 50:10-11). Job’s three friends wept for him in his sorrow, with loud voices, rending their mantles and sprinkling dust on their heads, and then sat with him in silence for seven, days (Job 2:1-13). Jeremiah lamented the death of king Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:25), and also for the desolation of Jerusalem and of the temple in the book of his Lamentations.

These examples possessed sincerity, but genuine mourning which arises from neighbourly sympathy became perverted into shallow professionalism. Lamentation degenerated into an art, in which some acquired eminence by reason of their skill (Amos 5:16). Mourning women held themselves in readiness to come and take up a wailing for the departed (Jeremiah 9:17-18), sometimes expressing themselves in elegies (2 Chronicles 35:25). The Lord who was Himself ever tender and gracious to the distressed and afflicted rebuked the display of perfunctory grief over the daughter of Jairus. Entering the court of the ruler’s house, He said to the hirelings, "Why make ye this tumult and weep? The damsel is not dead but sleepeth." This severity of the Lord was directed against their hypocrisy and sham, for their sympathy was not sincere like that, for instance, of which the Psalmist wrote, when he says, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth I afflicted my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother: I bowed down mourning as one that bewaileth his mother" (Psalms 35:13-14, R.V.). The words of the Lord drew forth only laughter and derision from the ignorant and insolent attendants. In the house of the ruler of the synagogue there would be an exceptional number of these owing to his rank, and the menials would be more insolent to the prophet of Nazareth because of the contrasted social position of their employer. His words, "The damsel is not dead," came into direct conflict with their professional knowledge, and they had no faith in Him nor reverence for His sayings to counterbalance His seeming contradiction of fact. Hence the Lord’s dignified reproof of their clamour only awakened in them a sense of the grotesque coupled with some malice at His interference; and they laughed Him to scorn.* It was the laughter of folly, as that of Abraham and Sarah was the laughter of incredulity (Genesis 17:17; Genesis 18:12).

{*The word used here in Mark (katagelao), is used also by the other Synoptists, but it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is found in the Septuagint.}

Alas, that it fell within the scope of the appointed sufferings of the Messiah to be exposed to such ridicule from man. But it was written of Him, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn" (Psalms 22:7), and the climax in the fulfilment of this scripture was reached at the cross. He was the Servant whom man despised and the nation abhorred (Isaiah 49:7).

It is profitable to study in the New Testament records the variety of forms in which man exhibited his scorn and contempt for the patient and gentle Saviour. Some passages are collected below. We read that men

(1) mocked (empaizo) Him, Matthew 20:19; Matthew 27:29; Matthew 27:31; Matthew 27:41; Mark 10:34; Mark 15:20; Mark 15:31; Luke 18:32; Luke 22:63; Luke 23:11; Luke 23:36.

(2) reviled Him (blasphemeo), Matthew 12:31; Matthew 27:39; Mark 3:28; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65; Luke 23:39. (oneidizo), Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32. (loidoreo), John 9:28; 1 Peter 2:23.

(3) derided Him (ekmukterizo.), Luke 16:14; Luke 23:35.

(4) spoke evil of Him (kakologeo) Mark 9:39.

(5) spoke against Him (antilego; "contradiction"), Hebrews 12:3.

(6) wagged the head at Him (kineo T. K.), Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29.

(7) laughed Him to scorn (katagelao) Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53. The perusal of the above passages will induce the sad and humbling reflection that divine goodness when manifested in the Incarnate Son of God became an object of malicious mirth and insensate mockery to all classes of men. As the Psalmist foretold, He was the song of the drunkards, and those that sat in the gate spoke against. Him (Psalms 69:12). Yet Eternal Love triumphed over all such obduracy and hatred, and the testimony for God shone ever brightly, and never more so than amid the gross moral darkness displayed at Calvary.

"'Mid sin, and all corruption, Where hatred did abound, Thy path of true perfection Shed light on all around.

O’er all, Thy perfect goodness Rose blessedly divine;

Poor hearts oppressed with sadness Found ever rest in Thine." The Witnesses The multitude which had followed Jesus through the town were not allowed by Him to approach the house of Jairus, which indeed was already occupied by another crowd. The Lord having entered the house put forth the noisy mourners, as Peter afterwards did in the case of Dorcas. They, accustomed through their ill-favoured calling to the sight of the dead, knew that the damsel was certainly dead, and it was beyond them to understand that what was death to man was sleep to the Lord. They were quite out of place where the Quickener of the dead was, and accordingly they were ejected, like the chaffering traders from the temple-courts at Jerusalem. Not all the apostles even were admitted to the death-chamber; three only were selected — Peter, James and John. The raising of the widow’s son and of Lazarus was done before the eyes of the public. In this case the dead child was within doors, and therefore the circumstances must necessarily be more private. The three disciples chosen were adequate to render testimony to the fact of the resurrection. For while two witnesses were sufficient to render evidence valid from a judicial standpoint, three ensured an amplitude. Two witnesses, according to the Apocalypse, will be raised up to testify of imminent judgment (Revelation 11:1-19), but there are now three that bear witness in the world to the gospel of the grace of God — the Spirit, the water, and the blood (1 John 5:8). The father and mother were present also; for the Lord recognised the prior claims of natural affection. This feature is particularly prominent in connection with the miracles of the resurrection. Those raised by Him were this damsel, the only daughter of Jairus, twelve years old; the only son of his mother, and she a widow; and Lazarus the only brother of his two orphaned sisters. In each of these instances there were special reasons for the poignant grief of the bereaved. And now with what tender compassionate solicitude did the Blessed Master lead the grief-stricken parents into the presence of the silent dead, accompanied by the three wondering apostles. The number of the company was six, but this was quickly increased to seven, for, to the astonishment of the spectators, the little maid was brought back to the "land of the living." The Damsel Raised The Lord acted at once with simple directness. He took the child by the hand — a similar action is recorded in the restoration of Peter’s mother-in-law. He then called to her, saying, "Damsel, arise," Mark preserving the actual Aramaic words employed, "Talitha cumi."

There was an immediate response from the spirit-world. In the words of Luke, "her spirit came again." This is in accordance with the general phraseology of scripture wherein death connotes the departure of the soul and spirit from the body. Rachel, "as her soul was in departing," named her son Ben-oni (Genesis 35:18). Elijah prayed concerning the dead son of the widow of Zarephath, "Let this child's soul come unto him again" (1 Kings 17:21). Stephen at his stoning said,"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). The re-animated body of the daughter of Jairus rose up instantaneously, strengthened as well as vivified, for she was able to walk about, as Mark states with the detail characteristic of his style. She was twelve years old, and therefore able to walk in the ordinary course of nature, but here the action demonstrated that her restoration was as perfect as it was immediate.

It is instructive to note that the Lord in this instance, as in others, recognised the identity of the person with the body. He took the child by the hand, and called to her, not to it, "Damsel, arise." At main He said to the body on the bier, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." At the grave in Bethany, He said, "Lazarus, come forth." This is also the scriptural usage elsewhere: thus in the Acts we read that "devout men carried Stephen to his burial" (Acts 8:2). And at the appointed moment the Lord will come with a shout (that is, a call of relationship) and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18); according to the Lord's own words, those that are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28-29). The simple and dignified conduct of the Lord on this occasion is in striking contrast with that of the Old Testament prophets in the performance of similar miracles. The Lord spoke and acted in His own right, while the prophets had to look above with earnest fervour for the power that was not in themselves to raise the dead. Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD . . . . And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:21-22). So also Elisha, after prayer, "lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (2 Kings 4:34-35). How different was the procedure of the Lord: taking the child by the hand, He said, "Talitha cumi," and immediately she arose. The Lord having restored the damsel's life by His own inherent power, directed the parents to give her food. For the life restored needed the usual means of sustenance, and it was in their power to supply this, no miracle being required. The Lord expects us to do what we are able of ourselves to do, and only exercises His own might where our impotence is displayed.

Eating a meal afforded, in a simple manner, further evidence of the reality of this resurrection, and such a test the Lord applied in His own case (Luke 24:41-43).

Reticence Imposed The small company of beholders was amazed with a great amazement at this miracle. Giving life to the dead was a climax to the mighty miracles and wonders and signs wrought by Jesus. The public raising of the widow's son probably preceded this case in point of time, and with it constituted the two witnessing works of this kind in Galilee, the third of these miracles being performed at Bethany in Judea. The Lord charged them (presumably those present in the room where the damsel was) that no one should know this. The injunction seems to be in the sense that they were not to set themselves to spread the news of the miracle. It could not imply that the raising of the child was to remain a secret; for the fact of the dead daughter of a public

personage such as J airus coming back to life could scarcely be hidden. A similar injunction laid on the disciples by the Lord on another occasion is recorded in this Gospel, and in that case the context throws some light upon the reason for this prohibition. After the Transfiguration, speaking to the same three witnesses, the Lord "charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9). This restriction was removed after His own resurrection, for He said to them, "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Accordingly at Pentecost Peter testified in Jerusalem to the Jews of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you" (Acts 2:22). In like manner Peter testified to Cornelius of the same wonderful works (Acts 10:38).

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the apostles had not learned the secondary value which miracles have in the dealings of God with men, as compared with the moral and spiritual power of the word of the gospel. The Lord had to rebuke the exhilaration of the Seventy because they found themselves able to work miracles (Luke 10:17-20). Here He restrained their natural impulse to spread the news of this marvellous work of His. The Sign-Character of this Miracle The raising of the daughter of Jairus, together with the episode of the healing of the woman in the crowd, forms a further illustration of the character the service of the Messiah would and did assume in consequence of His rejection by the nation at large. In the fourth chapter He is set forth, by parables, as the Sower; in this as the Healer and Life-giver, by miracles. And while He demonstrated, in the country of the Gerasenes, His power over Satan who had the power of death, He showed, in the house of Jairus, that one actually dead was not beyond His salvation. The dead damsel was a true figure of the daughter of Zion when her King came to her. A few "babes and sucklings" cried, Hosanna, when Messiah came to Jerusalem in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, but the nation, through the mouth of its leaders, solemnly denied Him in the presence of Pilate, and declared, "We have no king but Caesar." Israel, knowing not the anointed Son of David, was like Nabal of old, whose "heart died within him, and he became as a stone." This figure of death applied to the Jews is a stronger metaphor than that of the unfruitful soil employed in the preceding parable. Indeed no more impressive term is used throughout scripture to describe the hopeless spiritual condition of the people, beyond all human remedy as it was. But the Lord was able to restore even in such a case as this. For this purpose He had come, and He was on His way to accomplish redemption for Israel. And during His progress to the house of death He was accessible to any needy person who had faith enough to touch Him as He passed by. But in a coming day all Israel shall be saved in accordance with divine promise. The Lord will yet bless the daughter of Zion, and will give life to His people, even though they be not only dead like the daughter of Jairus but in the grave like Lazarus. This figure of resurrection was applied by the prophets to the national restoration of the chosen people. Daniel spoke of the day when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). And Ezekiel prophesied still more precisely of the time of Israel’s future blessing, under the vision of the valley, full of dry bones which lived and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. This vision was explained to he a token of what Jehovah meant to do. He said to the people through the prophet, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:12). In the New Testament the apostle Paul used the same figure in connection with the same subject. Writing, in the Epistle to the Romans, of the setting aside of the children of

Israel, and of their future restoration, he says, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15).

30. — Rejection at Nazareth

1913 289 " And he went1 ouT1 from3 thence; and he cometh into4 his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath was come,5 he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him6 were astonished,7 saying, Whence hath this man these things?8 and, What is the wisdom that is given9 unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands?10 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Jude 1:11 and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended12 in him. And13 Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour,14 save15 in his own country, and among his own kin,16 and in his own house.17 And he could there do no mighty work,18 save19 that he laid20 his hands upon a few sick folk,21 and healed22 them. And he marvelled23 because24 of their unbelief" (6: 1-6 (R.V.).

{1 "departed," T.S.G.

2 "forth," McC.

3 omit "from," J.N.D.

4 "came to," J.N.D.; "cometh," McC.

5 "sabbath-day came," T.S.G.

6 "the many as they heard," McC.; omit "him," J.N.D.

7 "amazed," J.N.D.

8 "Whence come these things to this man?" T.S.G.

9 "hath been given," McC.

10 "and such miracles are being done through his hands," T.S.G.; "and such works of power are done by his hands," J.N.D., W.K.; "and the mighty works in such wise done by his hands," McC.

11 "Jude," McC.

12 "were stumbled," T.S.G.; "fell backward into a deadly snare," McC.

13 "But," J.N.D.

14 "despised," J.N.D., W.K.; "un-honoured," T.S.G.

15 "unless," T.S.G.

16 "kinsmen," J.N.D., W.K.

17 "household," T.S.G.; "home," McC.

18 "work of power," J.N.D. "miracle," T.S.G.

19 "except," T.S.G.

20 "laying," J.N.D.

21 "infirm persons," J.N.D., W.K.; omit "folk," T.S.G., McC.

22 "cured," T.S.G., McC.

23 "wondered," J.N.D.

24 "on account," T.S.G.} His Own Country

"And he went out from thence; and he cometh into his own country: and his disciples follow him." Nazareth was His country, His fatherland (patris), and is so called elsewhere in the Gospels (Matthew 13:54; Matthew 13:57; Luke 4:23-24; John 4:44). And Nazareth was a despised town or village in the despised province of Galilee. Remote from Jerusalem and Judah, it was in the most northerly part of those tribal districts of Israel which in the days of idolatrous Jeroboam revolted from the rule of David's royal line. In the prophecies of Isaiah it is described as Galilee of the nations — the land of darkness and the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:14-16).

There in the purpose of God Jesus was brought by Joseph. "Directed by God in a dream Joseph carries Him into Galilee whose inhabitants were objects of sovereign contempt to the Jews, as not being in habitual connection with Jerusalem and Judah — the land of Judea — the land of David, of the kings acknowledged by God, and of the temple, and where even the dialect of the language common to both betrayed (Matthew 26:73) their practical separation from that part of the nation which by the favour of God had returned from Babylon. Even in Galilee Joseph established himself in a place, the very name of which was a reproach to one who dwelt there, and a blot on his reputation." While people of Judea looked down upon Galilee, the people of Galilee looked down upon Nazareth. The "guileless" Nathanael, who was himself a Galilean, said of Jesus in mild contempt, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Men were loth to think that the northern province should be the scene of the ministry of the Prophet of Jehovah. Some said, "What! doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:41-42; John 7:52). But the speakers forgot that another scripture definitely foretold concerning Galilee of the Gentiles that its people who walked in darkness should see a great light — upon them the Light should shine (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Many prophets had testified that Messiah would become an object of scorn to men when they saw Him. And their united witness to this character of the King of Israel in His first presentation to the nation was fulfilled by the Lord's residence in Nazareth, the village of Joseph and Mary (Luke 1:26; Luke 2:39). This fulfilment is explicitly stated in the first Gospel: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:23).*

{*This is not the verbal quotation of a particular prophecy of the Old Testament, but the sense of many prophetic passages — that which was spoken, not by one prophet only, but by many, "by the prophets." compare Isaiah 53:1-12; Micah 5:1; and other texts.}

There in the darkest corner of a benighted province, the Lord remained for some thirty years till the time of His manifestation to Israel, increasing "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and

man." Of the events of those years we are not permitted to know more than a fragment (Luke 2:39-52). But who can tell whether we may not learn the marvellous story in a day which is to come? The Evangelist now records the visit of the Lord Jesus to His own "country" after a period of extended ministry in Capernaum and the neighbourhood. Mark had at the commencement of this Gospel showed that the public life of Jesus began from Nazareth: "And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan (Mark 1:9). The history then recounts the manifold service of the Prophet of Jehovah throughout Galilee, but especially in the favoured town of Capernaum, which was the scene of most of the Lord's miracles and parables mentioned in the early part of this Gospel. And it was to Capernaum that His kinsfolk, His mother and His brethren came to expostulate with Him in reference to His service (Mark 3:21; Mark 3:31-35). The Lord who on that occasion publicly repudiated the right of human relationship to interfere with Him as the Servant of Jehovah doing the will of Him that sent Him, now visits with His disciples the place where He was brought up. The former incident showed that He was above the human weakness that would swerve from perfect rectitude through the influence of natural ties. The latter proves the Lord's own consis tency with His own instruction to the delivered demoniac in Gadara, "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee" (Mark 5:19). The Lord did not neglect Nazareth, despised and debased though it was reputed among men to be. He went to His own, though His own received Him not.

Jesus of Nazareth (the Nazarene) is the term of reference to the Lord most frequently used by contemporary persons of all classes. He was so known not only in Galilee but also in Judea; for when the whole city of Jerusalem was stirred at His final visit, the multitude said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:11). This name too was the one used on the inscription placed in mockery by Pilate upon the cross: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." But if this title is one of dishonour and disrepute among men, angels are not ashamed to use it. The angel at the tomb said to Mary Magdalene, "Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6). To Jesus of Nazareth the apostles in their preaching testified expressly under this designation as the crucified but risen and glorified Messiah and Lord (Acts 2:22 : Acts 3:6; Acts 4:10; Acts 10:38). And more striking still, the exalted One Himself speaking from the glory to Saul of Tarsus, the bigoted Jew and haughty Pharisee, declared Himself under that name of reproach: "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest" (Acts 22:8). Was This a Second Visit? The Lord went to Nazareth on this occasion in His public capacity as the Prophet of Jehovah and the anointed King of Israel, accompanied by the apostles who had devoted themselves to His service. In this respect this official visit seems to be distinguished from the previous occasion when the Lord made the announcement of His Messiahship in the synagogue there (Luke 4:16-21). The two accounts, however, are supposed by some to have reference to the same event. And there are undoubtedly points of resemblance between the narratives as given by (a) Matthew and Mark, and (b) by Luke. For instance,

(1) In both cases, the words of our Lord uttered in the synagogue excite the astonishment and envy of the townsfolk of Nazareth.

{2) In both cases the Lord cites the same proverb, viz., "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country."

(3) In both cases allusion is made by the audience to the humble origin of the parentage of Jesus. But there are differences certainly as striking as these resemblances, among which are the following: —

(1) In one case the Lord is alone (Luke); in the other He is accompanied by His disciples (Matt., Mark).

(2) The proverb as recorded by Matthew and Mark has the added reference to His kindred and to His house: "No prophet is acceptable in his own country" (Luke 4:24); "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57); "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

(3) In one case His life is threatened (Luke). In the other case, after marvelling at the unbelief He heals a few persons before His departure (Matt., Mark).

(4) In one case He left Nazareth to go to Capernaum (Luke); in the other He left Nazareth to go round the villages teaching (Matt., Mark). The exact chronology of events of the Gospels is a matter of minor importance, and in many cases must remain an open question. But here the records seem to point with sufficient distinctness to two separate visits to Nazareth. The similarities enumerated above are such as might naturally occur in connection with His ministry in the synagogue there on successive occasions. A parallel case in the Gospels is that of the cleansings of the temple-courts at Jerusalem by the Lord, John recording the one at the beginning and the Synoptics that at the close of His ministry.

Sabbath Service in Nazareth

1913 308 It was the practice of the Lord to teach and to preach the word in the synagogues where the Jews habitually assembled (John 18:20) upon the sabbath. The fact of the people coming together in this manner afforded an opportunity of placing the truth before many at once, and of this opportunity the Lord continually availed Himself (Matthew 4:23; Matthew 12:9; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:44). It was His "custom" to do so (Luke 4:16). By this service in the word of Jehovah on the seventh day the Servant-Prophet most truly did the will of Him that sent Him, and most effectually honoured and observed the sabbath. Such a spirit was enjoined in the prophecies of Isaiah: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, and honourable, and shalt honour it, not doing thine, own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD" (Isaiah 58:13-14). In none was this fulfilled in the degree that it was in. Him who said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." His ministry to others in word as here and in deed as elsewhere was a perfect observance of the holy day and also the occasion of His own ineffable joy arising from the accomplishment of the Father’s will in spite of the unbelief with which His service was received by man. The audience in the synagogue at Nazareth was "astonished." Apparently the amazement was not only at what the Lord Jesus taught but also at the mariner in which He taught it; for He "taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). Those who were present knew Joseph and Mary, and Jesus was to them as "a root out of a dry ground." They had observed Jesus as He grew from boyhood to manhood. And they would not suffer one they knew so well to teach them. Where was His authority? Who made Him a teacher? How knoweth this man letters? (cp. John 7:15; Matthew 21:23; Mark 11:28). What was the wisdom

given to Him? Why were such mighty works wrought by His hands? Was He not the carpenter, and the son of a carpenter? They knew His brothers, and were not His sisters in their midst? The Stone of Stumbling The inhabitants of Nazareth were destitute of belief in the Lord. The evangelist says, "They were stumbled in him." It had come upon them already as it was quickly coming upon both the houses of Israel, for the national stumbling had been foretold. The Lord of hosts was in the midst of the nation even then, in accordance with Isaiah's prediction, as a sanctuary for those who would come to Him. But He was there also "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." And many would "stumble thereon and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken" (Isaiah 8:13-15). The Stone of Israel was in lowly form then, and the proud Pharisees stumbled at Him and His sayings (Matthew 15:12), but He was soon to be exalted and to become the headstone of the corner (Psalms 118:22). In the day of His glory Messiah will be "marvellous" in the eyes of His people, though in His humiliation they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. They will be a humble people then and the stumbling-block will be removed, and they will find that the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity dwells also with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit (Isaiah 57:14-15). And then will be brought about the full accomplishment of the prophecy of aged Simeon spoken to Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). The unbelief at Nazareth was therefore the precursor of the unbelief of the nation which delivered Him to the Gentiles to be crucified. The builders thought they knew the Stone well, and it did not please them, and they rejected it.

We may find this hostile spirit foreshadowed in the historical types of Messiah. Was it not so foreshadowed in the house of Jacob? God communicated visions of his coming power and wisdom to the elder son of Rachel. This was offensive to his brethren. "Shalt thou," they said, "reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they envied Joseph, and hated him for his dreams and his words. Did not the same evil spirit animate the hearts of the brethren of David when he spoke of the dishonour which the name of Jehovah was suffering from the vaunts of Goliath the idol-worshipper? They hated him, and their anger was kindled against him for his words: Why earnest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" The sons of Jesse stumbled at the stumbling-stone; they were not prepared to accept that their shepherd brother was the anointed of Jehovah though the prophet Samuel had declared it. Thus the proverb was true then also: neither a king nor a prophet is accepted in his own country and among his own kin.

Mary's Unbelieving Household The human imagination in poetry and art has in its retrospect woven many sensuous legends around the private life of our Lord. But scripture is strikingly reticent upon this subject. Where so many holy mysteries are thrown open for our learning, such a reservation should be regarded as a warning to us to avoid any intrusion into what is thus guarded. The Spirit of God makes some few but brief references in the Gospels to the early days of our Lord which "were spent in the physical and mental growth of the true humanity which He had assumed." But the general tone of the allusions throughout the Gospels to Mary and her family suggests that their attitude towards Jesus as the Messianic King, and Saviour was one of incredulity if not of actual hostility. Mary in her canticle of praise as we have it in Luke (1: 46-55) expressed her confidence in the immediate coming of Him who was God her Saviour, but this seems subsequently to have been overshadowed somewhat. Her faith diminished like that of the austere

prophet of the Highest who testified, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," but afterwards sent from prison to Jesus his depressed inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The humble guise and ways of the Lord Jesus seem to have been to Mary and to John the Baptist as well as to the mass the stumbling-block, and their early visions of His majesty and dominion and earthly power all faded into dimness, if not into obscurity. On this occasion the lack of interest on the part of Mary and her household appears to have been cited by the men of Nazareth as evidence against the divine claims of the Master. They said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and J ores and Jude and Simon? and are. not his sisters here with us?" And in another connection we are told definitely that His brethren, whose names are all so strikingly patriarchal, did not believe on Him (John 7:5). The Lord’s words in the synagogue therefore created great astonishment among the audience by their wisdom, but His lowly origin and His poor relations confounded them, and they "fell backward into a deadly snare." Their inconsistency illustrates how ill men reason when they lack faith. They could see there was nothing in the household of Mary, with all of whom they were well acquainted, to account for the extraordinary nature of the ministry of Jesus, but they failed to seek a divine origin. They could see His power was not derived from man, but they would not see it was derived from heaven.

Such misunderstanding arising among His own and developing into hatred and persecution was foretold by the Spirit of prophecy: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6). But though this detraction sprang not from strangers, but from those who might rank as "familiar friends" the pain of it was borne by our Lord with the utmost patience and without retaliation. He looked not to men, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously, as it was written again: "A man’s enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; nix God will hear me "(Mark 7:6-7). But Jesus had come to bless men, and unbelief could not altogether prevent the accomplishment of this work. It might diminish the stream of blessing for a time or divert its channels, because faith is essential to its outflow. "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief." In a future day the righteousness which is by faith will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; for the just shall live by faith. But now the unbelief of Nazareth was as phenomenal in its nature as the faith of the Roman centurion, and Jesus marvelled at both (Matthew 8:10).

31. — The Twelve Commissioned

1913 353 "And he went round about1 the villages2 teaching. And he called3 unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by4 two and two; and he gave them authority5 over the unclean spirits; and he charged6 them that they should take nothing for their journey,7 save a staff only; no bread, no wallet,8 no money in their purse;9 but to go shod10 with sandals: and, said Hebrews 11:1-40 put not on two coats.12 And he said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide13 till ye depart thence.14 And whatsoever place15 shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them.16 And they went out,17 and preached that men18 should repent. And they cast out many devils,19 and anointed with oil many that were sick,20 and healed21 them "(Mark 6:6-13, R.V.).

{1 Omit "about," J.N.D.; T.S.G.

2 Add "in a circuit," J.N.D.

3 "calls," J.N.D.; T.S.G.; "calleth," McC.

4 "out" instead of "forth by," J.N.D.; T.S.G.; McC.

5 "power," J.N.D.; T.S.G.

6 "commanded," J.N.D.; "gave them a charge," T.S.G.

7 "for the way," J.N.D.; "for travel," T.S.G.

8 "no scrip, no bread," J.N.D.; "no wallet, no bread," W.K.

9 "belt," J.N.D.; "pocket," McC.

10 "be shod," J.N.D., T.S.G.

11 Omit "said he," J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

12 "body-coats," J.N.D.; "shirts," McC.

13 "remain," J.N.D.; "stay," T.S.G.

14 "go thence," McC.

15 "whosoever," or "as many as," many authorities read so, see J.N.D.'s note, and Burgon.

16 Most authorities add here as in the A.V. nearly, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city."

17 "forth," J.N.D., T.S.G., McC.

18 "they," J.N.D. "people," T.S.G.

19 "demons," J.N.D., T.S.G.

20 "infirm," J.N.D.; "sick folk," T.S.G.

21 "cured," T.S.G., McC.} The reiterated rebuff which the Lord received at Nazareth did not deter Him from continuing His service. In unabated diligence He went on with His work, going round the Galilean towns and villages teaching. This Gospel throws into special prominence the zealous activities of the Servant of Jehovah. At the same time it shows that the end of His labour, judged from the common standpoint of human life, was not such as is usually seen in the careers of busy public men. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Proverbs 22:29). The Lord stood before kings truly, but He stood before them not for reward, but for unjust condemnation. From the outset He knew that He was going on to be "numbered with the transgressors"; but He shunned no man, standing in lowly submission before the obscure men of Nazareth to serve even them — only they could not endure Him.

These men of Nazareth were full of unbelief, and "where there was this unbelief, our Lord would not remove it by dazzling feats of power, because there would have been no moral worth in a

result so produced. He had given already abundant signs to unbelief; but men had not profited by them, neither was the word that He spake mixed with faith in them that heard it. The consequence was that He ’could there do no mighty work’; as here only it is recorded — yes, of the Man before whom no power of Satan, no disease of man, nothing above or around or beneath could prove the smallest difficulty. But God’s glory, God’s will governed all; and the display of perfect power was in perfect lowliness of obedience.

"Therefore this Blessed One could there do no mighty work. It is needless to say that it was no question of power as to Himself. It was not in any wise that His saving arm was shortened "not that there was no virtue in Him any longer, but there was the lovely blending of the moral glorifying of God with all that was wrought for man.

"In other words, we have not here the mere setting forth of the power of Jesus, but the gospel of His ministry. Therefore it is a weighty part of this, that because of unbelief He could do no mighty work there. He was really serving God "and if man only is seen, not God, we may wonder that He could do no mighty work there. But what at first sight seems strange, the moment you take it in connection with the object of God in what He is revealing, becomes striking, plain and instructive." The Twelve Summoned for Active Service

During, or at the conclusion of this Galilean circuit, the Lord called the twelve to Him, and formally despatched them in various directions for the work of preaching. They had hitherto been "with Him" to learn from His own lips the nature and character of His teaching. Thus we read that He "went about through the cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God; and with him the twelve" (Luke 8:1). This companionship with the Master was specified in the original terms of their apostolate. The record of their call is that the Lord "appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons "(Mark 3:14-15).

Mark accordingly shows how the chosen band accompanied the Master and how they were instructed by Him in the things of the kingdom of God, set out in parables which He afterwards expounded to them (chap. 4), while they were also made witnesses of His power over the elements of nature (4: 35-41) and over unclean "spirits and disease, and even over death (chap. 5). This comprised their training for service. At the fountainhead they learned what they were to preach, and, more important still, what a transcendent power was behind the ministry of the kingdom to make it effectual. The discipline of the inward man for days of suffering and disappointment is not noted here as elsewhere. The immediate object of their mission on this occasion was to announce the gospel of the kingdom of God — to make known what they had seen and what they had heard. And this feature of personal acquaintance must, of necessity, characterise all divine testimony (1 John 1:1). The twelve disciples were now sent forth by the Lord in twos, Mark alone recording this arrangement. The lists of the names of the apostles are arranged in pairs (Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16), and this dual arrangement may therefore indicate the order adopted by the Lord in sending them to preach. At any rate two ensured mutual help and adequate testimony. As the Lord’s purpose was to send them to preach, so it was to bestow upon them power over demons (Mark 3:15). They were able to exhibit the credentials of apostles — "signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Corinthians 12:12). They were able to produce marvellous acts which were samples of the powers of the age to come." They were sent

into the domain of the prince of this world to announce the imminence of the kingdom of Jehovah and His anointed; and in the commission for this service the Lord showed His divine power and Godhead by bestowing upon His followers authority over the demon-servants of Satan. A mere man could never delegate to others such power over unclean spirits; but Jesus possessed this authority Himself (Mark 1:27), and moreover imparted it to the twelve.

Personal Directions The Lord gave the apostles precise directions with regard to their outfit for this travelling mission. Their preparations were to be marked by lowliness and simplicity. How incongruous any appearance of luxury and pomp would have been in the emissaries of the poor and despised Nazarene. Accordingly the apostles were to take nothing for their journey, save a staff only. This article was essential to the poorest traveller. Jacob, referring to his poverty when fleeing to Padan-aram, and contrastedly to the riches he possessed on his return, said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies" (Genesis 32:10).

Further, the apostles were prohibited from taking with them any bread, or any bag to carry provisions, or any money in their girdle to purchase necessaries even. They were to use ordinary footwear, and not to put on two coats. Though invested with inimitable power over unclean demons, they were to he in circumstances which would make them outwardly dependent upon the "cold charities" of a selfish world. By these directions the apostles were prepared to learn by experience the elementary but fundamentally important lesson of spiritual service, viz., dependence upon God for those things after which the Gentiles habitually seek (Matthew 6:32). They would find during their mission that their Master had the control of providence as well as of winds and waves and demons. And we know historically from their own confession that the Lord did care for them without fail. He Himself said to them on the night of His betrayal, "When I sent you forth without purse and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." But from that time onward their circumstances would alter, for He said, intimating the approaching change, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword "(Luke 22:35-36).

These instructions of the Lord all point to the simplicity which, it was His will, should mark them as His servants. So Paul wrote to Timothy, "No soldier on service entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4). The absence of luggage would enable them to be more expeditious in their travelling. Their work was among the simple peasantry of Galilee where signs of affluence would hinder the reception of their preaching. Besides, if they possessed two coats, for instance, would it not have been their duty to have imparted one to him that had none (Luke 3:11)? The following remarks on the subject were made by a traveller in the East. "The entire outfit "of these first missionaries shows that they were plain fishermen, farmers or shepherds; and to such men there was no extraordinary self-denial in the matter or the mode of their mission. We may expound the instructions given to these primitive evangelists somewhat after the following manner "Provide neither silver, nor gold, nor brass in your purses. You are going to your brethren in the neighbouring villages, and the best way to get to their hearts and their confidence is to throw yourself upon their hospitality. Nor was there any departure from the simple manners of the country in this. At this day the farmer sets out on excursions quite as extensive, without a para in his purse; and the modern Moslem prophet of Tarshiha thus sends forth his apostles over this identical region. Neither do they encumber themselves with two coats. They are accustomed to sleep in the garments they have on during the

day, and in this climate such plain people experience no inconvenience from it. They wear a coarse shoe, answering to the sandal of the ancients, but never take two pairs of them; and although the staff is an invariable companion of all wayfarers, they are content with one." The Preaching of Repentance

These twelve men went forth therefore in six different directions, and the burden of their message wherever they went was that men should repent. The verb "repent," and its related noun, "repentance," only occur three times in the Gospel of Mark; for the words, "to repentance," in 2: 17, are omitted in critical editions of the New Testament. The occurrences, however, illustrate the unity of purpose in the Gospel. They are the following:

(1) "John came who baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).

(2) "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

(3) "And they [the twelve apostles] went out, and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12). The continuity of the testimony to the fundamental necessity for man’s repentance in view of the coming kingdom is strikingly shown by this sequence. What John the Baptist declared, the Lord emphasised, and the twelve echoed: Except men repented they would all perish. But should one sinner only repent on earth, this would become an occasion of rejoicing in heaven, as the Lord Himself declared (Luke 15:1-32). But scripture is clear that repentance was and is a necessity for men — not only in the land of Israel but in all the world. It is therein placed on record that the Lord before His departure instructed the apostles that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Paul also, "the apostle of the uncircumcision," in harmony with this commission to the twelve, announced in Athens that now, in contrast with the former times, God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

There is therefore a necessity, and an urgent necessity, enforced by divine command, and laid upon men without exception for that radical change which is implied by the scriptural term "repentance." It is, however, outside our present purpose to discuss whether this change is one (1) of heart or disposition, (2) of mind or thought, (3) of aim or purpose, or (4) of life or conduct. The essential fact to note is that repentance involves change, and that of the most momentous nature. Inwardly, this change extends to the deepest springs of a man’s conduct; outwardly, it corrects his attitude Godward, for repentance is primarily "toward God" (Acts 20:21), being also manward by inevitable consequence. This need for repentance was insisted upon in view of the earthly kingdom as it was presented in the days of our Lord, and it was no less pressed in the preaching of the heavenly kingdom in the days of the apostles. Paul himself declared how he testified to Jews and Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and do works worthy of repentance (Acts 26:20), the last phrase being an echo of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:8). This necessity rests, not upon the avowedly impenitent only, but upon those who bear the name of Christ. Witness the messages of the Lord Himself to the seven churches of Asia. Five of them, Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea, are definitely exhorted to repentance (Revelation 2:5; Revelation 2:16; Revelation 2:22; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 3:19). Judgment will

begin with the unrepentant in the house of God, therefore let every man beware lest he cherish the vain delusion that he is one of the "ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

Staff and Staves The prohibition of the Lord having reference to a staff shows some variation in the records of the first three Evangelists. The passages are as follows:

(1) Matthew 10:9-10 : "Provide neither gold, nor silver . . . nor yet staves." The Revised Version reads, "Get you no gold nor silver . . . nor staff."

(2) Mark 6:8 : He charged "them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only." The R.V. and the A.V. are in agreement here.

(3) Luke 9:3 : "He said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip." The R.V. reads "staff" not "staves." The variation in the phrase, taking the readings adopted by the Revisers, may thus be set out:

(1) Matthew: Do not get a staff.

(2) Mark: Take a staff only.

(3) Luke: Do not take a staff.

Thus, the critics allege that according to both Matthew and Luke, the apostles were forbidden to take a staff, while according to Mark they were permitted to do so. It is true also that Matthew and Mark differ in their phraseology. The former forbids the apostles to get or to provide a staff, that is, in addition to the usual one, while the latter grants permission to them to take a "staff only," but not one additional to the ordinary one. Understood in this sense, the difference in the phrases does not constitute any essential disagreement between the two statements. The expression in Luke at first sight raises a difficulty, since it seems to say, Do not take a staff at all, in opposition to Mark. But the "discrepancy" is only an apparent one, for it will be observed that the prohibition is directed entirely to the preparation for the journey contemplated, and the staff is included with the scrip and bread and money: "Take nothing for your journey, neither staff nor scrip nor bread nor money." The very commonest article was not to be procured by the twelve in view of their mission. They might make use of the ordinary walking staff, but they might not provide one specially for their new enterprise, This seems to be the simple and unstrained solution of the problem, and preferable to the elaborate and forced hypothesis of McClellan, who supposes that the word staff is used in these passages in a double sense, viz., (1) the staff for travelling, and (2) the staff of apostolic office. The latter they were enjoined to take, but not the former. This is pure assumption, and is altogether unnecessary for adequate explanation of the passages; for the plain import of the phrases in all three evangelists is that the apostles were not to make any special preparation for the journey.

Anointing with Oil The apostles in the course of their ministry "cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." The circumstance of the anointing is only mentioned in Mark, but the healing of the sick is also associated with oil in the Epistle of James: "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:14).

It is known that oil was used throughout the East as a remedial agent. Not to make reference beyond the Bible, the Good Samaritan administered oil as well as wine to the wounded man (Luke 10:34). Isaiah refers to the mollification of wounds with oil (Isaiah 1:6). Is it not therefore reasonable to suppose that the disciples and the elders of the church applied oil to sick persons, as a natural remedy, this being a simple specific within the power of those lacking medical knowledge and skill? And they did so, relying on the power and blessing of the Lord to make the means efficacious. Further than this we have no warrant for imitating their example in these days. The Words Omitted in verse 11 by the Revisers The latter part of verse 11 in the Authorised Version (1611) contains the solemn warning by our Lord against such as refused the preaching of the apostles: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. [Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city]." The Revisers (1882) substitute "whatsoever place" for "whosoever," and omit, without any marginal comment, the whole of the words placed between the brackets []. It is true that the words thus deleted in this Gospel are found in substance in two others, viz., in Matthew 10:15 and in Luke 10:12, so that the general truth of the warning clause expunged in Mark is still maintained by these passages; but the question may well be asked on what grounds the omission is made in the Second Gospel.

It is not, however, proposed to discuss in these notes the adequacy or otherwise of the evidence upon which these words are denied a place in Mark's Gospel, but it may sufficiently serve a useful purpose to point to this passage as one among many others in the New Testament where, in the opinion of scholars competent to judge in matters of textual authority, the Revisers were unduly influenced by the testimony of a few ancient witnesses to disregard that of the more numerous documents. The late Mr. Kelly, writing in July, 1881, on the "Revised New Testament,"* a month or two after its publication, said in reference to this passage, "The latter half of chapter 6: 11 seems an accommodation from Matthew 11:1-30 and Luke 10:1-42 with changes. Yet the ancient testimony is so ample (eleven uncials, nearly all the cursives, and some of the best versions) that it surprises one to see no remark in the margin on such a difference," that is, on such an extensive omission in the face of weighty evidence for its retention.

{*Bible Treasury, Vol. 13. (1881), p. 301.} The summary treatment of this passage by the Revisers is adversely criticised, but more decisively than by Mr. Kelly, in a posthumous work of Dean Burgon, arranged and edited by Prebendary Miller. He rightly points out how destructive of the individuality of the Gospels such unwarranted excision becomes. These are his words: "The value — may I not say the use? — of these delicate differences of detail becomes apparent whenever the genuineness of the text is called in question." He then goes on to refer to the words withdrawn from Mark. "It is pretended," he says, "that this [passage] is nothing else but an importation from the parallel place of St. Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 10:15). But that is impossible for, as the reader sees at a glance, a delicate but decisive note of discrimination has been set on the two places. St. Mark writes, Sodomois e Gomorrois; St. Matthew, ge Sodomon kai Gomorron. And this threefold, or rather fourfold, diversity of expression has existed from the beginning; for it has been faithfully retained all down the ages; it exists to this hour in every known copy of the Gospel, except of course those nine which omit the sentence altogether. There can be therefore no doubt about its genuineness. The critics of the modern school (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Westcott and Hort) seek in vain to put upon us a mutilated text by omitting those fifteen

words. The two places are clearly independent of one another.

"It does but remain to point out that the exclusion of these fifteen words from the text of St. Mark has merely resulted from the influence of the parallel place in St. Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:5), where nothing whatever is found corresponding with St. Matthew 10:15, [or] St. Mark 6:11."* {*"Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text," Burgon and Miller, pp. 118-9, 181-2.} The passage in Luke 9:5 refers to the rejection of the apostles' preaching, but has no warning based on the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha. The Revisers have made Mark agree with Luke by omitting the clause. It must be noted, however, that the warning occurs in the following chapter of Luke, though in slightly different terms, being applied to the city rejecting the witness of the Seventy: "It shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city" (Luke 10:11-12).

It will be gathered from the above criticism that the internal evidence for the exclusion of this passage is very weak, just as the external evidence is very scanty. The assumption that the words were inserted in the Gospel of Mark by some scribes in order to agree with either Matthew or Luke rests upon a most slender basis.

(1) If the words were taken from Matthew, why is there such diversity still remaining? Matthew reads "for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah," but Mark reads "for Sodom and Gomorrah." In the Greek the distinction in the words is more apparent still, because the proper names have different case-endings in the two Gospels — in Matthew the genitive case is used, and in Mark the dative. The conjunction differs also: in Matthew kai (and), in Mark e (or). These points of difference are not likely to have occurred if the phrase in question was copied into Mark from Matthew, as the critics allege.

(2) Neither does it appear that Mark copied from Luke, for the latter names only Sodom, but Mark both Sodom and Gomorrah. Again, Luke has "in that day," but Mark has "in the day of judgment." These verbal distinctions make it most improbable that the sentence was added from Luke. Besides, it has already been noted that the Lord's warning is given in Luke in connection with the preaching of the Seventy and not with that of the Twelve as in Mark.

It seems therefore incredible that the received text in Mark 6:11 should possess so many indications of originality if of spurious origin. And we may still reflect upon the significant fact that all three Gospels unite to show that not temporal only but eternal issues hung upon the acceptance or rejection of the apostles' preaching.

32. — John's rebuke of Herod's sin And king Herod heard thereof; for his name had become known1: and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him2. But others said, It is Elijah. And others said, It is a prophet, even as one of the prophets. But Herod, when he heard thereof, said, John, whom I beheaded; he is risen. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And Herodias set herself against him3, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe4. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed and he heard him gladly5" (Mark 6:14-20, R.V.).

1 "public," J.N.D.; "famous," T.S.G.

2 "works of power are wrought by him," J.N.D.; "the mighty powers do work in him," McC.; "the Powers were busy in him," T.S.G.

3 "kept it in her mind against him," J.N.D.; "had a spite against him," McC.; "bear him spite," T.S.G.

4 "was regardful of him," T.S.G 5 "did many things," J.N.D., T.S.G. The activities of the Lord Himself and the separate testimonies of His apostles at this period reached the ears of king Herod. The name of Jehovah's Servant was becoming famous through His own mighty works, and now through the labours of His servants. Herod did not know Jesus of Nazareth, but his memory was full of John the Baptist, for he had but recently pronounced the cruel sentence of his execution. And when tidings came of one who was working the works of God in Galilee, he could only think of the righteous and holy prophet who had been as the mouth of God to him. But how were these miracles of Jesus Christ, so numerous and striking as they were, to be explained? The testimony of the Baptist was not accompanied by signs as the people said of him on one occasion, "John did no miracle," his service differing in this respect from that of the Messiah. But the superstitious king had an explanation satisfactory to himself, an explanation which his own terrified conscience supplied. John in the flesh wrought no miracles, but John returned from the grave must be, and was, full of supernatural energy. Herod said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him." And yet though this wicked ruler professed to believe there was a messenger from the dead in the land he did not repent, and he is therefore a solemn example of the truth of "father Abraham's" words in our Lord's parable — "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:30-31).

Popular opinion said of the Lord that he was Elijah, the promised prophet (Malachi 4:5), or one of God's prophetic messengers. There was no unanimity in the estimates of the public, as the apostles also stated in their reply to the Lord's question concerning current opinions (Matthew 16:14 "Mark 8:28; Luke 9:19). Herod however had personal reasons for his own theory. It was he who beheaded John. And he now believed that John lived again in the prophet of Galilee.

There was some substratum of truth in Herod's opinion, though he was unconscious of it. He was wrong as to the identity of the Person who was preaching the kingdom of God, but he was right in that John's testimony of truth and holiness was still being declared. He had removed the head of the Baptist, but the voice that spoke of righteousness and purity was not silenced. The witnesser for the truth may be slain, and his gory head displayed in the orgies of the wicked, but truth itself is not put to death by the sword. And Herod was not mistaken in thinking that the Voice then preaching in Capernaum and Chorazin was saying to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her."

It is well to note that the Gospel history here becomes retrospective. Mark, in the early part of the book, mentions the imprisonment of John in connection with the commencement of the ministry of Jesus (1: 14), but makes no further mention of the Baptist until now, when he turns back to narrate his violent end. John was truly the forerunner of the Messiah the righteous Servant of Jehovah, to the very last act of his public testimony. He witnessed to the Anointed Sufferer not less in the prison than in the wilderness for both he and his Master were cut off in the midst of their days. Peter and others followed the Lord to a martyr's end, but John had the unique privilege of immediately preceding Him. The Jews under the Power of Daniel's Fourth Empire The historical references here to the death of John the Baptist by Herod, bring in the subject of the civil government of the Holy Land at the time of our Lord. The people and country were tributary to

Rome, that Western power which had then but recently assumed absolute supremacy in the political world. This subjection was not a surprise to those in Israel who had drunk of the spirit of prophecy. The Roman Empire was prefigured in the Image-vision of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1-49), the "iron" government being the fourth in order of succession of the Gentile empires there portrayed. Daniel also saw it in prophetic vision under the figure of the fourth beast, terrible and powerful "with great iron teeth (Daniel 7:7). In the New Testament history we find this "iron" rule in exercise at the time of the birth of Christ. Caesar Augustus issued a decree that "all the world should be taxed," or enrolled (Luke 2:1). In obedience to this edict Joseph and Mary, lineal descendants of the royal line of David, went up submissively from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. The position of servitude in which the chosen people stood to the great Empire is further shown by the circulation in their midst of the Roman currency in which they paid taxes to their over-lords (Luke 20:19-26).

Again, the supremacy of the Roman government in the land of Israel was demonstrated by their exclusive exercise of the function of condemning prisoners to the extreme penalty. After the flood the authority of man in government to punish the murderer by death, previously reserved by God, was conferred by Him upon Noah and his descendants. God decreed that "Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6). This power was recognised and in use throughout the successive forms of government in Israel, and after Israel’s subjugation it was exercised by the Gentile empires. For instance, Daniel testified of Nebuchadnezzar, the "head of gold," that "all peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive" (Daniel 5:19). And the Roman emperors, though not so absolute in their rule as their Babylonian predecessors, "reserved to themselves and to their local representatives the right of judicial execution. The Jews admitted to Pilate their lack of this authority: "It is not lawful," they said, "for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). This authority was in the hands of the Roman governor who arrogantly and insolently said to his Just and Holy prisoner, "Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power [authority] to crucify thee, and have power [authority] to release thee? "(John 19:10). This authority of Pilate Jesus did not deny, but rather traced that authority to its true source — not to his imperial master at Rome but to the Sovereign Ruler of all: Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (cp. Romans 13:1-4). Never was this judicial authority more flagrantly abused than it was by Pilate, the representative of the Roman empire. Weakly submitting to the will of the Jews, he freed Barabbas the malefactor whom he should have executed for murder, and condemned Jesus the Benefactor to be crucified. The Herodian Rule The rule of the Herods was subservient to Rome. Several members of the Herod family are mentioned in the New Testament history, but most were enemies to Christ and to those who bore His name.

(1) Herod the Great, one of the worst tyrants of all time, massacred the children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

(2) Archelaus was the son of Herod the Great whom Joseph feared (Matthew 2:22).

(3) Herod Antipas executed John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12), and mocked Jesus (Luke 23:11).

(4) Herod Agrippa I. executed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2).

(5) Herod Agrippa II. had Paul brought before him as prisoner (Acts 25:13-27). The Herods were Idumean in origin, and were placed in the position of titular rulers in Judea and Galilee by the Roman government. The name Idumea is the Greek equivalent of Edom, the land of the descendants of Esau. So that the position of the Jews in the days of the Gospels was humiliating in the extreme. They were not only under the dominion of the Gentile power at Rome, but a son of Esau ruled over them in the land. This order was not according to the purpose of God announced from the beginning — that, of Jacob and his brother, the "elder should serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). But through the unfaithfulness of the chosen people, this divine order was for the time reversed, and Esau was in the ascendant, though an enemy of God and His truth. Indeed hatred and jealousy and bitter animosity against God and the people of God characterise the Edomites throughout the Old Testament records. The last of the prophetic "burdens" declares them to be the people against whom Jehovah has indignation for ever (Malachi 1:4). And the New Testament opens with the effort of the Edomite, who was ruler of Edom as well as of Judea and Galilee, to destroy Him who was born King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-23). The bloodthirsty Herod was a true descendant of Doeg the Edomite, the murderer of the priests at Nob (1 Samuel 22:9-19).

Herod Antipas and John

Herod Antipas*, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee, the northern part of his father’s dominions, when John the Baptist came into the country round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and the immediate coming of the Messiah (Luke 3:1-3). This voice crying in the wilderness resounded in the palace of the king. John spoke of an Anointed One whose coming was imminent, and Herod may have feared in Him, who was announced to appear, a possible rival to his throne, the tenure of which was so notoriously frail. He could hardly have entirely forgotten the incident which happened less than thirty years before when there came Eastern magi to his father’s court in Jerusalem, seeking Him who was born King of the Jews. He may also have remembered, amongst other of his father’s deeds of blood and cruelty, the horrible slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem perpetrated to ensure the death of the Royal Child. We think it must have been so, for conscience stimulates the most sluggish memory, and Antipas was riot altogether dead to conscience.

{*Antipas was the son of Herod by Malthace a Samaritan, so that he had not, in Jewish eyes, the slight redeeming feature of his brother Archelaus who was by a Jewish mother.}

Moreover, that conscience was appealed to by the dauntless testimony of the Baptist. For John came "in the way of righteousness." Like Noah, he was a "preacher of righteousness" in a day of unnatural corruption. Like also his prototype Elijah, he delivered his words of truth in a profligate court. John reproved the king for the many notorious evils he had committed; but perhaps his blackest crime was to marry his brother Philip’s wife, and the intrepid prophet did not shrink to denounce the incestuous adulterer to his face, although he sat upon a throne, condemning him by the laws of God and man (Leviticus 18:16; Leviticus 20:21). "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife" summed up his charge. The king’s guilt was trebly great; for the wife of Herod was alive, the husband of Herodias was alive, and Herod and Herodias stood in the relationship of uncle and niece. But there was no repentance. The words of John did not turn this disobedient one "to the wisdom of the Just" (Luke 1:17). Herod hardened his heart, and as the Spirit of God says,

in view no doubt of the ancient precept, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," that he "added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison," and would have done worse to him, but "when he would have put him to death he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14:5). This popular opinion in favour of John was so strong that the chief priests and elders also feared to oppose it (Matthew 21:26).

Herod’s Fear of John The king was of a weak and vacillating nature, but not without a susceptibility to influences for good. We read that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed: and he heard him gladly." The invincible nature of truth and righteousness is exemplified in the king’s attitude toward the Baptist. It was Herod, not John, who feared. The empurpled voluptuary was a moral coward in the presence of the prophet, as such must be before the righteous and the holy. The licentious monarch had abandoned himself to the luxurious gratification of his every evil passion, for which the manners of his court gave him every facility. In contrast with this royal self-indulgence, John had learned the difficult lesson of self-denial and self-conquest in the solitudes of the wilderness. His hairy garment and his frugal diet were outward indications of the moral attitude of the man who by severe self-discipline, qualified himself (so far as man may do so) for his dignified mission. John, who called the people to sackcloth and ashes, was not a man "clothed in soft raiment" himself. He came neither eating nor drinking, for it was a day of fasting, and a day for men to afflict their souls. His practice corresponded with his preaching. The divine object, announced in the song of his father Zacharias, was that the people of Israel might serve God "in holiness and righteousness" all their days. And accordingly the forerunner of the Messiah was a righteous and a holy man himself, and this character of John was so well-known and well-established that even the evil and suspicious king knew it, and feared him in consequence.

Nevertheless, in spite of this admission, the unrighteous and unholy ruler did not release his righteous and holy prisoner, but held him in custody. Yet this attitude was no strange event in the world’s history, for evil’s enmity of the good it sees in another has repeated itself from the beginning. Why did Cain slay Abel? Because his own works were evil; and like Herod he knew that his brother’s were righteous (1 John 3:12). It was so also in the history of Israel when their Messiah came. He whom they denied, and delivered over to Pilate for crucifixion, was pre-eminently the Holy and the Righteous One (Acts 3:14), concerning whom even the crucified robber testified, "He has done nothing amiss." And is it not the constant experience of those who are the possessors of the kingdom that they are persecuted for righteousness’ sake? (Matthew 5:10; 1 Peter 3:10-14). It is true that the followers of Christ are called to a higher standard of suffering-testimony, viz., that which arises out of a confession of the name of Christ; but this highest standard cannot be truly attained unless it is based upon righteousness and holiness of truth, the twin principles of the new creation (Ephesians 4:24).

Herod then feared John, if not as a prophet of God as a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe* from the malice of his paramour Herodias who sought to kill him. And during the Baptist’s imprisonment Herod appears to have summoned his prisoner before him on several occasions, and the faithful words and fearless bearing of the prophet were not without their effect upon the profligate king. "When he heard him, he was perplexed," or as many read it, "he did many things." He sought to compromise with the truth by carrying out some minor reforms. But of the foul sin of which he was guilty before the eyes of his kingdom and before the eyes of his God, he was

impenitent. He did many things, but not the one thing. He heard John gladly too; and it is also said elsewhere, that the common people heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). But such gladness is not associated with the hearing by which faith comes.

{*The word so translated may bear the sense of "observing him diligently," or "being regardful of him." But on the whole the above rendering seems more in keeping with the context, as Trench points out. See also the note on the verse in J.N.D's translation.} 33. — The Death of the Forerunner

1914 23 "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went out and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger* the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat, he would not reject her. And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger*, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard thereof, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb." (Mark 6:21-29, R.V.).

{*"dish," J.N.D., McC.} The ways of God with men are altogether removed in their nature and character from human ideas. Though we so frequently forget the truth, it is impossible for us to foretell what the end of a man's career upon the earth will be, even though that man is an honoured servant of God. The common opinion is that the last days of the pious and upright will be days of honourable peace and prosperity.

Such a thought may have given rise to the vain wish of Balaam, that consummate hypocrite, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Numbers 23:10). But the prayer of the wicked is declared to be an abomination to the Lord, and certainly the end of Balaam the soothsayer was not peaceful, but violent, for he perished by the sword of the people whom he sought to curse (Numbers 31:8).

John, the prophet of righteousness, the harbinger of the Messiah, was an utter contrast to Balaam, yet his end was one to call for serious contemplation. The Lord said of him that he was the burning and shining lamp (John 5:35), He Himself being the true Light come into the world to light every man. Hence it might well have been expected that the Old Testament principle would have been applicable in John's case, and that his earthly testimony would have closed in a climax of brilliance. Was it not said of old that "the path of the righteous is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18)? And yet the greatest of the prophets appears to end his life in dark disaster, and is put to a violent death. And of this gloomy close he himself seemed to have had some premonition, when he said of his Master, "He must increase, and I must decrease."

John saw the salvation of God like aged Simeon, and he was, as Simeon was not, the chosen herald of the Lamb of God; yet it was not John’s like the venerable father of Israel, to depart in peace — the portion of the perfect and upright man (Psalms 37:37). The crown of martyrdom was for John, not the hoary head, the earthly crown of glory, for ’he did not live out half his days. He was slain ignominiously by a woman, like Sisera the cursed Canaanite, and like Abimelech, the murderer of seventy of his brethren. Like Elijah, in whose spirit and power he came, John too was hated by a Jezebel. Elisha saw Elijah disappear in a blaze of transcendent glory, but the disciples of John had to save the bleeding and headless corpse of their master from the vultures and the dogs. The truth explaining the seemingly contradictory facts is that God was not then vindicating the righteous in the earth, as He will yet do (Psalms 58:10-11).

Thus John the Baptist, the last of the line of the prophets to Israel, was slain by Israel’s Edomite king in Galilee. But Jesus, who was pre-eminently the Prophet of Jehovah was crucified at Jerusalem, the city so favoured of God, yet notorious for killing the prophets and stoning those who were sent to her (Luke 13:33). Not but what Herod would fain have killed Jesus as well as John; so the Pharisees said (Luke 13:31), and we may well believe it. Only it was to Zion that Messiah offered Himself, and upon her would rest the guilt of His rejection and delivery to the Gentiles for crucifixion. The Deed of Darkness The scriptural narrative touches lightly and without emphatic force of language the tragic particulars of the Baptist’s death. The circumstances are eloquent in themselves of the terrible power of sin and Satan over the human heart.

Herod, as seen in the Gospels, was a weak-minded, impressionable man. Thus, the straight talk of the prophet impressed him. The presence of his lords and captains at his feast excited him. The dancing of the daughter of Herodias before him and his guests carried him away in a whirl of exuberant pleasure. Devoid of all self-control, he gave utterance to the most extravagant promises: "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee," he said, adding no qualifications. And to show that this was not mere Eastern hyperbole, he confirmed his promise with oaths. The man who inherited a fourth of his father’s kingdom swore to the damsel, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee unto the half of my kingdom." In such a wild impetuous way do infatuated and inebriated men sometimes speak. So Ahasuerus more than once promised Esther to grant her petition up to the half of his kingdom (Esther 5:3; Esther 5:6; Esther 7:2), and Herod may have foolishly thought to emulate the great world-emperor in this boastful pledge.

Receiving such an unlimited promise, the damsel sought advice from her mother, who according to Eastern custom was not present at the banquet. Such consultation was in itself a proper step to take. Alas, that her mother could only counsel her for evil and not for good. It would seem that Herodias had plotted for this issue. She had set a trap for Herod and baited it with her own daughter. Knowing his disposition, she counted upon some such promise from the monarch when well in his cups. And now the "convenient" moment had come. The sweets of revenge being more to her than half Galilee, she instructed her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist.* {*Herodias spoke of John as ’the Baptist,’ showing that he was known generally by that title.} The depraved instincts of Herodias appear also in the daughter, for returning with haste to the king, she delivered the message of her mothers with additions of her own. On comparison of the words of the mother with those of the damsel, it would seem that it was the daughter who desired that the gruesome reward should be handed to her upon a dish in the presence of all the guests. She

demanded also that the hideous gift might be made to her immediately, being fearful lest the weak-minded king might repent of his rash vow, and recall his promise. Give it me here, she said with incredible savagery (Matthew 14:8); let me have it at once on a platter. A guardsman was accordingly sent there and then on the errand of execution, and in the presence of the assembly of rank and nobility, the shameless damsel received her chosen reward, and carried the trophy of blood on the dish to her mother as her share of the feast.

David took the head of Goliath, the uncircumcised enemy of Jehovah and His people, to Jerusalem, but that was an act of retributive justice, and a witness to the deliverance of the nation. The repulsive action of Herodias and her daughter was the gratification of their private revenge on John the Baptist because he had condemned Herodias' uncle, Herod, whose wife was still living for having his niece, Herodias, whose husband was also alive.

Herod Sorry but not Repentant

Herod was a man of extreme but superficial feeling. He heard John gladly, though the prophet, denounced the sin of which he was guilty. We also read that he was sorry, "exceeding sorry,"* when he discovered to what a cruel outrage he had committed himself. So was the rich young ruler sorry to refuse the call of Jesus, but in neither the king nor the ruler did the sorrow work repentance (Luke 18:23 "2 Corinthians 7:8; 2 Corinthians 7:10). When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod he was glad, 'exceeding glad,' to see Him (Luke 23:8). But the result of that interview was only to demonstrate the callous ferocity of his nature. Herod "with his soldiers set him at nought and mocked him, arraying him in a gorgeous robe and sending him back to Pilate." With all his sorrow, Herod slew the servant in Galilee, and with all his gladness he derided the Master at Jerusalem.

{*The Greek word is a very strong one, and is also used of our Lord in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38).}

"We have in Herod the history of a soul that had his conscience reached by the word of God, but nothing more. We know well that there is such a thing as resisting the Holy Ghost on the part of unconverted men; it is the commonest thing possible where God's word is known, though it is not only resisting the word, but the Spirit of God. Therefore it was that Stephen said, when addressing the Jews, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." The Holy Ghost so far uses the word as to touch the conscience, and whosoever refuses this resists both the word and Spirit of God.

"In Herod's case it was only John's testimony, but it was a mighty one, so far as the conviction of sin was concerned. John the Baptist did not pretend to bring in redemption; his main object was to point to One who was coming. But there was a mighty work produced through him in leading men to the sense that they could not do without the Lord.

"Thus he brought before men that all was ruined in the sight of God, and that, so far from things being prosperous or happy, the axe was lying at the root of the tree, judgment was at the door And so it was, only that, first of all, the judgment that man deserved fell, by grace, upon Christ. That was the unlooked-for form in which Divine judgment took place then — in the cross. It was a most real dealing of God, but it was a judgment for the time stayed from falling upon the guilty, which fell upon the guiltless Son of God, and thereby redemption is accomplished. The whole work of Christ for the church of God has come in during the time of man's — Israel's — being left by the Lord to

Himself. It is the time of God’s long-suffering, the world being permitted to follow its own way in the rejection of the Gospel as much as in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what the world is doing now, and is soon to consummate, when judgment will come.

"Thus [in the case of Herod] conscience is shown in a man that felt what was right, and heard the word gladly for a time. But there was no repentance, no submission of his soul to the conviction that for a moment passed before his mind of what was true, just, and of God. The consequence was that circumstances were so managed by the enemy and permitted of God that Herod should evince the worthlessness of natural conscience, even as regards the very person whom he had owned as a prophet. But at any rate all was lost now, and a guilty hour at a banquet, where the desire to gratify one as bad or worse than himself ensnared his weakness and involved his word. There is the end of natural conscience. Herod orders what he would not have conceived it possible for him to do."* {*Exposition of the Gospel of Mark, by W. Kelly.} The Disciples of John The followers of the Baptist appear to have kept in touch with him during his imprisonment. Thus John sent from the prison two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" And the messengers carried back to their master the answer of Jesus (Matthew 11:1-30). At the time of John’s execution they were near enough to the place of imprisonment to learn quickly the sad fate of their master, and were able to perform for him their last loving office. They took up the poor mutilated remains, and laid them in a tomb. The Lord who buried His servant Moses and took away Elijah provided honourable interment by reverent hands for John the Baptist. The disappearance of the body being noted by the servants of the king may have given rise to Herod’s surmise of John’s resurrection when he heard of the miracles of Jesus.

Moreover, the fact that the disciples of John carried away the body of their master may have given support to the false story circulated by the Jews to explain away the reported resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:13). There was no real analogy between the two cases, but the suggestion was plausible enough for those who wished to evade the truth. From the Gospel of Matthew we learn that these disciples, having buried their master, went and told Jesus (Matthew 14:12). May we not conclude that thenceforth they followed Him of whom John said, "Behold the Lamb of God"?

34. — Seeking a Short Seclusion

1914 39 "And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus and they told him all things whatsoever they had done and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:30-34, R.V.). The execution of John the forerunner constituted an epoch in the ministry of the Blessed Lord. It showed that Israel would not receive divine testimony. From this point onwards He instructed His disciples plainly concerning His own sufferings and death which would follow at Jerusalem. In the appointed order of God John was constituted the pioneer of the Faithful and True Witness, bearing testimony to Him in a remarkable manner from his earliest history. Was it not through the son whom she had not seen that Elizabeth was first able to hail Mary as the mother of her Lord? (Luke 1:41-45). That light of witness which shone so feebly at the outset rose

to the zenith of its full brilliance when John's clarion call rang out for all who had ears to hear, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." From that moment the lamp of prophecy waned, for John was soon delivered up to prison, and Jesus Himself came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). And the preaching of Jesus continued up to the period to which we have arrived — some two years later.

During this lengthy period — for him — John had languished in confinement, waiting for the day to break and the shadows to flee away. The voice of the Messiah was heard in the land, throughout Judea and Galilee. When he himself had cried in the wilderness, multitudes had flocked to his preaching and to his baptism. Now One was speaking whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. Yet week after week, sabbath after sabbath, new moon and passover went by, and the kingdom was not restored to Israel. As we consider John's long and dreary imprisonment, can we chide him as an impatient man because he sent disciples to Jesus, asking, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? The Master did not upbraid him nor may we. The truth was that the lofty ideals of Messiah's glorious kingdom were not to be realised in a human fashion, and since signs of immediate deliverance from the oppressor were wanting, many of the sons of Israel would on that account stumble at the Stone Jehovah was setting in Zion. The humble guise of the Messiah caused the thoughts of many hearts to be revealed, and the Baptist's among others. Nevertheless the Lord said to the disciples of John, "Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me" (Matthew 11:6).

It would seem that God in His inscrutable wisdom delayed the final removal of John from the earth until Messiah had delivered an adequate testimony to the people of Israel, and that testimony was seen to be unheeded and rejected. The martyrdom of John was in effect a public act, signifying that Israel was not ready to receive the One of whom John spake (Mark 9:12-13), just as the martyrdom of Stephen was the public act which proclaimed that the nation would not accept the crucified Messiah whom God had glorified and whom Stephen was preaching. The coincidence of the testimonies of John and Jesus, and the personal love Jesus had for the Baptist are special features of Matthew's Gospel more than Mark. It is there noted how the news of his death affected Him. "Accomplishing in lowly service (however personally exalted above him) together with John, the testimony of God in the congregation, He felt Himself united in heart and in His work to him; for faithfulness in the midst of all evil binds hearts very closely together; and Jesus had condescended to take a place in which faithfulness was concerned (See Psalms 40:9-10). On hearing therefore of John's death He retired into a desert place." The kingdom which John proclaimed was not then to be set up in power, and he was therefore taken away, for the time of his public reward as a righteous prophet was deferred until the Son of man should come in His glory, and the people should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Thus the powers in authority wrought their evil will upon the Baptist, as they would shortly do upon Jesus. This the Lord knew, though His apostles did not. Hence we find that about this period the Lord began to withdraw Himself more from the populace, and to devote Himself to the instruction of the apostolic band in regard to the sufferings and death that awaited Him at Jerusalem. It was needful for them to know the mysteries of His person and work, and thus in measure to be equipped to become able ministers of the new covenant in the particular form in which it was soon to be introduced. A summary showing the connection referred to may be helpful. Comparing the first three Gospels, it will be observed that following immediately upon the account of the death of John the Baptist we

have a record of the events named below:

(1) Jesus taking His disciples apart (Matthew 12:1-50 ; Mark 6:1-56 ; Luke 9:1-62).

(2) Jesus feeding the crowds who sought Him out, but leaving the apostles to cross the lake alone, though He eventually came to their deliverance in the storm (Matthew 14:1-36; Matthew 15:1-39 ; Mark 6:1-56; Mark 7:1-37 ; Luke 9:1-62).

(3) Jesus inquiring what men said of Him, and eliciting personal confession from the apostles (Matthew 16:1-28 ; Mark 8:1-38 ; Luke 9:1-62).

(4) Jesus speaking precisely of His sufferings and death at Jerusalem, and of the cross of discipleship.

While the general order of this sequence is found in the three Synoptists, the several events enumerated are brought into closest juxtaposition in the Gospel by Luke.

Gathering to Jesus The apostles at the bidding of their Master had gone in various directions in the service of the kingdom. That particular service being now completed they "gather themselves together unto Jesus." It is not stated that they were directed to do so. In a sense it was the natural thing to do. To assemble to Him was the instinctive act of their spirits. To whom else should they go? For them there was now but one Master upon the earth, and accordingly they spontaneously gathered themselves together to the Lord and told Him all their doings and all their sayings. The act was a simple, natural, obvious one historically; but it is often forgotten that the principle of it abides true, so long as there is service to Christ in exercise upon the earth. Are there deeds to be done, and words to be said in His Name in an unfriendly world? When the mission is ended let the report of the proceedings be made at headquarters: whether the necessity arises daily, weekly, or yearly, the principle underlying it is the same. The Master tells His servants what to do; the servants tell their Master what they have done. In a well-known promise, He Himself has shown that this practice was to be continued during the time of His absence. Laying down the general principle, He said, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst" (Matthew 18:20).

Taken Aside On the one hand, we find that the apostles returned of their own accord to Jesus at Capernaum after their tour of service; on the other ’hand we find that the Lord upon their return took them aside for a season of privacy. This was the Lord’s own arrangement for their well-being as His servants. An Eastern house is open to any one who will enter, and meal-times form no exception to the freedom of general access which every one expects to be allowed. Jesus said therefore to the apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." They had no leisure, or rather they had no convenient opportunity to eat, on account of the incessant intrusions of the people. ’Leisure’ may be thought to imply absence of occupation, but the turn here seems to be that there was no suitable occasion even for meals, on account of persistent interruption.

It is well to note that the Great Master, who sent out these men into active enterprise, also led them apart to rest awhile. Not that their work was all finished. The harvest was as plenteous as ever: the labourers were still few. A world of need was around them. But the same voice that said on one occasion, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh

when no man can work" (John 9:4), also said to the same persons, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." Need it be said that He is the Lord, and that He will say to us 'Work' or 'Rest,' as He in His perfect wisdom sees best. It is ours to respond cheerfully and readily to either of these calls or to any.

"Strike, Thou the Master, we Thy keys, The anthem of the distinies." In point of fact the apostles had been passing through a perilous experience. They had been preaching their first sermons, and performing their first miracles. They were therefore exposed to the deadly snare of the novice (1 Timothy 3:6). Is it extravagant to suppose that they, like the seventy shortly afterwards, were highly elated at the outward signs of what appeared to be their brilliant success? "The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name" (Luke 10:7). But the Lord showed them how, by reason of their immature judgment, they had failed to grasp the true proportion of things. The endowments of grace far exceeded in value the equipment for service. Their names were written in heaven and not in the dust of the earth; and this enrolment for heavenly blessing was the fit subject for their rejoicing rather than their delegated power over unclean spirits. For a like reason, mayhap, the Lord said to the twelve, Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile. The rest would sober their spirits. The Lord had many things to say to His servants, but He could not say them there where so many were coming and going. Communications that could not be made to the twelve on the seashore were made on a former occasion indoors (Matthew 13:36), but when the house became overcrowded privacy must be sought elsewhere. An individual might secure this privacy by entering into his closet, and barring his door (Matthew 6:6), but the circumstances were different in this case. There were a number of them, and the Lord turned aside to the solitudes of the wilderness with His little company.

Instances are not wanting in Scripture history which establish the necessity for seasons of retirement in the public life of men of God. In the presence of fellow-men, the manifold activities and responsibilities of mutual relationship tend to exclude the sense of the invisible and the eternal; but in privacy, faith, hope and love are quickened into exercise and strengthened for the day of conflict. It was by the river Chebar that the heavens were opened to Ezekiel the priest, and he saw visions of God. And it was while exiled in Patmos that John beheld the glorious Son of man among the seven golden candlesticks, and saw vistas of the future depicted in the gorgeous imagery of the Apocalypse. Moses found the "burning bush," not in. Egypt but in Horeb, and forty years of sheep-tending on the untenanted slopes of the mountain was a needful part of his training to become the leader and lawgiver of Israel. And so the Lord's call, Come apart and rest awhile, was no new element in the method of divine training; but the call is the more impressive, coming as it does, from the lips of the assiduous Servant of God whom Mark portrays. Let it be the more carefully to be remembered that it is in 'seclusion that the deep-lying principles of divine life are deepened, strengthened and developed for days of activity. Apart from these seasons of silent and secret growth such fruit as may appear is likely to be unripe and untimely.

Shepherdless Sheep The Lord accordingly went away with His apostles in the boat, which, apparently, was one allotted to their use (cp. Mark 3:9; Mark 6:45; Mark 6:51). Their destination was an uninhabited district on the shores of the Sea of Galilee where the required privacy might very well be found. It was, as Luke tells us, near the town of Bethsaida (Luke 9:10). This was not the Bethsaida near Chorazin upon which the Lord's woes were pronounced (Matthew 11:21), but is generally believed to be a town some miles to the eastward known as Bethsaida Julias.

They did not depart unnoticed. The people were too much alert. They had received many benefits through the mercy of the Master, and some seem to have kept watch upon His movements. The embarkation of the little band was observed, and many "knew Him." They recognised the Benefactor, and with characteristic impetuosity, and with some labour and fatigue, they followed on land for some ten or twelve miles the progress of the boat, being joined by many others from the neighbouring villages. Mark, with his customary graphic detail, records that the people "ran "' — such was their earnestness; and, moreover, that they ran "afoot." And Jesus coming forth either from the boat on landing, or from the place of retirement having arrived first, saw this great multitude, and was filled with compassion. He knew their case, marked their eager and laborious pursuit of Him, appreciated their mute but eloquent prayer that He would do them some good, and as a consequence He was filled with compassion. W hat an heart of infinite capacity His was to be filled! How great the volume of pity when He was filled! The multitude was a great one, but the Lord knew the burden and the need of each person present. God’s love was there below, and there is "No creature, great or small, Beyond His pity which embraceth all, Nor any ocean rolls so vast that He Forgets one wave of all that restless sea." But this occasion however was more than an illustration of His universal love. It exemplified His particular concern. In His general providence the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26). But this company was of more value in His eyes than they? They were not like the busily curious idlers in Capernaum from whose incessant coming and going the Lord had turned away. These persons had been seeking Him with some pains and inconvenience to themselves. They had travelled some miles to reach Him. They were now before Him, faint in body and weary in spirit. Had they not been as sheep going astray? Were they not now returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls? And He was filled with compassion for them. Who was there in all the earth to care for these poor ones of the flock of Israel? A Gentile emperor at Rome ruled them with a rod of iron. An Edomite sat on the throne of David. Were Annas and Caiaphas high priests such as the people needed — men who would bear gently with the ignorant and with them that were out of the way (Hebrews 5:2)? There was no compassion in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees who devoured widows’ houses a and loaded men’s shoulders with heavy burdens grievous to be borne. The grave had but just closed upon the mutilated corpse of the last of the line of the prophets of God. Truly Israel was without prophet, priest, or king. The people were as sheep not having a shepherd (Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5-6). All this the Lord saw very fully, and He was filled with compassion for them. Their own shepherds did not pity them (Zechariah 11:5), for they were but hirelings, and did not own the sheep, who were therefore afflicted because there was in point of fact no shepherd (Zechariah 10:2).

We may ask ourselves who was it there by the Galilean sea with these compassionate thoughts for Israel? Was not this Jehovah echoing what He spake of old through the prophet Isaiah? He was saying, Surely, these are my people; I will be their Saviour. He had come down to be afflicted in their affliction, to redeem them in His love and pity, to hear them and carry them as in the days of old (Isaiah 63:8-9). His arm was not shortened that it could not save; His ear was not heavy that it could not hear. The Lord’s heart of pent-up goodness needed but to find a channel, and it found a suitable channel in this indigent friendless people; so He "began to teach them many things." They were to Him the ’poor of the flock,’ and He began accordingly to feed them. He was Himself their living food, come down from heaven. As He said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"Blessed Master, how lovely to have Thy character to rest on, to study, to feed on! Oh, may we feed so richly on it, that when we meet Thee, Thou mayest be to us a known Jesus, and the sympathies of Thy Spirit may be with what Thy Spirit has already matured in our hearts, and seeing Thee in glory as Thou art, all the inward springs and depths of Thy character may then be revealed to us."

34. — The Servant of Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel

1914 75 "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent: send them away that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves and he gave to the disciples to set before them and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men" (Mark 6:35-44, R.V.). The Lord, having been, so far as the spirit of the people was concerned, rejected in Galilee, revealed Himself to the company that sought Him out in the character of the promised Shepherd of Israel. He was there to feed both the hearts and the bodies of His hungry flock if they would but come to Him. They had come to Him, and, accordingly He led them into green pastures. This title of Jehovah’s Sent One — the Shepherd — first appeared in the prophetic pronouncement of Jacob upon his sons. Israel upon his dying bed was inspired to declare what should befall the twelve tribes in the latter days. But, according to these predictions, it was in the offspring of Joseph that blessings for the seed of Jacob would culminate — blessings of the heaven above, and of the deep beneath, blessings unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Moreover, it was out of the loins of Joseph, who was "separate from his brethren," that the Shepherd should come, the Stone of Israel, to establish the tribes in these blessings (Genesis 49:24). Now that Shepherd, whom the departing patriarch dimly saw in vision, had appeared in the midst of His people to stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD and in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God (Micah 5:4). It is part of the good tidings promised to Zion that the LORD God shall come to her and "shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck" (Isaiah 40:11).

There seems to be some distinction between the Lord viewed as Shepherd and as King. The nature of the offices of the Shepherd, regarded as a. whole, are more peaceful than those of the King of Israel. It is true they each have a double character, so that the titles blend into one anpther in that harmony of perfection and glory which is inseparable from our Blessed Master. Thus, the Messianic King is both a man of war and a man of peace — a David and a Solomon. On the one hand, He will subdue the oppressor of His people, striking through kings in the day of His wrath, dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. On the other hand, He will come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth, introducing world-wide peace and prosperity. And as the King’s energies are exercised in a twofold direction, so the Shepherd exercises a twofold care. In the first place, He protects His own from the predatory foes of the flock. The wolf cannot snatch the feeblest lamb out of the Shepherd’s hand, and according to the prophecy of the

days to come He will "cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land." But He not only protects, He also preserves and provides food. The Shepherd brings His flock into the green pastures and beside the still waters. He comforts them with His rod and His staff, and is with them in the valley of the shadow of death. This beautiful figure of our Lord is used throughout both Old and New Testaments, and it will well repay the devout heart to pursue the study of it in he law, the prophets and the psalms; in the evangelists and the apostles. And, what is best of all, the Shepherd's compassions still abound towards His hungry, weary flock, and, as on the Galilean shore of old, His voice still teaches His flock "many things."

"There is no voice like Thine, O Shepherd, kind and true, Whose accents, human and divine, Still call Thy sheep anew. The stranger's voice is loud, And confident his tone;

But, Lord, to Thee our hearts have bowed To Thee whose love is known. So when with siren song That alien voice would lure, Thy steadfast word shall keep us strong And peaceful and secure."* {*Poems by Mr. R. Beacon (1910), p.114} The Suggestion of the Twelve As the Lord proceeded with His discourse to the assembled crowd the day began to wear away, and the apostles thereupon grew anxious in regard to the situation. They themselves had apparently planned to return in the boat to Capernaum. But what would the multitude there in the wilderness do for food and lodging? They therefore interposed with their difficulty. Going to the Lord, they pointed out that the place was a desert one, the day was far spent, and the people had nothing to eat. They suggested that the Lord should dismiss the audience at once, so that they might go to the neighbouring homesteads and villages and purchase food for themselves. The suggestion of the apostles was wise enough perhaps as a measure of purely human policy. Commonsense, that much vaunted factor in the affairs of life, could invent nothing better than self-help as a means of supplying the needed food under the exceptional circumstances. The proposed scheme relieved the disciples of any responsibility as to the welfare of the people, but it fell woefully short of the compassionate spirit inculcated in the law. "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt surely open thine hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. . . . Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land" (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

If the disciples were lacking in this spirit of compassion for their poor and needy brothers in Israel, it was not so with their Master. He had come into the midst of the nation to exemplify the tenets of the law in their fullest perfection. Only we cannot fail to note that the band of privileged followers of the Lord showed in this instance how utterly unable they were to apprehend the motives animating their Master. Indeed, how frequently they are shown in the Gospel running counter to Him. When little children were brought to Him for a blessing which He was ready to bestow, the disciples rebuked those who brought them. When they saw one casting out demons in the name of Jesus, they, contrary to the will of their Master, forbade him because he followed not with them. When a certain village of the Samaritans refused to receive the Lord, James and John desired the Saviour of men to destroy the villagers by fire from heaven. When the Lord spoke to His disciples of His

journey to J erusalem to suffer, Peter took it upon him to rebuke his Master. Well might the Lord say to them, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. They continued in His company, but did not adequately learn of Him. Even at the last, on the night of His betrayal, He had to say to one, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? The Lord did not receive the suggestion of the twelve that the multitude should be dismissed, but said to them, Give ye them to eat. And He addressed Himself especially to this same Philip, saying, Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? He said this to prove him (John 6:6), knowing Himself what He would do. The twelve had been recently constituted apostles, preachers, miracle-workers. Here then was an occasion for them to test their resourcefulness. The Lord bade them feed the hungry people, but neither Philip nor any of the apostles were capable of grasping the true bearings of the situation, and counting upon help from the only possible source. The statistician of the company estimated that two hundred denarii spent in bread would only provide a little for each person. This would be equal to a pennyworth of bread for each twenty-five men in the company, and nothing for the women and children. Besides, where was such a great quantity of bread to be obtained in a country place but sparsely inhabited, as that was? Shall we go and buy? they ask, scornfully.* Yet did they not know the Scriptures? Had they forgotten what Jehovah had done in the days of Elisha? Then the loaves of a man from Baal-shalisha were multiplied so that a hundred men were satisfied (2 Kings 4:42-44). And a greater than Elisha NA, as there, even Jehovah Himself, who put to shame the unbelieving objections of His servant Moses in somewhat analogous circumstances (Numbers 11:1-35). Jesus also shamed the twelve; for out of His own love He cared for and fed these people.

{*John writing of another occasion, tells us that the disciples went into the town of Sychar to buy bread while Jesus sat by the well (John 4:8).} This miracle is remarkable as being one of the Lord’s few spontaneous ones. In contrast with the majority of recorded instances, He did not wait to be solicited to put forth His power, but acted straightway out of the fulness of His compassion. The sum of money named, ’two hundred pence,’ was a considerable one, and may have been in the common purse of the Lord’s company. It is estimated to have been equivalent to some seven pounds of our currency, but at the same time it must be remembered that the purchasing power of money was then greater. The ’penny’ was the Roman denarius, and the pay of a soldier was a denarius a day. This was also the liberal wages of a liberal master to the labourers in the vineyard, as we read in the parable (Matthew 20:1-34). A hundred denarii was a common currency multiple, as we may speak in round numbers of so many hundred pounds. We read in the New Testament of a) 100 denarii in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:28). b) 200 denarii in the answer of Philip (John 6:7). c) 300 denarii in the valuation of the ointment used upon the Lord (Mark 14:5; John 12:5). d) 500 denarii in the parable of the two debtors (Luke 7:41).

What a Man Hath On the failure of the apostles to provide any scheme for the relief of the people, the Lord Himself took up the case. He would not allow them to go empty away. And as was His custom, He made use of what they possessed, though this in itself was totally inadequate. He inquired of them how many loaves there were. And having ascertained, they reported that a lad who was present had two barley loaves and two fishes. Barley bread on account of its coarseness was the food of the poorest peasants only, the dried fish being eaten with it as a relish. In Solomon’s day barley was the food of horses (1 Kings 4:28). And the Midianite’s dream of a cake of barley bread rolling into the camp was a vivid metaphor of the dire straits to which the famished

poverty-stricken Israelites were reduced; nevertheless, by Jehovah's aid the despised cake overturned the tent of the oppressor (Judges 7:13). Here also the Lord took up what were poor, weak and contemptible as things of the world, and used them in the plenitude of His power and of His grace to satisfy the hunger of the assembled multitude.

It is instructive to observe that the Lord did not feed the people with bread from heaven, as manna came down day by day to Israel in the desert, but He multiplied the few loaves which they found in store until the wants of all were supplied. In like manner He changed the contents of the waterpots into wine for the marriage-feast at Cana. By such events the Lord showed how the power of God can magnify human inefficiency and insufficiency to the praise of the glory of His grace and to the liberal satisfaction of human need. He could, of course, in His own inherent power make all things new in His kingdom, but the time of the new creation had not then come, nor would it come until He Himself, its Head, rose from the dead. The Lord therefore made use of the five barley loaves, sad testimony as they were of the poverty of Jehovah's ancient people, and by means of them gave a demonstration of the future plenty of the promised land wherein they should eat bread without scarceness, and should not lack any good thing (Deuteronomy 8:9).

However, a great lesson lies here of perennial importance. In the matter of usefulness, God looks at what a man has, and not at what a man has not. And it is His way to use what a man has, if there be a willing mind. "What is that in thine hand?" Jehovah said to Moses, who was so full of excuses of his own unfitness to go to Egypt. Under Jehovah's power and direction the rod became a serpent, to the confusion of Pharaoh and his magicians. Shamgar had but an ox-goad, but in the might of the Lord he smote six hundred Philistines with it, and saved Israel. David had but a sling in his hand, but a smooth stone from it slew Goliath the giant, and the enemies of Israel were discomfited. The Philadelphian church is said to have but little strength, but like the widow's handful of meal and the drop of oil, it shall suffer no diminution. The Lord sets before this assembly with its modicum of power an open door which is impregnable, for no one can shut it (Revelation 3:8).

35. — Marshalling Into Order

1914 90 No spectacle, perhaps, exhibits greater disorder and confusion than a crowd of excited persons. Such a concourse is described most graphically in the reference to the mob assembled in the theatre at Ephesus, which cried for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." We read of them that, "Some cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together" (Acts 19:32). A multitude has no conscience to condemn the wrong, and no humane consideration for the weak. Many an outrage has been wrought by a hungry mob in a struggle for food. When the famished people of Samaria thronged out of the gates in quest of the food left in the deserted tents of the Syrians, they trod to death the supercilious captain who was set there to regulate the traffic. The Lord would not permit any such confusion. He was preparing a table in the wilderness for these Galilean folk, and He arranged the guests according to a definite plan. He would have no haste, no disorder. He Himself knew what He would do. He commanded the assembled thousands to be seated as at table, not where they would, but where and how He would. He was the Lord of the feast, and He would say to one, Sit here, and to another, Sit there, as it pleased Him. The mass of persons was divided systematically by Him according to a simple plan which all could understand

and follow. The men were to sit in one place, and the women and children in another by themselves. They were disposed in companies and ranks; in fifties, counting in one direction, and in rows of hundreds, counting in another; fifty hundreds, making five thousand, so far as the men were concerned.

Such an arrangement obviated confusion, and enabled the distribution of the bread and the fish to be made with equal fairness to all, while the task of distribution was made less laborious for the disciples. Even under these circumstances, considerable physical exertion was involved in handling the amount of food required to satisfy the hunger of all the company. Assuming for the purpose of making a rough estimate, that each person present ate one pound of bread, more than two and a quarter tons would be necessary for the men, omitting all provision for the women and children, and making no allowance for the fish, nor for the fragments that remained at the close of the meal. These items would increase the total weight beyond three tons. There was therefore a considerable bulk of food for the twelve apostles to handle.*

{*May we not believe that the whole bulk of the food was handled by the Lord Himself? Though it is idle to speculate as to the exact point where the multiplication took place, whether in the hands of the Lord or in those of the apostles.} The pre-arranged system materially lightened the labour incurred, and moreover enabled the people to take their meal without distraction. Looking back to the occasion of the Lord leaving Capernaum to come to this spot, we see that the unjealous Lord protected His guests from such interruptions and disturbances as those which prevented Him and His apostles from eating their food in peace, and which led Him to seek seclusion in the wilderness. The Lord’s Fellow-helpers When they were all seated in orderly array upon the green grass (for it was the springtime, and the herbage of the hillside was shooting up in young and beautiful life), the Lord took up the five loaves and the two fishes, their size being such that He could probably hold them all at once. In the presence of the assembled multitude He raised His eyes to heaven, as He did when He healed the deaf and dumb man (Mark 7:34), and when He came to the grave of Lazarus (John 11:41). This was an attitude of prayer and heavenly communion (John 17:1), and He had taught His disciples to pray, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . Give us this day our daily bread," assuring them at the same time that the heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air would not forget His more valuable creatures. By this act the Perfect Servant sets an example before all, acknowledging His dependence upon the One who sent Him, and in general effect taking up the language of the Psalmist: "Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes, O thou that sittest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of the maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the LORD our God until he have mercy upon us" (Psalms 123:1-2). The Lord also "blessed." In John 6:2 we read that He gave thanks. Luke says that He blessed the loaves and fishes (Luke 9:16), while Matthew and Mark speak only of blessing without naming the object. In Scriptural usage, blessing and the giving of thanks are closely joined. Both terms are used in connection with the Lord’s Supper, e.g., blessing (Mark 14:22; 1 Corinthians 10:16); and giving thanks (Mark 14:23; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). To bless (eulogeo) seems to combine (1 Corinthians 14:16) the ascription of praise and thanks to God with the sanctification of food for healthful use (1 Timothy 4:4-5). The Host then broke the victuals, and the distribution began with Him. The multiplication and the extent of it were altogether in His hands. Under His superintendence the little did not become less. He opened His hand and supplied the need of every living person before Him.

"'Twas springtide when He blessed the bread;

'Twas harvest when He brake." But the disciples were made sharers in this benefaction, which they had not been able to anticipate. He gave of the loaves and the fishes to them to set before the people. It was the Lord's part to bless the provision abundantly, and to satisfy these poor folks with bread (Psalms 132:15). But while the apostles could not multiply the five loaves into a bounty for five thousand men, they could transport the bounty as it accumulated to the hungry mouths of their brothers in Israel. This service they were called to perform under their Master's eye, and it was analogous to their subse quent spiritual service as the "fellow-labourers of God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). The apostles, though forming the foundation of the church, were never originators. They acted in the name of the Lord. As with the physical, so with the spiritual food; what they received of the Lord, they delivered to others, either for their physical or their spiritual nutrition, just as the case was, the Spirit, in the latter case, dividing to each one severally according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Overflowing Bounty

James, writing of the Giver of wisdom, says "He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Another contemplating His great riches of goodness, says, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." A transcendent generousness is the divine habit. Hence we read that at this feast in the wilderness, "they did all eat and were filled." Not one was overlooked. The weak women and children were not crowded off by selfish men, but all were supplied with an ample sufficiency, of which they were able to partake with ease and comfort as they sat upon the green grass. Philip's way would have been to provide enough bread for the meal, so that each might take "a little"; the Lord's way was to provide a superabundance, so that every one might have "as much as he would." We may not regard the superfluity as the result of a too liberal estimate on the part of the Lord. He who increased the scanty store by His omnipotence, knew, in His omniscience, the exact measure of the appetites of the multitude. But He did not stay the exercise of His multiplying power at that point. He gave them "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Was He not showing forth the Father, and the plenty of His house, where there is surely "bread enough and to spare"? He was, as it were, opening the windows of heaven and pouring out a blessing, and there was not room enough to receive it.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," says the proverb, and there was an exemplification of it that day. The abundance was such, that they were able at the close of the meal to gather together for future consumption twelve basketfuls of the portions which the Lord had broken off and divided. When Jehovah multiplied the widow's oil in the days of Elisha there was sufficient, when sold, to pay her debts, and also something for her to go on with. The same Lord was here, and was spreading before these weary and hungry Galileans the largess of Heaven. The very profusion of the gifts marked that they came from above. And the same feature of amplitude is true of spiritual things as of temporal, for where sin abounded, grace did superabound. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" The Lesson of Frugality The Lord who exhibited such plentitude in the provisions He spread before the multitude gave special directions for the care of such overplus as would be found when all needs were met. It is from John only of the four Evangelists that we learn of Jesus saying to His disciples, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). That nothing be lost! The Lord would not have us lose His gifts by waste or neglect because we have more than sufficient for the moment. When God gave seven years of plenty in Egypt, it was the spirit of divine wisdom in Joseph that

devised efficient measures to gather up the superabundance, and store it for the days of famine. Nothing was to be lost! When the people of Israel reached the land of Canaan, the Lord promised, in view of the rest of the sabbatic year, that He would command His blessing during the sixth year, so that the land might bring forth fruit sufficient for three years (Leviticus 25:21). But of what value would this abundance be to the nation, if the bounteous harvest was not carefully garnered? Again, we observe that in spite of profusion nothing was to be lost. In short, the lesson is one of general application. It is not pleasing to God that we should neglect or squander His bounties. To waste is to despise, to lose, His gifts. Economy is not contrary to, but consistent with true liberality, and thrift with benevolence and benefaction. That person who lays by in store as God has prospered him, is the person who is thereby prepared to bestow his gifts bountifully when occasion arises (1 Corinthians 16:2). The superabundant broken pieces were those which the Lord had broken off for distribution, and of these each apostle had a basketful over and above what was required by the people. The whole scene is eloquent of the rich goodness of God, provided by the Servant of Jehovah, and administered by the twelve apostles. It recalls the words of Paul written to the Corinthian believers: "God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having all sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work. . . being enriched in everything unto all liberality which worketh out through us thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:8-11).

36. — The Pathway over the Stormy Sea

1914 152 "And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat and to go before [him] unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And seeing them distressed1 in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them; but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition2, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer3: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed4 in themselves for they understood not concerning5 the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:45-52, R.V.).

{1 "tormented," McCl.; "toiling hard," T.S.G.; "labouring," J.N.D.

2 "phantom," T.S.G.: "ghost," McCl.

3 "take courage," T.S.G.; "Be of good courage," McC1:, J.N.D.

4 "beyond all measure amazed," T.S.G.; "exceedingly amazed," McCl.; "exceedingly beyond measure astonished," J.N.D.

5 "With the help of," McCl.; "through," J.N.D. See also note 65a, p. 256, W. Kelly’s Exposition of the Gospel of Mark, 1907.} The service of love to the famishing multitudes having been rendered, the Lord did what the disciples suggested He should do earlier in the day (ver. 36). He sent the people away. But, first of all, He constrained His disciples to embark in the boat and to precede Him in crossing to the other side of the lake near to Bethsaida.*

{*This Bethsaida was the city of Andrew and Peter, situated to the South of Capernaum, and therefore not Bethsaida Julias in the vicinity of which this miracle took place (Luke 9:10). There are some, however, who think otherwise, holding that Bethsaida Julias is the only town mentioned in the Gospels, and they translate pros, "over against," instead of "to Bethsaida" (Mark 6:45).} An unwillingness on the part of the disciples to obey seems implied in the terms of the narrative, such as "demanded a certain loving violence on His part to overcome." And from John (6) we learn what in all probability was the reason why the apostles needed to be "constrained," or forced to put to sea. The miracle of the loaves had awakened great popular excitement in the desert place, and the multitude were desirous to take Him by force and proclaim Him the Prophet and King of the Jews. The disciples had not sufficiently imbibed the spirit of their Master to judge rightly of this momentary impulse, and they would probably have taken sides with the mob to place Him on the throne of David. Jesus therefore sent them away, while He Himself calmed the turbulence of the people and dismissed them to their homes before night came on. The Lord valued this ebullition of popular feeling aright. He would not receive honour from men, nor would He commit Himself to man, for He knew what was in man. A year later, a crowd, not then of Galilee but of Jerusalem, would, He knew, follow Him and cry "Hosanna, blessed is the kingdom of our father David that cometh," while a few days later the same crowd would cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Messiah’s hour was not yet come. The Servant of Jehovah would not, therefore, consent to be hurried to the throne by popular clamour. God in due time would give His judgments to the King, and then the anointed of the Lord would judge the people in righteousness and the poor with judgment (Psalms 72:1-20). For the moment, the marvellous multiplication of the loaves and fishes seemed most attractive to the indigent peasantry of Galilee who were accustomed to earn their small morsel of bread by much sweat of the face. Jesus therefore seemed to them to be most desirable — a king after their own heart. But when they sought Him the next’ day that they might exalt Him, the Lord unveiled to them the secrets of their inner selves, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

Because Jesus had so liberally fed the multitude they were prepared to come in their zeal, and by force to make Him a king. "But the Lord would not take the kingdom from zeal like this. This could not be the source of the kingdom of the Son of man. The beasts (Daniel 7:2-3) may take their kingdoms from the winds striving upon the great sea, but Jesus cannot (Daniel 7:13). This was not His mother crowning Him in the day of His espousals (Song of Solomon 3:1-11). This was not, in His ear, the shouting of the people bringing in the head-stone of the corner; nor the symptom of His people made willing in the day of His power. This would have been an appointment to the throne of Israel on scarcely better principles than those on which Saul had been appointed of old. His kingdom would have been the fruit of a heated desire of the people, as Saul’s had been the fruit of their revolted heart. But this could not be."

Prayer in the Mountain Solitude The disciples having embarked and the crowds having been dismissed, Jesus departed into the mountain alone to pray. This reference is the second one made in this Gospel to the prayers of the Lord. On the first occasion we are told that "in the morning a great while before day he rose up and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). This was in Capernaum at the beginning of His public ministry, and was the sequel to a day of strenuous toil. The present occasion was after some two years of His public

service had passed, during which the multitudes of Galilee had everywhere welcomed Him and His preaching of the kingdom. But a change was now imminent. The Evangelists unite to show us that at this juncture the spirit of envy and malice began to display itself more openly against Jesus. The opposition that had hitherto slumbered now awoke to a vigorous action which grew in intensity until it finally reached, a year later, the climax of the cross. In view of this definitive rejection by His beloved people, Jesus took up the burden of it upon His spirit before His Father. And may we not believe that as He most surely felt in the silent midnight the poignancy of a despised love, so the lonely mountain-altar smoked with the fragrant frankincense of a submissive will: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight? "

It seems the way of the Spirit of God in the Gospels to give us momentary glimpses of Jesus such as these in order that we may see the historical fulfilment of prophecies which were given long before concerning the Servant of Jehovah. These holy men of old were not silent concerning the apparent failure of the Sent One of God when He should come to introduce Israel to the blessings of the new covenant. It was said that the Servant would labour for the name of Jehovah, but that His assiduity would be in vain so far as outward result would manifest. He would spend His strength without stint, but for nought in seeming effectiveness. The Messiah would come to gather Israel under His wings, but Israel would refuse to be gathered. Surely we see these things outlined in the praying Christ, and we see Him there upon the mountain-side learning obedience to the written will of Jehovah by the things He was suffering in His spirit. But after the long dark night comes the glad day. In those sacred solitudes the blessed Saviour was wrapped in secret communion until the morn approached. The night watches were passing, the day would break, the shadows would flee away. The same prophecy that foretold failure also foretold triumph. "But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity, yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:4-6). There was thus a joyful issue set before the face of the Lord; and in the morning watch He came to His disciples, walking on the sea. The Distress of the Disciples A storm was no unusual phenomenon on the Sea of Galilee. Indeed, this inland lake was noted for the prevalence of violent tempests which arose with great suddenness. The apostles were natives of the surrounding districts and were therefore familiar with this feature. And those of them who had been fishermen must often have experienced similar storms in the course of their regular occupation. On this occasion we are told that the sea arose because of the great wind that blew against them. The boatmen had intended to skirt the northern coast, but they appear to have been driven in the opposite direction towards the southern shore. Consequently, though they spent a great part of the night labouring at the oars they made but very little real progress towards their "desired haven," because they were pitting themselves against the forces of Nature. And though they struggled zealously to gain their destination, they were no match for the opposing elements.

There was undoubtedly a great tempest, but it is not to be gathered directly from the narrative that the apostles were in imminent personal danger. In the case of the storm recorded earlier in the

Gospel the waves washed into the boat, and the apostles felt themselves perishing when they aroused their Master. Here it is not stated that the storm threatened to overwhelm the barque, though there must always be danger in an open boat with winds and waves running high. But we do read that the Lord saw the disciples distressed with rowing. Such was the particular difficulty of the moment. They had been pulling at the oars with all their might without making any headway. This was weary work, and dispiriting too. And yet had not the Lord constrained them to embark that evening? And they might have reflected that, in effect, it was He who had set them at this work of rowing in the teeth of a strong gale, and such a reflection would give rise to disparaging thoughts of Him. But was there not some ulterior purpose in the trying experiences of that night? Had not these fishers of men to learn thereby that there are times in Christian history when no fishing can be done, when no sail can be set to run easily before the breeze, when, in fact, every muscle must strain at the oar to keep the boat's head in the right direction and to prevent drifting, while no real progress seems possible? What the Lord was facing in spirit on the mountain top, the apostles were learning upon the stormy waters in a manner more suited to the measure of their understanding. The servants, like their Master, were labouring in vain and spending their strength for nought.

There was an essential difference, however, in the two cases. On the one hand, the Lord submitted to apparent failure in His service; on the other hand, the apostles lacked the needful strength to secure for themselves a victorious combat. The Lord forebore to exercise His power; His servants did not possess that degree of power which the occasion demanded. But before the morning broke, while they had proved their own insufficiency, they had also proved the almighty power of their Lord and Master to make them easy conquerors in spite of themselves.

36. — The Appearance of Jesus

1914 167 Jesus on the mountain-side was not in ignorance of the precarious position of His followers. From the place of prayer He saw them toiling hard in rowing. May we not believe, indeed, that they in the extremity of their trial were the subject of His intercession? At a later day we know He said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). So that we have reason for boldly thinking that the Lord was the Unseen Helper of these distressed ones throughout that night.

We believe, in short, that He who prayed that the faith of Simon might not fail prayed in like manner for the faith of the twelve. Their trial was permitted to extend through the long hours of darkness that the tribulation might work out patience, and patience experience, and experience hope — the hope that maketh not ashamed.

Such being the divine purpose, there was the occasion for much soul-discipline throughout the night-watches. The apostles must have often thought, and possibly often spoken of their absent Master. How they then desired the presence of Him who had formerly stood up in the boat during a similar storm, and rebuked the wind and the sea. Surely they must have had some expectation that He would come to their relief. Blessed servants would they be if when their Lord did come He found them watching, counting upon Him in faith that He would not utterly forsake them. But He came to them not in the second watch, nor in the third watch. Nor was it until the dark hour before the dawn that the bright and morning Star appeared. "But they when they saw him walking on the

sea supposed that it was an apparition and cried out; for they all saw him, and were all troubled." The Lord’s method of approaching the disciples was altogether superhuman.* The manner, it is needless to say, was unexpected on their part. Among all the wonders related in the Old Testament there was no parallel to this one. At the national crisis which arose at the passage of the Red Sea, Jehovah, in the morning watch, looked forth upon the hosts of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and delivered the people of Israel from their foes. But the wonder on the Galilean Sea was of another order.

{*It is said that the Egyptian hieroglyph for an impossible thing is a figure of feet walking on the water. Compare Job 9:8.} The sight of the Master of the elements making His way to them across the heaving billows must have been overwhelming to these men. There was, in this instance, no forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord, to make His paths straight. Unannounced, He approached the little band, treading His way through the surge of the mighty waters. They were troubled on seeing Him thus, for as yet they had not understood Jesus who He was. They did not realise that the sea was His; He had made it. Truly, His way was in the sanctuary, but equally His way was in the sea and His paths in the great waters (Psalms 77:13; Psalms 77:19). They had yet to hear His promise, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you," though He anticipated the enunciation of it by His appearance to the storm-tossed mariners, as He had done in a former day to the three bound men in the furnace of fire (Daniel 3:1-30), coming, as we may say, alike through fire and water to the relief of His own. But when the Lord came across the sea He sought a response from His disciples. He came within their ken, and He would have passed them by. He looked that His appearance should awaken some impulse of appeal to Him (cp. Luke 24:28), for they all saw Him, as Mark tells us. There was, however, no intelligent recognition of their Master on the part of the apostles. We read that they cried out in fear, for they supposed they saw a phantom. The vision on the waves, they thought, was not real — an apparition — the creation of their own imagination.

Such was the delusion of the little company, notwithstanding the power they had lately received and which they had exercised over evil spirits. The appearance of their Master filled them with more alarm than the fury of the storm seems to have done. That fear — the fear of the unknown — possessed them of which Eliphaz spoke when he said, "Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before my eyes" (Job 4:14-16). The Lord’s Word of Good Cheer But the Lord never failed in the supply of His gracious help in the needful measure and at the needful moment. The disciples uttered no direct prayer to Him for aid, but their cry of fear and distress arrested Him, and instantly He wrought for their relief, allaying their fears with His word. "He straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I: be not afraid." The Lord’s first word, on this occasion, was addressed to the apostles, while in the previous storm it was first addressed to the waves and the sea. The actual necessity, therefore, for the Lord’s interposition was distinct in the two cases. In the first instance, there was imminent peril to be averted. In the second, a tempest of fear was sweeping over the men’s hearts; their courage, nerve and assurance were apparently exhausted. Then, the Lord remarked upon their lack of faith. Nov His words show there was a lack of peace in their hearts. It would seem that in the one case the chief trouble was without and around, while in the other the more pressing need was within the troubled hearts of the disciples. At any rate, we have the historical

fact that the Lord’s words, with their threefold message from the waves, were addressed to His distracted followers. He said to them: —

(1) Be of good cheer (courage)

(2) It is I;

(3) Be not afraid.

(1) The Servant of Jehovah was commissioned to bring "consolation" to Israel (Luke 2:25). This He did individually as well as nationally. There were many hearts stricken. with fear among those with whom the Lord came in contact during his ministry. And we find the exhortation "Be of good cheer" was one He loved to speak. "Cheer" is that comfort of heart which springs from implicit confidence in the love and power of God. And who could impart this sustaining virtue like our Lord? Besides the present occasion, Jesus used these words in the following four cases, two being cases of physical weakness and two of mental distress; two being in the midst of trouble, and two full of apprehension of what was imminent: a) To the sick of the palsy whom the four men of faith laid at his feet (Matthew 9:2). b) To the feeble and trembling woman who touched the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:22). c) At the close of His valedictory address to His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). d) In the hour of great persecution at Jerusalem, the risen and ascended Lord stood by Paul and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).

(2) In the next place, the Lord, by His words "It is I," corrects the error of the apostles regarding Himself. Most probably they failed to recognise Him, because they were not expecting Him to come to them at that particular time or in that particular manner. Hence they imagined they saw a phantom until the Master said, "It is I." Similar cases of non-recognition occurred after the Lord’s resurrection. When J esus appeared to Mary and spoke to her, she supposed Him to be the gardener until He called her by name (John 20:15). And again, when He subsequently presented Himself in the midst of His disciples and said, "Peace be unto you," they were terrified and affrighted and supposed they had seen a spirit (Luke 24:37). Speaking generally, we may say that it is the latent incredulity of man’s heart which prevents him from accepting the operation of divine power and love in superhuman ways, and such sluggish comprehension was often displayed by the apostles. The Lord dispersed the unbelief of those in the boat by a word which awakened their dull memories to a recognition of Himself. He is One whom they knew. Hence His words were, "It is I." It was as if He said to them, "Your Master and Lord is before you." And it will be remembered that He used similar words to them after His resurrection, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Luke 24:39).

(3) The third exhortation to the agitated disciples was "Be not afraid." It is one of the many offices of perfect love to cast out fear (1 John 4:18). And the Lord during His ministry often used His assuring words of love and power to deliver trembling ones from the bondage of fear. The sense of His presence was and is all-sufficient to banish the dread of coming calamity. The Lord knew this when He gave the verbal promise of His abiding presence to those He was leaving in the world: "Lo, I am with you always." And the pious heart knows this from experience when he sings: —

"O Lord, Thou art enough The mind and heart to fill Thy life — to calm the troubled soul, Thy love — its fear dispel." The apostles realised the same blessed truth on that stormy night. For after He had spoken to them these words, He went up unto them into the boat and the wind ceased. The Lord’s word of comfort was succeeded by His act of deliverance.

Callous Hearts At this miraculous display the apostles "were beyond all measure amazed, for they bethought nut on the loaves, for their heart was hardened" (T. S. Green’s rendering). Thus they failed to exercise that degree of faith and confidence in their Master which might be expected from men who were privileged followers of Jesus and eye-witnesses from the beginning of His ministry of many phases of His divine power. The Lord exhibited before them His personal control of the unruly elements, and they were filled with wonderment such as the multitude often displayed in their unreflecting ignorance (Mark 2:12). Like Israel of old whose tendency was to forget Jehovah and their deliverance from Egypt (Psalms 78:7; Psalms 78:1), the anxieties of the moment obliterated the marvellous mercies of the past from the minds of the disciples. Even the miracle of the previous afternoon, in which they had the honour of being distributors of the Lord’s bounty was forgotten by them. Such is the natural disposition of our hearts, for they were but men of like passions with ourselves. This failure of the apostles is said to be because (1) they understood not the loaves, and (2) their heart was hardened. The verb used in the text for "understanding" has been variously rendered, but it appears on the whole to imply the putting together of matters in the mind and heart in order to ascertain by spiritual reflection their true significance. Like other scriptural words it seems to be employed with great breadth and with various shades of meaning. It occurs, for example, in the address of Stephen. Speaking of Moses slaying the Egyptian, he says, "He supposed his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance but they understood not" (Acts 7:25). So also Joseph and Mary understood not a certain saying of Jesus (Luke 2:50). The Lord opened not the minds of the disciples that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45). It became true of Israel nationally in the day of their visitation that "they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13), and on account of their wilfulness judgment came upon them, and the heart of the people waxed gross lest they should understand with their heart (Acts 28:26-27). In this passage of Mark we are instructed that the apostles failed to glorify the Lord in a great crisis because they had not sufficiently considered the miracle of the loaves. They saw in the miracle the work of His omnipotent hand, but they neglected to perceive in it the intense love of His heart for needy men. They had been witnesses of and participants in the labour of feeding the five thousand, and that deed of mercy was done not only to satisfy hungry mouths but also to awaken slothful hearts. It was another proof that Jehovah Himself was present in Israel giving His people bread. But the hearts of the disciples were so dull that they missed the significance of His presence, and consequently they lacked that source of comfort in the hour of their trial.

If their hearts were not hardened, if they had but considered the loaves, would they have set limitations to the love and power of the Servant of Jehovah? Would they have thought that He who had displayed omnipotence on the land, lacked omniscience on the sea? Would they have thought that He who had showed such solicitude could so change in a few hours as to forget in their peril the band of servants whom He had chosen to be His companions? The Lord came over the waves seeking a spirit of fidelity and confidence in the hearts of the disciples, but He found instead deadly dulness and spiritual insensibility. There was hardness or blindness of heart in them as well as in

the Pharisees (Mark 3:5), in Israel (Romans 11:7; Romans 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:14), and in the Gentiles (Ephesians 4:18). Thus Jesus discovered no response in the apostles to the labours of His love, and when He delivered them from the fury of the storm, against which they were vainly battling, they were excessively astonished. If they expected deliverance at all, they did not expect it in that manner. However, their hard hearts were melted, and "they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). The Lesson for Today The lesson of unwavering faith and confidence in the Lord is one needing to be learned again and again and afresh by us. We readily enough recognise the greatness of our foes and the weakness of our might, but not so quickly the power and grace of our Friend and Deliverer. The apostle Paul "considered" the miracle of the loaves and of the waves, as it were, and has expressed the teaching of them in terms of the spiritual world for the comfort of us all. He wrote to the saints at Corinth, "we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell [us] in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life yea, we ourselves have had the answer of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead: who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:8-10, R.V.).

Let us then exercise faith in face of the adverse forces of this world which we must needs encounter. He who has power to deliver has also sympathy for us in our infirmities, and can give us peace within before He gives peace around. And though we may not be immediately delivered, He will bear our infirmities and carry our sorrows. So that from our sea of tossing billows we may look upward to our Intercessor on high, and say:

"Thou who hast trod the thorny road Wilt share each small distress: The love, which bore the greater load, Will not refuse the less,"

37. — The Morning Without Clouds

1914 183 "And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored1 to the shore.2 And when they were come out of the boat, straightway the people knew him, and ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds3 those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market-places, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border4 of his garment:5 and as many as touched him were made whole"6 (Mark 6:53-56, R.V.).

{1 "made," J.N.D.

2 "in the haven," McC.

3 "couches," J.N.D.; "pallet-beds," McC.

4 "hem," J.N.D.; "fringe," McC.

5 "outer garment," McC.; "mantle," T.S.G.

6 "healed," T.S.G.; "saved," McC.} The sequel to the narrative of the miracle on the lake, as recorded both in Matthew and Mark, is remarkable, though our interest and attention are apt to be

so powerfully attracted by the display upon the waters of our Lord’s power in the physical world that we overlook those beneficent effects that followed in profusion when He came to the shore and that equally proved Him to be the Lord from heaven. During the ministry of Jesus, the activities of His mercy were incessant, and were spread alike over land and sea, by night and by day. The Servant of Jehovah never wearied in His task of spreading out the lovingkindnesses of Heaven before the dull eyes of Israel, taking up in spirit the Psalmist’s words, "Oh, that men would praise the LORD for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalms 107:31).

There was still among the people of Galilee an outward interest in the Lord and a widespread belief in Him as a wonder-worker. Before He set out from Capernaum on the boat-journey the people came flocking to Him (ver. 31), and during that journey on the previous day a multitude followed on the land (ver. 33) that they might hear Him again. Now when the boat was moored to the western shore after the night of tempest the Lord was recognised, and a crowd quickly gathered again that His healing power might be exercised upon them; and they did not seek Him in vain.

These two or three verses form a comprehensive summary of the Lord’s service at this period. Judging from the narratives of Matthew and Mark, the miracles began directly after the crossing of the sea, and thus constitute the immediate sequel to the stilling of the storm. But it is not implied by either of the Evangelists that all the cases of healing contemplated in the summary took place on a single day*. On the contrary, the interest is said to have been aroused throughout the whole region of Gennesaret, and wherever the Lord went, whether into a village, or town, or district, the sick ones were brought into the market-places that they might touch the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole.

{*Compare a similar but not identical summary in Matthew 4:23-25.} The Shadows Fleeing Away The dark watches of the tempestuous night were ended, the roaring of the mighty billows had ceased, the storm-tossed boat was at its desired haven, the rising sun chased every gloomy cloud away and beamed in peace and joy upon a smiling land. The Lord with His disciples came to the land of Gennesaret, as Matthew and Mark tell us. This was the name given to the strip of country lying along the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The district is described by Josephus, the historian of the Jews, as one of singular beauty and fertility. Its name, Gennesaret*, is said to signify the "king’s garden," and, if so, it is singularly appropriate in this connection, forming a pictorial allusion to the glad time when the Lord shall come, and the whole land shall be as the garden of the Lord (Isaiah 51:3).

{*The "land of Gennesaret" is only mentioned in the New Testament in this connection (Matthew 14:34; Mark 6:53). The "lake of Gennesaret" occurs once only (Luke 5:1). Dr. John Lightfoot regarded the term as meaning by derivation "the garden or gardens of the king or prince."}

However that may be, we may see here, without an undue exercise of imagination, some partial fulfilment of that long-promised day breaking and the shadows fleeing away. Certainly across this fertile Galilean country the shadows of death were lying, shadows sinless Eden never knew. Indeed, this district in the neighbourhood of Capernaum by the sea was described by Isaiah in one of his prophecies as the land of the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2), and the fulfilment of that particular prophecy so far as it related to the ministry of the Lord, is stated by Matthew. Speaking

of the preaching of Jesus, he says, "the people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:12-16).

It is true that the sad phrase, "the shadow of death," is of frequent occurrence in Holy Writ, and is found no less than ten times in the Book of Job, where the terrible devastation wrought in a single household by the "king of terrors" is the main topic. But it is a matter of special interest to note that the phrase is definitely applied by the prophet and by the evangelist to this land on whose shores Jesus landed after the storm.

Here the stroke of death menaced men in every direction, whether in an exceptional degree we are not informed. But there were sick persons in every town and village and along the countryside. Dark shadows were in the streets, in the homes, and in the hearts of these Galileans everywhere. But when the people recognised Jesus, they carried the sick ones on their beds to the place where He was. They laid them in the market-places that they might touch if only the border of His garment, and as many as touched Him were made whole.

It was thus that the shadows were dispersed. The pain and infirmity of the sufferers, the fears and anxieties of the watchers were alike dispelled by the presence of the Lord of abounding mercy. Many a one that day proved that while weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. The good Shepherd who had fed the flock of Israel, literally and figuratively, the previous evening, now appeared again to His people, and walked with them, as it were, comforting them with His rod and staff, more potent in mercy than those of Moses and Elisha. The Presence of the Lord

There is a striking outstanding feature in this short section of the Gospel. This feature is the beneficent effect produced directly by the presence of Jesus upon the dwellers upon that favoured shore. They brought the sick to the place where they heard He was. It was sufficient that the suffering ones should touch Him or the hem of His garment, and they were healed. We are not told that the Lord touched them or even spoke to them. But power went out from Him, drawn forth to relieve the circumstances of needy faith. This outgoing of His personality was also the manner of His service in the storm. There was then no recorded word or act, but on going into the boat where the disciples were, the wind ceased. Thus His presence was recognised. The unruly elements on the sea, pain and sickness on the land, alike confess Him in effect as Jehovah-Shammah, the true seat on earth of Jehovah’s power.

We have elsewhere in the Gospels another instance of the spontaneous effluence of remedial mercy from the Lord. This was on an earlier occasion when great crowds had gathered to Him. Then "all the multitude sought to touch him: for power came forth from him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19, R.V.). But with regard to the present instance we ask whether we may not learn something from the fact that the incident appears to be arranged, apart from its chronology, as an appendix to the stilling of the storm. For it cannot be denied that the work of the Servant of Jehovah on this occasion was in essence that which the prophecies declare He will yet do for the nation as a whole, and indeed for all the world. In the evening the Lord satisfied the hungry mouths of the people with good things; and in the morning He healed all their diseases. He thus fulfilled to some extent to Israel (those in Galilee being for the time representative of the nation) that ancient promise of Jehovah: "Ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exodus 23:25). But it is to be noted that the two clauses of this promise were separated, as regards their fulfilment, by the events of

the intervening night. Before the morning of blessing dawned upon the people, the little band of Messiah's followers had to pass through the terrors of the storm, and on each occasion the presence or absence of Christ gave its character to the event. The Lord was present in Bethsaida, and their bread was multiplied. He was present in Gennesaret, and their infirmities were banished. He was absent from the ship, and the adverse forces of winds and waves baffled their progress. He entered the boat, and immediately the storm ceased, and they were at the "king's garden." The Allegorical Aspect From the point of view taken in these suggestions, we see that these happenings upon the lake and shore of Gennesaret, while they may not be considered to be exactly types, have their allegorical aspect as to future events in the history of the kingdom. And this aspect we may now briefly consider under two heads, viz.: —

(1) The violent storm which effectually opposed the progress of the followers of the Lord;

(2) The effect of the coming and presence of Jesus on sea and on land.

(1) In the first place, then, the disciples, in crossing the lake in obedience to the Lord towards the place to which He had directed them, were so fiercely opposed by winds and waves that they were unable to go forward. It has already been observed that in general principle these conditions are applicable, as an illustration, to the history of the church of Christ in the midst of its difficulties and in face of the antagonism of the world. But the general principle has, without doubt, a more direct application to the fortunes of the faithful and pious Jewish remnant in the troublous times which immediately precede the establishment of millennial glory upon the earth.

There will be in that period zealous and courageous witnesses for Christ who will proclaim the gospel of the imminent kingdom in the face of persecution which will be unparalleled in its severity. This struggle in the teeth of the storm is plainly set forth by our Lord in His prophecy delivered on the mount of Olives. He at that time declared that His coming for the deliverance of Israel would be preceded by tribulation such as the world had never known. The various political organisations of that day would be thrown into a state of indescribable uproar and confusion and conflict, a condition of things of which the storm on the Sea of Galilee is a striking figure.*

{*Compare the phrase of our Lord in Luke 21:25 : "the sea and the waves roaring." The metaphor is descriptive of this period of "Jacob's trouble."} This widespread conflict of national forces must necessarily bring about general hardship and suffering. But the special feature for our present consideration is the effect of this upheaval upon the followers of the Lamb. And the Lord showed in His discourse on the mount of Olives what this effect would be. He warned the faithful that they would be persecuted and betrayed and killed, being hated of all the nations, and the trial would be so severe and exacting that many would not endure to the end. The Lord's words, as we have them in Matthew, who presents the prophecy in its amplest and furthest scope, were as follows: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail. Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:7-14, R.V.). The "end" will bring

judgment upon the habitable world, and all the tribes of the land shall wail at the coming of the Son of man. But the faithful followers of Christ will be preserved throughout this great tribulation, and will be delivered at His coming from all their sorrows.

Speaking generally, tribulation has been the lot of every Christian since the days of Pentecost, even as the Master forewarned His disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). But in this prophecy of the Lord's we have what is exceptional and unequalled, and what will only be terminated by the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the words quoted above from Matthew describe the sort of opposition that those who go out to preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the nations will inevitably encounter.

1915 199 Mark represents, in similar terms, the hard case of those faithful Jewish preachers struggling against the stormy billows of worldly hate and cruelty. We there read, "For those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be" (Mark 13:19). On the occasion of the tempest the apostles had but just returned from their first tour of gospel preaching in Galilee. It was needful for them to learn that before the kingdom which they were proclaiming would be set up in power, and during the absence of their Master, they would find themselves beset by the most powerful adversaries. May we not, therefore, regard, this storm on the lake as illustrative of the Satanic fury with which the authorities of this world will by-and-by make their onslaught upon the Jewish witnesses of the coming kingdom? But at the same time it is shown that the onslaught will be in vain, for the little flock will find that there is an Intercessor on high and a Deliverer at hand.

(2) In the second place, we cannot but mark the special effect that was exercised by the appearance of Jesus. As soon as the apostles knew their Master, as soon as they, in effect, said, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," the tempest ceased, the danger was passed, the goal of their hopes and aims was realised. Such was the effect upon the turbulent sea; what was the effect of His appearance on shore? As soon as the inhabitants knew that Jesus was there, they proved Him to be their Deliverer from their sicknesses and from the sorrows that followed in their train. The tree of life was in the garden, and they found no flaming sword to terrify the weak and timid. All who would might eat of its fruit and live, and not die. Thus in Gennesaret a sample was given of the powers of the age to come, only in that future age the tree of life shall not be for Israel only, but its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations also (Revelation 22:1-2). The passage forms a striking illustration in miniature of the prophetic words of the sweet psalmist of Israel when he spoke of the coming of the Blessed One to usher in the great day of peace and joy: "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; a morning without clouds; when the tender grass springeth out of the earth through clear shining after rain" (2 Samuel 23:4, R.V.).

It is beautiful to observe how in this favoured land the mercy of the Lord was available for any and for all. They brought their sick for healing wherever they heard He was. It was truly a gospel to the needy people when one said, Lo, here is the Christ; or, Lo, He is there. They found they were free to touch Him and be blessed. And this liberty of access recalls, by force of contrast, Eve's false report of God's word concerning the tree in the garden, when she said, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:3). Here the dying touched and lived.

Touching and Seeing

"Touching" seems more applicable, as a figure, to the faith of a Jew than to the faith of a Christian It is concerning those who believe on Chris hidden in the heavens that Peter wrote: "whom not having seen, ye love: on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The faith of the future day of the Lord's presence will be associated with an Object of sight and of touch, as it were. It will be of the sort signified by the action of the Jewish women who, when they saw the Lord after His resurrection, "took hold of his feet and worshipped him (Matthew 28:9). But Mary Magdalene on the same day was instructed by the risen Christ in the exercise of faith of a higher order — faith which requires nothing visible or tangible in its object, but penetrates even unto the Unseen Presence on high. To her the Lord said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). She was surely to learn from this utterance that earthly relationships with the Messiah were suspended, and heavenly ones about to be established between the ascended Saviour and His own. This faith which introduces us to present heavenly realities is declared to be more blessed than that of Thomas Didymus, who insisted on seeing and touching before he would believe. Thomas would not accept the testimony of the apostolic body that they had seen the Lord. "Except," he said, "I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." This disciple was therefore a representative of the unbelieving class who will not believe on the testimony of others, but who require to see for themselves. Jesus said to him, distinguishing for all time the two orders or degrees of faith, "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:24-29). The latter order or character is that of today, for we "walk by faith, and not by sight." The former order is that of the future — the day of the coming of the Lord, when every eye shall see Him, and the Jews particularly shall look on Him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7). Both classes are happy and privileged, but the Lord, by His words to Thomas, has placed a special mark of approbation and favour upon those who believe on Him in the period of His absence.

Peter Walking upon the Waters The incident of Peter leaving the boat and walking in that strange pathway upon the waters along with his Master is not recorded in any of the Gospels except that of Matthew, although the account of the Lord's doing so is to be found in all the four. Strictly, it does not fall within the scope of our present consideration, which is confined to the Second Gospel, but in view of its close historical connection with this section, it may not be unprofitable to seek some enlightenment upon the moral significance of this miracle. The account of the episode as given in Matthew is as follows: — "Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were gone up into the boat, the. wind ceased" (Matthew 14:27-32, R.V.).

It must now suffice to draw attention to the main features of this record, and these are twofold. (1) Peter walking on the waters is a triumph of faith over insuperable obstacles of nature; and (2) Peter sinking in the waters is the collapse of nature so soon as faith was replaced by doubt. So far as Peter was concerned, faith was the essential quality which enabled him to occupy this position in humble imitation of his Master.

It will at once be seen that the bold and impulsive apostle by his enterprise stands out in remarkable contrast with his fellows. In the boat they remained in the place of usual security under such circumstances. On the waters Peter had abandoned all earthly means of safety, and was relying exclusively upon the superhuman power of the Lord to sustain him. The apostle, however, did not take up this position of his own accord, but sought and obtained permission to do so. Jesus had said to them all, "It is I." Peter answered, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." That passionate love was burning within him which caused him on a later occasion to leap from the boat at the sight of his beloved Master upon the shore, and make his way, strong swimmer as he was, to be the first to greet Him (John 21:7). And now Peter, having recognised the voice of the Good Shepherd, desired to demonstrate before the eyes of all that it was no phantom form which they saw upon the waves, but the One who was all-powerful to sustain and to deliver. At an early day he left his nets at the call of Jesus to follow Him upon the land (Mark 1:18); now he was prepared to leave the boat at his Master's call, and follow Him upon the sea also. The Lord gave the single and sufficient word, "Come"; and the apostle obeyed. In thus abandoning the boat and walking upon the waters to come to Jesus, the apostle did. but carry into effect the principles of faithful service laid down by the Lord Himself in another place: "If any man serve me let him follow me: and where I am, there shall also my servant be if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

It is, therefore, true of Peter that he went forth to the Lord in response to His "Come"; and

He is thus an apt illustration, to that extent, of the believer today. This character is also figuratively expressed by the Lord in the parable of the ten virgins, to whom the cry was, "Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him" (Matthew 25:6, R.V.). In distinction from the other disciples, Peter left the boat while the storm was still raging, and walked upon the waters to Jesus, and returned with Him to the boat; and then the storm ceased — a vivid figure of the return of Christ with His, church to bring peace to the troubled earth. Matthew only of the four Evangelists makes specific reference to the church. This we find in his record of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Son of the living God. "Upon this rock," Christ says, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). It is therefore in keeping with this character of the First Gospel that it is only in it we have the figure of the church supplied by the same apostle walking on the waters.

It was a great wonder to see Jesus walking in this manner, but it was even a greater wonder to see Peter "follow His steps." In the Master there was inherent power to do so; but in Peter there was only imparted power; and that power was imparted to him because he trusted in the Lord, who afterwards said to His disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (John 14:12).

Apart from faith, Peter was as another man upon the waters. And when he considered the fury of the winds and the waves he began to sink, as any man would do. But even when he had lowered himself to the level of those who lack faith, he was not abandoned when he cried out in his extremity, "Lord, save me." On the contrary, Jesus immediately stretched forth His hand, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The Lord remained faithful to the one who had followed him in obedience to His word, and who had honoured Him in this manner by his confidence. This deliverance by the Lord is in accordance with the words of the apostle Paul, who

wrote, "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). The Lord was the same both in Peter's triumph and in Peter's failure; the only change was in the disciple into whose heart doubt had crept. The following extract gives an admirable summary of the wider significance of this incident.

Jesus "sent away the Jewish people, who had surrounded Him during the period of His presence here below. The departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter, individually, in coming out of the ship, goes in figure beyond the position of this remnant. He represents that faith which, forsaking the earthly accommodation of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus, who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea — a bold undertaking, but based on the word of Jesus, 'Come.'

"Yet remark here that this walk has no other foundation than 'If it be Thou'; that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends upon Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water. Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which therefore imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character.

"Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure. He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover, the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm — that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail and the Lord is forgotten.

"For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him who is above them all. Nevertheless, blessed be God! He who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple: and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him.

"Peter's fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with it) instead of looking at Jesus, who was unchanged, and who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed. Still, the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done: only it was now to His shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion, and walking like the Lord.

"Jesus having entered the ship, the wind ceases. Even so it will be when Jesus returns to the remnant of His people in this world. Then also will He be worshipped as the Son of God by all that are in the ship with the remnant of Israel. In Gennesaret Jesus again exercises the power which shall hereafter drive out from the earth all the evil that Satan has brought in. For when He returns, the world will recognise Him. It is a fine picture of the result of Christ's rejection, which this Gospel has already made known to us as taking place in the midst of the Jewish nation."* {*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby; Matthew's Gospel in loco (Vol. 3, pp. 118-120.)} 38. — Vain Ablutions

"And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market place, except they wash themselves, they eat not: and many other things there be, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men" (Mark 7:1-8, R.V.),

Attention has already been directed in previous papers to the manner in which a general opposition to the progress of the gospel of the kingdom was foreshadowed by the wind-storm which swept down upon the apostolic band of its preachers during their voyage across the Lake of Galilee. The adverse forces depicted by this sign-miracle possess the distinguishing feature of being external to the kingdom itself. The winds and the waves therefore would be figurative of violent powers of evil which would assail the "little flock" of disciples from without.

We now come to a section in this Gospel which still deals with threatening dangers, but points in this case to that form of evil which would arise from within, that is, to an insidious and corrupting foe to the truth of God which in its attacks would be masked under the guise of piety. Hypocrisy, garbed in exceptional religious zeal and austere devotion, had even then corrupted the Jewish nation beyond remedy, and the record forewarns that a similar dead formalism would not fail to envelop Christendom — that form of the kingdom of God which would immediately succeed the earthly people in its responsibility to maintain the light of testimony for God among men. Man’s natural heart, the ever-present and ever-active fountain of evil, would then, as it had done in the generation of that day when Christ was present, elevate to the seat of supreme authority its own deceitful imaginations, displacing the commandments of God by the traditions of men.

It is not to be imagined that evil is any the less effectual in destroying the accredited witness for God because its attacks are subtle and not openly violent. The great enemy of the truth adopts tactics of both kinds, seeking either to affright the followers of Christ as a "roaring lion," or to insinuate his deadly errors among them in the guise of an "angel of light." And we may remark for our personal profit how the Lord on this occasion showed that a punctilious formalism expressed in the form of an inordinate piety was, even then, nullifying the authority of God in the house of Israel. The Accusations of the Pharisees The disciples were accused of eating bread with unwashed hands. This criticism of their behaviour was made by certain Pharisees and scribes who had come up to Galilee from Jerusalem. Among the simple and unlettered peasantry (John 7:48-49), they assumed the professional role of authoritative exponents of the law of Moses, and of the whole body of precepts contained in the Old Testament scriptures. In the exercise of this judicial capacity they condemned the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God as being contrary to the first principles of Jewish knowledge. Confronted with the undeniable fact that multitudes of the Galilean folk were flocking to hear the Prophet of Nazareth, they had come down from the centre of religious learning and zeal formally to investigate the claims and teaching of Jesus, and to

denounce the preacher and the doctrine as being contrary to the approved standards of the Sanhedrin.

Such official inquiries with regard to the ministry of our Lord seem to have occurred at intervals throughout the term of His ministry in Galilee. It is recorded that on previous occasions He had been charged by the Pharisees and the scribes as follows: —

(1) With blasphemy, for pronouncing the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:7).

(2) With keeping evil company, because He ate with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16).

(3) With neglecting the customary fasts (Matthew 9:14; Mark 3:18).

(4) With desecration of the sabbath day (Mark 2:24).

(5) With being possessed by Beelzebub, and casting out demons by him (Mark 3:22).

These charges were to all appearance serious, and involved questions of godliness, such as, (1) blasphemy, (2) "sitting in the seat of the scornful," (3) avoidance of the self-discipline of the fast, (4) disregard of Jehovah's holy day, and (5) direct service to the prince of the demons. Every one of these false and wicked accusations the patient Servant of God refuted with gentle and holy wisdom. The indictment now made against Him was founded on a trivial point in itself, and seems to have been intended to show how Jesus came short of the standard of devoted sanctity practised by the Pharisees and scribes. These pietists would not permit themselves to eat bread with unwashed hands. They found that some of the disciples of the Lord did so, and in this particular they therefore fell below the conventional standards of religious practice established among the Jews by their religious chiefs. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." The charge made against the Lord on this occasion appears to have arisen mainly out of His practice of mingling with the crowds in the exercise of His ministry of teaching and healing, accompanied by His disciples. At the close of the previous chapter, these activities of divine mercy are summarised and described. Wheresoever the Servant of Jehovah was to be found in country, or village, or town the people brought their sick into the marketplaces, that they might touch the border of His garment and be healed. (Mark 6:56). In this service of healing the disciples may well have borne an active part. And it was after this promiscuous intercourse with many classes of sick and needy folk that the Pharisees, having seen that some of the disciples ate bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, found fault. Such an omission, they asserted, was in direct contrast with the tradition of the elders and with their own practice, for when they came from the marketplace where people congregated most, they would not eat until they had washed themselves (vers. 3, 4; cf. Mark 6:56, R.V.). The pious Jews were careful to observe this ceremony whether they were conscious of having contracted defilement or not. But the followers of the Lord deliberately came into contact with all sorts of persons in the exercise of their office, in the marketplaces and elsewhere, and yet failed to purify themselves according to the recognised ritual. The Pharisees therefore embraced the opportunity, and sought by means of this charge to depreciate the value of the services of the apostles, since the latter openly disregarded the tradition of the elders, and therein fell short of the recognised Jewish canons of piety. On another occasion a similar charge from the same source was made against the Lord Himself (Luke 11:37). The Jews The evangelist explains that the custom of washing was not peculiar to the sect of the Pharisees, but was common among all the

Jews. He says, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not," In this sentence we have an instance of the use of the term, "Jews," which is rare in the Synoptic Gospels, while of frequent occurrence in the Gospel of John. In the latter, this term is found about seventy times, but in the first three Gospels only seventeen times; some of these being parallel passages, All four evangelists, however, record Pilate’s question to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" and also that this title formed part of the superscription placed on the cross. Of the seventeen occurrences of the word "Jews" in the first three Gospels, twelve of them consist of the title, "King of the Jews," applied to our Lord (a) By the wise men of the East (Matthew 2:2).

(b) By Pilate, in the course of the trial (Matthew 27:2 ; Mark 15:2; Mark 15:9; Mark 15:12; Luke 23:3).

(c) By the soldiers (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:18; Luke 23:37).

(d) By Pilate in the superscription (Matthew 27:37 Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38). The other occasions in the narratives are of its ordinary historical usage, such as, "among the Jews," "all the Jews," "elders of the Jews," "a city of the Jews," etc. The passages are the following: Matthew 28:15; Mark 1:5 (Judea) Mark 7:3; Luke 7:3; Luke 23:51. The term "Jews" does not arise in the divine history until after the deportation of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. It is then applied to those of the seed of Abraham who continued in the southern part of the land of the promise, under the rule of the descendants of David, and consisted mainly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (2 Kings 16:6; 2 Kings 25:25; 2 Chronicles 32:18). The use of the name is specially characteristic of the writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament, as it is of the Gospel of John in the New Testament.

Israel is the name connoting the divine promises to the earthly people, and the futUre day of their national blessing during Messiah’s reign is associated with this name. It is to the Israelites that pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises (Romans 9:4). And before the millennial day, Jehovah will bring the children of Israel from among the nations, and Joseph and Judah shall be one nation, and the sure mercies of David shall be their portion for ever (Ezekiel 37:1-28). So shall all Israel be saved, and not the Jews only. The Washing of Hands

{It should be borne in mind that the reference in this section is not to habits of physical cleanliness, but to the added rites of purification, alleged to have a religious import and value.} The Jews had fallen into the prevalent and perilous snare of performing their acts of divine service for the sight and approbation of their fellows. They were attracted by the instant recompense which is "awarded to a man by his friends and neighbours for deeds of a religious nature" done under their notice. For men readily and unstintedly avow their appreciation of acts of almsgiving to which their attention is directed by a flourish of trumpets, of prayers performed at the street-corners in public view, and of tithes of goods voluntarily extended in scope to include even the lesser herbs of the garden. The synagogue and the street alike observe and generously appraise such deeds. And the Pharisee of every age seeks with much pains to obtain this praise of man rather than the praise of God. Mostly he is successful in his pursuit, and secures the adulation of his fellows, according to the words of the Psalmist, "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself" (Psalms 49:18). Herein, as the Lord said, the Pharisee receives his reward, 1:e. the glory that comes from men, but misses that glory which comes from above, which the Father who sees in secret will bestow upon those who

serve Him in spirit and in truth. In His reply to the Pharisees the Lord did not pronounce any decision as to the legitimacy of their practices, but showed that they had invested the rite of washing with a spiritual significance and value which were unwarrantable. For the alleged principle involved was one not of physical cleanliness on sanitary grounds, but of ceremonial pollution. "They shrank not from dirt, but from defilement." They considered it possible that they might have come into contact with a Gentile or a tax-gatherer in the public footways. They might have handled something ritually unclean. Their cups might have been touched by the lips of strangers. Their couches might have been used by those who, according to the tradition of the elders, were defiled. These and many other things they had "received to hold," their elaborate ritual for maintaining "purity" being enforced by them with the inflexibility of a divine mandate.

Writers on Jewish customs tell us how elaborate the traditional rite became.

"It was laid down that the hands were first to be washed clean. The tips of the ten fingers were then joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, then turned so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was poured on them as they were lifted up, and twice again as they hung down. The washing itself was to be done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. When the hands were washed before eating they must be held upwards, when after it, downwards, but so that the water should not run beyond the knuckles. The vessel must be held first in the right, then in the left hand; the water was to be poured first on the right and then on the left hand; and at every third time the words repeated: 'Blessed art Thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands.' It was keenly disputed whether the cup of blessing or the handwashing should come first; whether the towel should be laid on the table or on the couch; and whether the table was to be cleared before the final washing or after it." The answer of the Lord to the question of the Pharisees stamped this rite with its true character. In essence, it was a commandment of men, not of God. And their ablutions had an external effect only, not an internal. The six stone water-pots, each holding about twenty gallons, standing empty during the marriage banquet at Cana of Galilee, illustrate what ample provision it was customary to make for the sacramental purification of the guests (John 2:6). Yet to the Omniscient eye, this ritual so scrupulously enforced by the Jewish elders contemplated nothing further than the purity of the hands and of domestic utensils, the outside of the cup and the platter (Matthew 23:25), while it ignored the condition of the heart, that ever-flowing, and over-flowing spring of pollution.

Divers Washings under the Law In the Mosaic ritual various ablutionary rites were definitely prescribed, and the brazen laver, which was a prominent feature of the court of the tabernacle, was an abiding witness to the necessity of cleansing by water before there could be approach to God in sacrificial worship. The holocaust or whole burnt-offering, particularly, was to be purified thoroughly by water before it could become upon the altar a fire-offering of a sweet savour unto Jehovah. And by other similar ceremonies, including the washing of garments (Leviticus 13:6; Leviticus 14:8), the nation was taught symbolically that the removal of defilement was an essential preparation for intercourse with God. See also Exodus 30:17-21; and compare Psalms 26:6. But these ritualistic performances, while they were based on divine authority transmitted through the mediator, Moses, were imposed for a limited period only. Types and shadows of deep moral and spiritual realities, they con stituted as a system "a parable for the present time," looking forward in their typical scope and application unto the time when the promised Christ should come. As ceremonies of divine origin, they were insufficient to perfect the conscience of the worshipper, the

entire scheme, with its "meats and drinks and divers washings" being but ordinances of the flesh, imposed until the time of rectification (Hebrews 9:9-10). And even the Psalms and the Prophets united to teach how inefficient were the ceremonies apart from the inward change of the worshipper (Psalms 51:16-17).

There had arisen, however, at the time of our Lord, a foreign accretion upon this body of Mosaic rites. It was now enjoined (but not through angels, by the hand of an appointed mediator, as the law at Sinai was) that men must wash before eating after visiting the marketplaces, and that cups and pots, and brazen vessels must be ceremonially cleansed.

These injunctions were founded upon the opinions of the elders of Israel, and, by a spiritual authority unwarrantably assumed by the rulers, were made binding upon the people equally with the commandments of God. Sitting in Moses' seat, the scribes and Pharisees invented these heavy burdens "grievous to be borne" which, without mercy, they bound upon the people's shoulders. This punctilious but mis-directed zeal was founded upon hollow pretence, which the Lord of truth and grace unsparingly exposed (Matthew 23:1-39). Those who outwardly appeared so righteous unto men were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity. To the pure and fiery eyes of heavenly holiness, they were neglecting the weightier matters of the law of God — judgment, mercy and faith, while insisting upon trivialities of conduct which were but human in their origin. The spirit of the divine commandments was ignored, while their authority was supplemented and therein usurped by the tradition of man. The Pharisees had forgotten the solemn warning through Moses of old: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32). Into this snare of meddling with God's word, man of every age is liable to fall; hence we find in the conclusion of the Apocalypse, similar warnings addressed to any who should add to, or take away from, the words of the prophecy of that book (Revelation 22:18-19). The particular sin of the Jews condemned in our chapter was that of adding to God's word. Legal ablutions were definitely prescribed in the Pentateuch, and had their temporary use as well as their pictorial significance. The error of the Pharisees and of all the Jews consisted of the extension of those rites beyond the provisions of the law, and also of the merciless condemnation by them of every breach of their man-made rules with reference to purification by water.

Hypocrisy in Divine Things The Lord did not reply to the Pharisees in His own authority, but condemned the cavillers by a citation from the prophecy of Isaiah. He did not discuss with them the legality of this particular tradition, but brought the written word of God to bear upon their spiritual state. They were manifesting an undeniable zeal, but it was not according to God. With much earnestness they were going about to establish their own righteousness by works which were outside the Mosaic ritual. They were deceiving both themselves and others. And the Lord said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." This prophecy of Isaiah was delivered at a time when religious formalism pervaded the life of the people. Their land was menaced, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, threatened the destruction of Jerusalem. Jehovah for His name's sake promised to frustrate this purpose of the enemy (Isaiah 29:7-8), but the prophet did not conceal from the people their terrible moral condition in His sight. There had been an outward cleansing

from the abominations of idolatry. During the reign of Hezekiah there had been a considerable reformation. There was a suppression of open idol-worship (2 Chronicles 31:1), and a revival of the passover, and of the sacrifices, and of the temple services.

Ths there was a general outward conformity to the provisions of their ancient law, but, alas, to the eye of Jehovah this was but a form of piety without the power. The prophet declared that a spirit of deep sleep was upon them and their rulers and their prophets, and the vision of Jehovah was a sealed book to the learned and to the unlearned alike. And the Lord said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:13-14).

Thus in Isaiah's day there was an outward, regard among the people of Judah for the law of Moses, and for the worship of God, but no inward reverence for Jehovah Himself. In the Lord's day it was so again with the people. Their house was swept of idols and garnished with "pious" deeds, but it was an empty shrine. Though God was on their tongues, He was not in their thoughts. Hence the Lord delivered this solemn warning to, those who were walking in a vain show. How could the lip-service of the Pharisees, and the eye-service of the men-pleasers be acceptable with Him who looks not on the outward appearance, but judges the heart?

It will be seen that two evils are indicated for condemnation in this citation —

(1) Insincerity before God, — honouring Him with the lip, but not regarding Him in the heart.

(2) Substitution of human authority for divine, seeking to worship Him after the commandments of men rather than according to His own will.

Into one or both of these pitfalls man in his religious service is liable to fall. For the person who forgets the Omniscience of the God to whom he comes is also likely to forget the supreme authority which belongs to Him. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). When the Pharisee, praying in the temple, said, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are," his lips betrayed the fact that his heart was far from Him who desires truth in the inward parts. But the man who had learned by bitter experience to have high thoughts of God and low thoughts of self, said in the presence of the Lord, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" John 21:17). And Simon Peter's heart and lips having been brought into unison as a worshipping servant of the Lord, he was in a fit spiritual condition, recognising the authority of His Master, to receive after such a confession His command to feed His sheep and His lambs.

We may be sure that the poor and contrite spirit trembling at the divine word will not mistake the commandments of men for the commandments of God. And we may guard ourselves from the twofold danger specified in the citation from Isaiah (1) by that self-discipline which tends to keep the soul in a true sense of God's greatness and of man's unworthiness, and (2) by unqualified subjection to the scripture, which is our sole guide to the revealed will of God for man.

Pilate's Hand-washing

Before leaving this section we may briefly refer to the striking public act of the Roman governor before he pronounced sentence that Jesus should be crucified. This took place after the proposal of the procurator to release Jesus instead of Barabbas had been refused by the priests and the people. "So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it. And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children. Then released he unto them Barabbas: but Jesus he scourged and delivered to be crucified" (Matt. 27: 24 26, R.V.).

Scripture is silent with regard to the inmost motives of the unjust judge in performing this futile ceremony. Since, however, Pilate was the accredited representative of the responsible Gentile authority in the tragedy of that day, we may seek whatever light is thrown upon his conduct by the narrated events. It is unquestionable that he sought by this means to transfer from himself the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus. This much is implied in his language: "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man," and this significance is confirmed by the united rejoinder of the Jewish multitude, "His blood be on us and on our children." But amongst other inquiries we may ask why he sought to emphasise his words in this particular manner — taking water and washing his hands very assiduously (apenipsato) in the presence of the assembled people? Did he adopt a symbolical practice prevalent in his own Gentile lands? or did he imitate the rite of purification so widely practised in the land of the Jews?

Moreover, what prompted Pilate to this action? Was he full of forebodings that this was no ordinary magisterial inquiry? and was his conscience uneasy with regard to his own share in the matter? Twice in his judicial capacity he had definitely declared of Jesus, "I find no crime in him" (John 19:4; John 19:6). Now, sensible of his own weak inconsistency, he may have sought by this public avowal to silence the accusations of his own conscience, awakened by the injustice of condemning to death a man in whom he could find "no cause of death."

Again, the warning of his wife increased the apprehensions of Pilate, and he may have hoped by an open disclaimer of responsibility to satisfy the scruples raised in the minds of them both. She had "suffered many things" that day in a dream because of Jesus, and her message to the governor was, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man." We cannot but note the echo of her warning in Pilate’s official declaration. The wife testified that the prisoner was a "righteous man," and Pilate re-affirmed this verdict when he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man." Further, it has been suggested that Pilate adopted this public device with the intention of making a final and effectual appeal to the eyes as well as to the ears of the infuriated Jews. He had made previous efforts to release Jesus, expostulating with them upon the baseless nature of the charges they were bringing against the prisoner, and their final reply to these efforts was, "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend." Pilate, seeing a tumult arising, yielded to their clamour, but sought by this public sign to impress upon them that the entire responsibility of the crucifixion would be upon them. In case the imperial government of Rome should institute judicial inquiries regarding this criminal deed, it was to be understood thereby that the Jews, not Pilate, must bear the political penalty. Before the eyes of all assembled, the governor washed his hands of all complicity. But if Pilate hoped to influence the people by this dramatic appeal to their fears of the pitiless power of their conquerors, he was mistaken. The people were in no sense deterred by the prospect of any civil punishment to which they might be subjected by their cruel rulers, for they

answered him unanimously, recklessly defying all consequences, saying, "His blood be on us and our children."

Still remembering that we can do little more than suggest what were Pilate's real motives, we recall that he had displayed the characteristic Roman contempt for Jewish customs, and that he loved nothing better than to outrage where he might the susceptibilities of the people whom he governed. It was he who mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1), thus adding sacrilege to massacre. And on this very morning he did not conceal his scorn for this vassal people. After his examination of Jesus in the Praetorium he brought Him forth to the people assembled without the hall, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe (John 19:5). It was as if he had said, This is your Prophet, This is your King. And by this parade of the Teacher who had become so popular in Judea and Galilee Pilate mocked at the people whom he knew were eager above all things to throw off the yoke of the Romans, and to be governed by one of their own nation. In the same spirit of cynical disdain, he wrote the superscription for the cross, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," refusing to modify the terms of the taunt, which in their very protest the Pharisees had to confess they admitted to be such. The governor detested the people with all the strength of his Roman pride, and the attitude of the Jews at this inquiry brought Pilate in to renewed contact with the irritating exclusiveness of their religious practices. They had led Jesus to him from Caiaphas, but they would not enter his palace lest they should be defiled, and be thereby prevented from observing the great festival of the passover. It became necessary, therefore, for the Roman governor to go out to them to hear their charges. Such a concession would be galling to the Roman soldier accustomed to compel unqualified homage to the Imperial eagle whose representative he was. Who were these Jews who affected to become polluted by entering the halls of imperial justice? Moreover he well knew that this was no isolated instance of their fanaticism. He was not ignorant that every time they returned home from the marketplace they were in the habit of washing themselves that they might be freed from any possible defilement contracted by contact with the Gentile. This domestic rite of the nation was therefore a daily witness by the Jews to the "uncleanness" of the uncircumcised Gentile. The governor saw an opportunity for retaliation. In solemn irony he washed his hands before this multitude too prudish to enter his palace lest they should be defiled. If the Jew claimed to cleanse himself by water from the taint of uncircumcision, could not the Gentile in like manner rid himself by water of the guilt of the blood of a righteous man condemned by him under protest?

1917 227 This may be the explanation, but whatever the Jews thought of Pilate's act, they accepted full responsibility. Whether it reminded them of the provision of the law in the case of an uncertain homicide (Deuteronomy 21:6) or not, they cried out, in reckless hardihood, "His blood be on us and on our children." Theirs therefore was the greater guilt, though the Gentiles were not exonerated, as the Lord said to Pilate, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." In conclusion, let us observe that whatever else is not fully established, it is certain that material water could never remove the defilement of the Jew, nor the blood-guiltiness of the Gentile (Job 9:30-31). And the appeal of God still goes forth, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee?" Jeremiah 4:14). "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes" (Isaiah 1:16). "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). But there can be no real national response until they look to Him whom they pierced. Then will they mourn

for Him. And "in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Then Jehovah Himself will undertake their purification, as He promised long ago to do, saying, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25).

39. — The Word of God and the Tradition of Men

1917 244 "And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God, ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do" (Mark 7:9-13, R.V.). On the ground of its purely human origin, the Lord declared the true relative value of the rite of purification by water, of which the Pharisees were making such improper use in their doctrines. Moreover, He went further than the condemnation of this particular item of their religious practice, which was not authorised by the law, and showed that the whole system of Judaism was corrupt and hypocritical before God. Using the written word for their convictions, the Lord adduced the testimony of Isaiah the prophet to show that they, the favoured people, outwardly nigh by national election, were far off from God in heart and spirit, as much so as the Gentiles, who were without law, being both Jews and Gentiles, equally under sin, as the Holy Spirit subsequently demonstrated to all men by means of the pen of the apostle Paul (Romans 3:9). In the words cited at the head of this article, the Lord of light and truth pronounced solemn judgment upon the profession made by the Jews that they were the accepted worshippers of God. In the divine estimation they were but dead formalists, and, worse even than this, they were active rebels against the truth of God. For, under an assumption of excessive zeal for the commandment of God, they destroyed its real value by the adoption of human tradition, which was in effect an evil and destructive substitute for the holy law. On consideration of the Lord’s words, it will be perceived that His charge here, as elsewhere in the Gospels, was that in the matter of the possession of the law, which was their proud boast, the Jews has corrupted themselves. The Pharisees are accused, not of a riot of their carnal passions, but of religious hypocrisy. The law was in their mouths, but not in their hearts.

It is strikingly true that in the general decadence of their national history the custody of the living oracles of God, retained in their original purity by the Jews, constituted their chief remaining glory. What other institution for their boasting remained to them at that time? The temple of Solomon had long been desolated, and the building then standing on Mount Zion was erected by that foul Edomite tyrant, Herod the Great. The Aaronic office was occupied by two high-priests of evil fame, Annas and Caiaphas. The sacred character of the Levitical services and of the round of feasts and sacrifices was obliterated by the violent contentions of those powerful fanatics — the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The land of promise itself groaned beneath the iron yoke of a heathen empire, and many of the seed of Abraham were scattered as strangers in strange lands. But while it might be truly said that Ichabod was written upon the people and upon their ancient institutions, they, in spite of all their vicissitudes and of their spiritual declension, had faithfully preserved the manuscripts of the law, the prophets and the psalms. And the apostle was careful to note the fact of this sacred trust when summing up the respective responsibilities of the Jew and the Gentile

and their failures therein, at the tribunal of divine inquiry. Paul made no reference to Mosaic ritual or sacrifice; but, having asked, "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?" replied "Much every way; first of all that they were intrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). There were, undoubtedly, other privileges, some of which are enumerated later in the same Epistle (Romans 9:4-5). But while much had been debilitated or lost, the Jew had some ground for his boast that the law had been maintained intact in spite of its oft-threatened destruction. If there was no Shekinah of glory in the Holy of holies, the voices of the prophets were still read in the synagogue every sabbath day.

It is sad to reflect therefore that the Jews, highly-favoured as the custodians of the word of God and jealous to conserve its every jot and tittle, should stultify this priceless benefit by human glosses so that its inward power and sweetness were no longer known and enjoyed. The Terms of Condemnation used by our Lord

Collating the words of Matthew with those of Mark, we find that this sin of the Jews is described by our Lord in a fourfold manner. By the undue prominence given to their tradition (a) concerning the rite of purification, and (b) concerning the manner of release from filial obligations, He declared that they had:

(1) laid aside the commandment of God (Mark 7:8);

(2) rejected the commandment of God (Mark 7:9);

(3) transgressed the commandment of God (Matthew 15:3);

(4) made void the word of God (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13). And by these four terms employed with reference to this particular transgression, there appears to be indicated an ascending scale of error. At the point of departure, as it were, the commandment is (1) left on one side or ignored; it is then (2) rejected and its claims refused; next, the commandment is (3) traversed and violated; while, lastly, it is (4) rendered ineffective and void by the substitution of a human ordinance.

Let us briefly consider each of these terms.

(1) The Lord said to the Pharisees, "Ye leave [or, lay aside] the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men." In these words is to be traced the primary cause of the failure of the nation as a faithful exponent of the divine ordinances of old. Theirs was not a sudden and violent rebellion against the authority of God, but a quiet and gradual declension from their fidelity. Turning aside, almost imperceptibly at first, they had wandered out of the way of God’s commandments. Their regard and reverence for the expressed will of God was allowed to weaken, and they strayed from the green pastures and the still waters, forgetting His precepts. Forsaking the voice of Jehovah their Shepherd, they followed the voice of strangers. Slipping away from the commandments of God and leaving undone the weighty matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith, they clung with the greater tenacity to the tradi tion of men (Matthew 23:23). A similar departure is a continual menace to the people of God. Silent deterioration and decay creep upon the Church as they stole upon Israel. The assembly at Ephesus did not make a formal and deliberate renunciation of her profession, but she did, nevertheless leave her first love (Revelation 2:4), as the Jews "left" the authority of God’s command. Individually, we are still exposed to the same danger, and we should take to ourselves the warning of the apostle to the Hebrews:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Hebrews 2:1. R.V.).

(2) Further, these boastful zealots had rejected the commandment of God. The sense of the verb used in the original appears to be that of slighting or disregarding the claims the law had upon them, as if they were unworthy of recognition (cp. Hebrews 10:28, Gk.). The Lord also used the same word in His address to the Seventy with reference to their preaching, saying to them, "He that despiseth [rejecteth] you despiseth [rejecteth] me, and he that despiseth [rejecteth] me, despiseth [rejecteth] him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). On another occasion Jesus spoke of one who rejected Him and received not His sayings (John 12:48).

These were the words of Him who was Himself the despised and:rejected of men, by whom He was regarded as "a root out of a dry ground." There was thus on the part of the nation no recognition of the claims either of Himself or of His words. The rulers formally refused to accept His teaching as the "counsel of God." Luke says of the Pharisees and the lawyers, in contrast with the people that they "rejected" for themselves the counsel of God (Luke 7:29-30).

We see therefore, that those of New Testament days who ignored the word of Jehovah through Moses of old, also ignored the word of Jehovah spoken by the Son of God. Lifted up with pride of heart, they despised the commandment of the living God. Such is also the spirit of those condemned by the apostle for setting aside their "first faith" (1 Timothy 5:12), as well as of those who set at nought dominion and rail at dignities (Jude 1:8), the same Greek word occurring in these passages, all of which show how prevalent is this tendency of the human heart.

Clearly then, to despise the commandments of God is an indication of greater intensity of opposition to His will than to lay them aside. And those who despised Moses' law died without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses (Hebrews 10:28).

(3) We now come to the third stage of departure from God, viz. — that of positive transgression. In this charge the Lord made use of their own term addressed by them to Him. The scribes had said, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" The Lord answered by asking them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition? "Transgression is that form of sin which involves the wilful disregard of known instructions; for where no law is [i.e., no prescribed rule] there is no transgression (Romans 4:15). The Pharisees were guilty of transgression, for while they raised the question of the violation of a human tradition, the Lord brought home to them the startling indictment that in and by means of that very tradition they who boasted in the law had become trangressors of the law (Romans 2:23, R.V.). In their inordinate zeal for the human innovation they has dishonoured the law of God, given through angels, every transgression and disobedience of which would receive "a just recompence of reward" (Hebrews 2:2).

Transgression then, is the fruit of passing by, and then of despising the explicit commandment of God. It is in fact the wilful infraction of a known rule of conduct. Such was the form of the sin of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:14). Our first parents violated the single restriction laid upon them in the garden of Eden, Adam not being deceived, but partaking of the forbidden fruit with his eyes open to the fact of the disobedience involved in the act.

Transgression, therefore, constitutes a grave and serious offence. It is the sin of the servant who, knowing his master’s will, nevertheless disobeys, and on that account must be punished with many stripes (Luke 12:47). The sin of Israel was transgression in distinction from the sin of the Gentiles, which is lawlessness. The sin of those who gloried in divers washings and in votive offerings to their temple, but who in these very things contravened God’s holy law, was also transgression. And by that transgression they not only dishonoured their parents but God also (Romans 2:23).

(4) Fourthly, these formalists among the Jews had disannulled the word of God by their tradition. The Lord had made three previous references to the "commandment," viz. — to God’s precise and definite injunctions, These He declared they had (1) neglected, (2) rejected, and (3) transgressed. He further referred to the divine oracles as "the word of God" (see also John 10:35; Romans 9:6), and charged them with cancelling it or making it void by their tradition. This change of designation for the law is significant. We are carried back to the Author of the Scriptures, which are the communication of His mind and will concerning men. The "word of God" expresses the spiritual intent of the "ten words," for instance. It points not so much to the letter of the law, as to its inmost interpretation — its spirit. Thus, by this expression the Lord showed that, in addition to the transgression of God’s commandment, their tradition rendered void or disannulled the essential mind and meaning of His communications to them.

It was possible, we learn, for the letter of the law to be exceeded, while its spirit was maintained. This the Lord enunciated in connection with His own acts of healing on the sabbath day. But the scribes were guilty of the infraction of both the word and the commandment of God. The two terms applied to the divine communications are distinguished elsewhere in the New Testament, And the greater depth and fulness of the former may be observed in a passage of the Gospel of John (John 14:21-23). Herein we are instructed that to keep the word of Christ is evidence of greater fidelity than to keep His commandments, and the more faithful correspondence to the Master’s will implied in the former case will receive the greater reward. Of one case the Lord said,"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." This is commendation, but not of such a high degree as that awarded in the second case. In this instance the Lord promised the signal honour and felicity that the Father and the Son would dwell with the one keeping His word: "If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Keeping the commandments is a proof of obedience; but keeping His word is a proof of devotion. On reflection upon our Lord’s words to the Pharisees, it is startling to learn that it is possible for puny man to render ineffective the word of the living God. We know that word is eternal, immutable, "settled in the heavens," its stability exceeding that of the heavens and the earth. Its inward power is illustrated by the figure of the living and incorruptible seed. This is its true and unique character; and yet, such is the seeming paradox of the truth, as expressed in a notable parable of our Lord’s, birds of the air can carry it away, the sun can wither it, and thorns, springing up, can choke it. The Tradition of Men

1917 259 The word "tradition" occurs in scripture both in a good sense and in a bad sense. Broadly, the usage Of the term is with reference to religious instruction passed from one to another. The root idea is of something delivered to men. If the instruction is derived from God, the tradition is obviously of supreme and undeniable authority; but if derived from a purely human source, its authority is questionable, and its truth requires to be substantiated, before it can claim

our acceptance.

Before the canon of holy Scripture was completed and became accessible in a written form, much of the apostolic teaching was circulated in the early church in the form of tradition either by word or letter. Hence we read of Paul exhorting the Thessalonian saints to "hold the traditions wherein ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15) similarly also in 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Again, the same apostle, writing to the Corinthians, praises them that "ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2). Whatever truth was delivered to the saints through the medium of the apostles was necessarily a tradition, whether written or oral, and being inspired, had a paramount claim over them (1 Corinthians 11:23; 2 Peter 2:21; Jude 1:3). But our Lord here spoke of Jewish tradition which emanated, not from holy men speaking by the Holy Ghost, but from fallible Rabbis who foisted upon their fellows their own views and interpretations. And on account of their human origin, the teaching and ceremonies of the Pharisees are described by Him as "the tradition of men," "the tradition of the elders," and as "your own tradition."

These traditions were held with great tenacity by the scribes and others, and, so far as reputation. among men was concerned, a Jew became distinguished in proportion to his zeal for their propagation and development. Saul of Tarsus before his conversion acquired distinction in Jerusalem by reason of his devotion to the tradition of his fathers. Alluding to this feature of his early days, he wrote, "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my country-men, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14, R.V.). Tradition, therefore, acquires its evil sense when it is formed by an addition to, or a subtraction from the word of God, and, when fully developed, it becomes a pernicious substitute for the word of God. The scriptures, however, constitute a permanent standard of reference, and are always available for the correction of the vagaries of tradition, if we will but use them for this purpose.

We have in the New Testament an instance of the origin and spread of an unwarranted tradition. At the Sea of Gennesareth, Sim on Peter, having received from the Lord some particulars relating to his own future life and service, made inquiry concerning John, saying to Jesus, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." Such was the word of the Lord to Peter. But from it the erroneous tradition arose that John should not die. For we read in the Gospel, "This saying therefore went forth among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:21-23). For our warning this instance, occurring in the earliest days of Christianity, is recorded of a false gloss put upon our Lord's words gaining currency among the saints either in an oral or in a written form. We are, moreover, shown by the same incident that the correct version of our Lord's words formed a criterion for the false tradition which said what Jesus said not. The report that the Lord would return in the lifetime of the apostle John was an incorrect deduction from the Lord's words to Peter. The effect of this unauthorised tradition upon the hearts of the disciples would be to deaden the hope of the Lord's return as an ever imminent event. Human tradition is in essence an enemy to divine truth, and it invariably comes about in practice that man's inclination is to side with the former rather than the latter. Hence the apostle, writing to the saints at Colosse, exhorts them against the evil influence which man's tradition would exert upon their allegiance to Christ: "Take heed lest there shall be

any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). In Colosse therefore, as well as formerly in Judea, there were many who were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In pursuance of this subject, it is instructive to observe that a particular and uncommon Greek word is used in the New Testament for commandments when derived from man. The usual word so translated is entole, but entalma occurs three times only, viz., in Mark 7:7; in the parallel passage, Matthew 15:9; and in Colossians 2:22, in each case forming part of the phrase rendered "the commandments of men." This word also occurs three times in the LXX. One of the passages (Isaiah 29:13) was quoted by our Lord on this occasion (Mark 7:6-7; Matthew 15:7-9). In all these passages the word appears to be used with special reference to those ethical maxims and formularies of conduct which men sought to lay as heavy burdens upon the shoulders of their fellows, but which the Lord showed to be lacking in authority.

Filial Respect The ablutionary rites introduced by the elders and maintained so rigorously by the Pharisees were of the nature of pure ceremony, but the Lord also charged them with a serious abrogation of the moral law. Not that they sinned under this head in one respect only, for there were "many other such like things" of which they were guilty (ver. 13), but the destruction of the filial bond which their tradition permitted, if not enjoined, was the one selected by the Lord for their condemnation at this juncture. The conclusion of the incident shows that, in result, the religious leaders who came to the Lord to convict Him as a Teacher of the people were themselves convicted by Him. It affords an instance, in accordance with the special purpose of Mark’s narrative, of the absolute perfection of the Servant of Jehovah, in that He used the written word of God as the instrument of conviction, rather than His own personal authority. Matthew, setting out the King of the Jews come to adminster the kingdom of the heavens according to the law and the prophets, records the same instance (Matthew 15:1-39). When, therefore, the Lord spoke as the Prophet like unto Moses, and brought out of His treasure-house "things new," His utterances were in His own authority, and not like those of the scribes of the day. On such occasions He taught after this manner: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." At such times He was depositing with the people the word of Him who sent Him — a word which in the course of the progress of Divine revelation was given to supplement and to amplify the communications of old. But when the Lord opposed the false teachers of Israel His appeal was to the Scriptures. To their confusion He confronted them with what was on record and what was read by them on sabbath days in their synagogues. The proud Pharisees then found themselves in the presence of the One out of whose mouth went a sharp sword, and for their condemnation, as it were, the books were opened, and they were judged out of the things written in the books.

Accordingly, the Lord then referred the Pharisees and scribes to the law which they professed to teach. What was found in the book of Moses? How did they read therein?

(1) The specific command was, "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). This was one of the "ten words," and is called the "first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 5:2), for this injunction was specially distinguished by the assurance of Jehovah, that prosperity and longevity should be the portion of those obedient to it. See the special reward granted to the house of Rechab for filial obedience (Jeremiah 35:18-19).

(2) Further, the Lord quoted to the Pharisees the severe sentence pronounced by the same law against the one who did despite to his parents: "Whoso curseth (or, revileth) father or mother, let him die the death" (Exodus 21:17).

Thus, as not one of His hearers could deny, had Jehovah encouraged and warned every son in Israel to keep the commandment of his father, and not to depart from the law of his mother (Proverbs 6:20). The word of God declared there should be prolonged and prosperous days in the land for the obedient, but a criminal's death for the disobedient (cp. Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 27:16; Proverbs 20:20; Proverbs 30:11). And the solemn charge uttered from Mount Ebal was, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother" (Deuteronomy 27:16). But what said the elders? They contradicted both the letter and the spirit of the law of God.* They devised, in the name of piety, a wicked scheme whereby a man might release himself from every obligation towards his parents. Whatever benefits were due from him to his father and mother, let him consecrate those benefits to the service of the temple, and the Jewish council would thereupon absolve him from all filial responsibilities. "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, It is Corban (that is to say, a gift) by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me. . . . And ye no longer suffer him to do anything for his father or his mother."

{*For the divine recognition of this family tie throughout the Old Testament, see Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 27:16; Ezekiel 22:7; Micah 7:6; Malachi 1:6, and compare the honours paid by the exalted Joseph in Egypt to his father Jacob.}

Having thus contrasted their practice with the original precepts of the law, the Lord summed up the effect of their conduct in one of His pregnant sayings, charging His accusers with making the word of God of none effect through their tradition. They virtually repealed the law from heaven, and at the same time outraged the instincts of nature. It was not meet that they should take the parents' bread and devote it to the altar. In the Proverbs it was written, "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer" (Proverbs 28:24).

We learn, therefore, from this portion of the Gospel that the Lord condemned this innovation, so inimical to the reciprocal duties of family life, on the ground that it contravened the tenor of the law given by Moses, which was their boast. But, reading the Gospels as a whole, we also know that the tradition of the Jews was contrary to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. The Lord did not come to bear witness of Himself, and He did not in this instance refer the Pharisees to His own example in the home of Joseph and Mary. But human history knows no instance of filial perfection to set alongside that seen by men and angels through long years in the carpenter's house at Nazareth. Scripture says little of the youth of Jesus, but that little means much. We read that He went with His "parents" to Jerusalem, and that He returned to Nazareth, and was "subject to them," thus "rendering honour to whom honour was due" (Luke 2:39-52). The Evangelist who records that Jesus said to Mary at Cana in Galilee, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" also records His words to her at Golgotha, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 2:4; John 19:26). "Corban" applied to the service of our Lord in the fullest sense of the term, for He devoted Himself in sacrifice upon the altar, yet the committal of His mother to the care of the beloved disciple proves that, even upon the cross, He did not neglect to make provision for her future; magnifying the law in this respect and making it honourable (Isaiah 42:21).

We may note in passing that the obligations of Christian children to their parents are stated to be equally binding with those of the Jews (Ephesians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:20; 1 Timothy 5:4; 1 Timothy 5:8).

It has sometimes been alleged that there is inconsistency between the Lord’s defence of filial ties on this occasion, and His call made elsewhere to His disciples to forsake father and mother for His sake. This inconsistency is, however, only an apparent one. The Lord said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37) and again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). In these words the Lord declared the condition of discipleship. This condition was based upon the acknowledgment of His authority as paramount and absolute. No human tie should have a superior claim to that of the Lord Jesus. And in the utterances quoted, He contemplated a case where family authority sought to override His word as Master. Even in national government parental claims or filial responsibilities are not allowed to absolve a subject from allegiance to the Crown, or to screen a criminal from retributive justice. Must the Lord of all ask less than this from the subjects of His kingdom? If patriotism demands that a man shall leave all to serve his country, who should complain when the Master calls His disciples to leave all to serve Him?

There is, therefore, no inconsistency in our Lord’s teaching. In the one case, He set the divine call above the claims of filial duties, while in the other, He condemned the Pharisees who set human tradition above filial duty, an inversion for which there was no adequate warrant. The question of mutual obligation in the family is one which can only be finally settled by divine authority. God alone, who established the responsibility of children to their parents, can abrogate that responsibility, and from the beginning He recorded His permission that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife (Genesis 2:24). The parental home might be quitted to form a new relationship of a natural order. In the New Testament we have a relationship of a spiritual order entered by a similar renunciation. At the call of Jesus, James and John left their father Zebedee in the ship with their hired servants and went after Him. It was so with others, as Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee." But we read that the Lord said to another, "Follow me," and he was ready with an excuse. He took refuge in his filial responsibilities, and desired that he might be allowed to wait until his father was dead and buried. Clearly this man, judged by his own confession, was not prepared to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And accordingly the Lord said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59; Luke 9:6 o). He had yet to learn the absolute supremacy of the One who said to him, "Follow me."

Corban

"Corban" is a Hebrew, or rather an Aramaic, word whose equivalent in Greek is doron, which means a gift. In the Old Testament the word is used in connection with the service of the law, and is translated "offering" and "oblation"

(Leviticus 2:1; Leviticus 2:5; Leviticus 2:13 : Leviticus 3:1; Numbers 7:35). "Corban was applied to the offering especially in the aspect of its dedication to Jehovah. In this sense the word was applied at a later day to the sacred treasure of the temple; and to that consecrated store the chief priests decided that Judas’ pieces of silver might not be added (Matthew 27:6). Compare the

distinction made by the Pharisees between the temple, and the gold of the temple, and between the altar and the gift on the altar (Matthew 23:16-22).

Apparently the Jews were urged to contribute dedicatory offerings to the temple service, and out of an inordinate zeal on the part of the teachers which was not according to truth, the traditional custom arose. If a man said to his father or mother, "That wherein thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban," that is Given to God, his goods were regarded as consecrated by this formula to the service of God, and, according to the tradition of the elders, might not be thenceforth diverted to the relief of his parents. It is said that the scribes held that if this word was pronounced over any of a man's possessions he was exempt from the performance of any natural duty, even though he withheld the goods temporarily from the service of the temple. This accords with our Lord's word, "Ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother." A writer commenting on this practice of the Jewish leaders remarks, "A more striking instance of the subversion of a command of God by the tradition of men can hardly be conceived." But the Lord's warning to the hypocrites of that day has its application equally to the conditions of the present day. "May we all bear in mind how deeply we need to watch against the spirit of tradition. Wherever we impose with absolute authority a thing that does not proceed from God Himself, it is a tradition. It is all very well to take counsel of one another, and it is not a happy feature to oppose others needlessly; but it is of all consequence that we should strengthen each other in this, that nothing but the word of God is entitled or ought to govern the conscience. It will be found that when we let go this principle, and allow a rule to come in and become binding, so that what is not done according to that rule is regarded as a sin, we are gone from the authority of the word of God to that of tradition, perhaps without knowing it ourselves.

"The Lord here shows convincingly where these Pharisees and scribes were. They had never considered that their principles of Corban made void the word of God. But let us, too, bear in mind that after we have had any Divine truth pressed upon us we are never the same as before. We may have been simply and honestly ignorant then, but we are thenceforth under the increased yoke of God's known mind, which we either receive in faith or reject, and harden ourselves by rejecting in unbelief. Therefore, let us look to the Lord, that we may cherish a good conscience. This supposes that we have nothing before us which we cleave to, or allow inconsistent with God's will. Let us desire and value nothing but what is according to His word, lest peradventure any of us be left where Christ leaves these Pharisees, under the terrible censure that they made void the word of God through their tradition. If but one example was taken up it was a sufficient example of the things they were doing continually." The Word of Moses In a day of declining regard for the great law-giver of Israel, it is instructive to recognise the manner in which our Lord paid honour on this occasion to Moses, as the accredited representative of God in his time. Even in quoting from the decalogue itself, written as it was by the finger of God upon the tables of stone, Moses is named as the honoured medium through whom the law received in the holy mount was promulgated. The Lord declared to the Pharisees, "Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother."

We are not to suppose that the Lord in any sense detracted from the purely divine origin of the law. On the contrary it is clear that Moses was at the same time presented as the mediator between God and His people. This we may see by comparing this passage with its parallel in Matthew. The report of the words of Jesus there given is, "God said, Honour thy father and mother" (Matthew 15:4. R.V.). Both records are, of course, true, the full statement of our Lord being that (1) God

spake and (2) He spake by the mouth of His servant Moses. Each evangelist embodied that portion of the Lord’s utterance which was most consonant with the purpose of the particular narrative. Matthew shows that the tradition of the elders was in conflict with the words of God, while Mark lays stress upon its discordance with the sayings of the law-giver of the nation.

Remembering that the Second Evangelist is used by the inspiring Spirit to portray the humble servitude of Jesus, we discern a beautiful touch of His perfections in this part of the narrative. The Prophet’s championship of the truth of God was undertaken in meek unassertiveness of His own personal glory and authority. As the Servant of Jehovah He did not strive nor cry, but paid, if we may so express it, a dignified deference to Moses that former servant of God (Revelation 15:3), whom He was to resemble according to the prophecy of Moses himself (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22). God had honoured Moses, as the scriptures testified, and the Son of man honoured him too, teaching us also by a quiet example, to render honour to whom honour is due. The Lord maintained that honour must be paid to the word of Moses, while He condemned utterly the word of the elders. The word of Moses was the word of God (cp. ver. 10 with ver. 13), while the tradition of the elders was but the word of man, and more unreliable than that, — of misguided man. The Lord approved of whatever was true and commendable in the belief and conduct of those who came within the scope of His ministry, and He fully recognized their professed regard for Moses. He said to the people, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat" (Matthew 23:2), and they said. of themselves, "We are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses" (John 9:28-29). But on account of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, the word of God became, as in this instance, the instrument of their condemnation. They misused their boasted privileges to the destruction of their souls. Having Moses and the prophets, they had in them sufficient witness of the eternal verities to compass their salvation if they would but hear them (Luke 16:29-31). In the holy oracles were also written the "things concerning" the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah, as Jesus Himself showed both before and after His resurrection (Luke 18:31; Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44). But in this very thing their blindness was made manifest. Professing to believe Moses, they failed to perceive Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote. Moses accordingly became, not their saviour, but their judge, as the Lord said to them, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" John 5:45-47, R.V.).

40. — The True Source of Man’s Defilement

1917 292 "And he called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. And when he was entered into the house from the multitude, his disciples asked of him the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him: because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? This he said, making all meats clean.* And he said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:14-23, R.V.).

{*The Revisers replaced the words of the A.V. "purging all meats" by the clause, "This he said, making all meats clean." The critical questions involved in the determination of the correct reading are debatable, and the change made is not accepted by all scholars. But the unforced interpretation of the passage in its context is that the reference by our Lord was not to cleanness in its spiritual significance, as in Acts 10:13, but to the physical processes of the human organism, the result of their operations being for purification and not pollution.} The Lord on this occasion unsparingly condemned the traditions of the Jews which, though totally unauthorised by divine authority, were rigorously imposed by the religious chiefs upon the people of the day. But He established truth as well as exposed error. In His doctrine the Great Servant-Prophet of Jehovah was destructive of all evil forms and corrupt tendencies, but was also constructive of what was good and of God, preaching continually the gospel of the kingdom of God. He swept away the delusion of a cleansing from spiritual defilement by material means, and proclaimed the deep-seated cause of man’s moral uncleanness. There was, He taught, an overflowing spring of pollution within, and men were self-deceived by the habit of attending solely to external means of purification. Even if all avenues of contamination from without were closed, man would still possess the inward disposition and desire and impulses to sin which spread corruption through his being. In this manner of teaching we find no pandering to the notions of the times; and herein we see one notable difference between the false teachers and the True. The false prophet prophesies smooth things and deceitful things which conceal the ugly facts of sin and judgment. But the Servant of Jehovah unveiled the whole truth before the eyes of priests and people alike, and this plainness of speech incurred the bitter hatred of that evil generation. "Now ye seek to kill me," said Jesus to the Jews, "a. man that hath told you the truth" (John 8:40). The Saying Addressed to the Crowd

Both in word and deed, the Lord displayed a special loving interest in the welfare of the masses, oppressed as they were by the Pharisees and scribes who shut up the kingdom of heaven against them, neither entering themselves nor suffering the people to enter (Matthew 23:13). It was foretold that a characteristic feature of the ministry of the Messiah would be that the poor should have the gospel preached to them (Luke 4:18; Luke 7:22). The humble in heart often have a poor purse, and Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The Lord, then, had been speaking to the teachers of Israel and reproving them for foisting an empty tradition upon the people to the displacement of the law and prophets of God. They were not true men but evil shepherds of the sheep — thieves and robbers indeed (John 10:8-13), since they had taken away from the people the word of God which was their heritage and their salvation. But the Lord was the Good Shepherd of Israel. It was His delight "to stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD." He had come out of heaven to give His people the true bread of life — the word which proceeded out of the mouth of God.

Accordingly, the Lord called the crowds together again and communicated to them the truth on this subject in simple and concise language such as they might "hear and understand." He spoke to the multitudes direct without an intermediary, so that these simple peasants of Galilee were able to drink from the well-spring of truth itself. Everyone was called to give heed to Him, and to seek to lay hold upon His words. Hearken unto me every one of you, He said, and understand: "there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." The Lord’s subject in this saying is not the means of

cleansing, but the cause of defilement. He does not here speak of the futility of ceremonial purification, and of the use of water to remove immoral stains (Job 9:30-31). Of this He had already spoken to the Pharisees, but He now instructs those uninstructed in the law* with regard to the true source of defilement. Cleansing pre-supposes defilement. How then does man become unclean? Is it by the polluting influences of external things entering his physical organization? The Lord declared that the inner motives from which man's words and actions spring are the cause of his uncleanness, none being able to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

{*The Pharisees said, "This multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed" (John 7:49).} The soul was distinct from and superior to man's body, and what went into a man was for the nourishment and maintenance of his body — the tenement of the soul and spirit. The things which mattered most were those which proceeded from a man. His schemes, his motives, his desires, his character, his moral colour — these made a man a centre of power, radiating influences either for good or for evil. In speaking to the multitude the Lord did not enter into any details of the controversy recently held with their teachers, but placed the truth of the subject before them in a simple, antithetical way after the manner of many of the Proverbs of Solomon so that by this means its wisdom and truth might be retained with comparative ease in their memories.

Moreover, the style of His speech was not after the manner of the scribes but with authority: "there is nothing from without the man which going into him can defile him." He did not, as in His discussion with the scribes, cite scripture to support His statement, but delivered the truth as one who taught of His own inner fulness: "We speak that we know, and bear witness of that we have seen" (John 3:2). The Master knew so well the source of corruption which was "in man" (John 2:25). He saw not as man sees, for He looked not at the outward appearance, but on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). His words, accordingly were words of truth, and, by reason of this testimony from Him, His hearers were left without excuse. As He said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for sin" (John 15:22).

Further Instruction in the House A fuller explanation of this teaching was made to the apostles at their own request. They came to Jesus privately in the house, saying that the Pharisees were stumbled at His saying with regard to washing (Matthew 15:12). With all the technical knowledge of scripture which the religious leaders possessed they failed to comprehend the Lord's utterance. This failure proved their incompetence and indeed their added guiltiness, since they were the appointed custodians and expositors of the oracles of God. The Lord pronounced their coming doom. Every plant, He said, not of His heavenly Father's planting (cp. Isaiah 61:3) should be rooted up. The axe was laid at the root of the trees. The fig tree should wither away and become a dry tree. They had not profited by Moses, neither would they by the Messiah. They were to be let alone. They were blind leaders of the blind who said, We see, but their sin remained, and both teachers and taught would fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14; John 9:41.)

Peter said to the Lord, "Declare unto us the parable"* (Matthew 15:15; cp. Matthew 13:36). It was the same apostle who afterwards at Joppa and Antioch failed to put into practice this teaching of the Lord (Acts 10:14; Galatians 2:12). He was now the spokesman for the rest, all the disciples making inquiry through him, as Mark informs us (Mark 7:17). None of them had grasped the significance of the Lord's saying, but they differed in spirit from the Pharisees, inasmuch as not knowing they yet desired to know. They came questioning therefore, believing the Lord would

make the matter plain to them, and that they would then see a beauty and value in the Master's teaching which at the moment was not clear to them. Like multitudes since they had much to unlearn before they could learn. Their habits of mind and trend of thought induced by their instructions from childhood in the law of Moses and in the rites and ceremonies of that law blocked the way for the entrance of the Lord's words into their hearts, giving them the needed light and deliverance.

{*"Parable" is here used in the sense of a popular, sententious saying: compare Luke 4:28 : "Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself" (R.V.).}

We find the Lord said to the disciples who thus came to Him, seeking further instruction, "Are ye so without understanding also?" There seems some reproach in this question. The Pharisees had not understood; the populace did not understand (Isaiah 6:9; Mark 4:12); but how was it the Lord's own company did not understand Him? He said to the people, Hearken and understand (ver. 14), but the apostles also failed to understand. And the Lord by His question to them implies that it was blameworthy on their part to confess such ignorance. Why was this? The explanation appears to be that in New Testament usage lack of understanding (asynetos)* may arise (1) from a lack of capacity to receive divine truths, and (2) from the non-employment of this capacity by those who possess it. Thus, in the first sense (1) this lack is true of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, for "there is none that understandeth" (Romans 3:11). The same sense is also attributed to the word in the Lord's parable of the Sower and the seeds: the wayside hearer receives the word of the kingdom, but understandeth it not, and the wicked one catches it away (Matthew 13:19). But the term is used in the second sense of those who were brought into the kingdom, but yet failed to receive its wisdom. For example, the stilling of the night-storm on the Sea of Galilee followed immediately upon the feeding of the five thousand, and vet the disciples failed to reflect upon this marvellous exhibition of the power and goodness of the Son of God in their midst. "They considered [understood] not the miracle of the loaves for their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52).

{*This is the adjectival form, the noun not occurring in the New Testament. The sense of its usage seems to include moral defect, as well as mental inability.}

Now in the sequence of his narrative the Evangelist proceeds to show that, having failed to un derstand His works of mercy and power, the apostles had also failed to understand His words about purification. There were hindrances, such as infirmities of nature, carnal prepossessions and selfish interests; these clouded the spiritual vision. But the Patient Teacher was ready to repeat His words and to amplify His teaching, so that hearing yet again they might understand. The things of the Lord were hidden from the wise and prudent (the understanding ones of this world, Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 1:19), and revealed unto babes. Simplicity of heart was the character suited to the kingdom of God. The disciples though they had entered the kingdom were not maintaining the childlikeness of those to whom it was given to know the mysteries of that kingdom. Moreover, all knowledge would be partial until the Spirit came at Pentecost, when the truth would be declared in parables no longer. "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [parables]: the hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall tell you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25; cp. also Matthew 15:15; Matthew 13:36).

God's Kingdom not Eating and Drinking The Lord stated afresh to the inquiring disciples the law of that kingdom of God which He had come to establish. Its essence was spiritual not carnal. It was

founded not on temporal matters such as food and drink, but upon spiritual truths which affected the inner life and relationship of man to God, in whose sight the state of the heart is of greater importance relatively than the state of the body. Apart from the question of artificial restrictions which the Lord had already condemned in their hearing, He would have them know that "whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him." A man would not become morally unclean by the consumption of certain meats, as the Jews held. From the bondage of this tradition, the truth which came by Jesus Christ set them free. This deliverance is an important doctrine for the followers of the Lord to maintain today as ever. The Son has made us free, and we are exhorted to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). The ordinances to handle not, nor taste, nor touch, are after the precepts and commandments of men, from which we have been delivered by the Beat h of Christ (Colossians 2:20-23). So far as partaking of food is concerned the Christian is enjoined to discharge this as well as every other physical function in a manner becoming to one whose body is a possession of the Lord, a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19). The glory of God should be our ultimate object in the maintenance of physical vitality; "whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). On the other hand, the absence of self-control and the abuses of the appetites are positive sins, and the glutton and the drunkard alike are the subjects of the stern reprobation of God (Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21; Php 3:16). W.J.H.

1917 309 The kingdom of God therefore concerns itself with matters above the range of eating and drinking. Its domain, as the apostle Paul says, is characterized by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). The moral and spiritual traits of the sons of the kingdom abide for ever, but foods of whatever nature perish in the using; "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall bring to nought both it and them" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The Fountain of Uncleanness

We have in the verses which follow (vers. 20-23), a second statement of our Lord introduced in the narrative by the words, "And he said," the preceding statement being prefaced by the slightly different phrase, "And he saith unto them" (ver. 18). The first deals with the truth that man does not contract spiritual defilement by means of his material food and drink. In the second saying the complementary truth is presented that spiritual defilement is contracted by the evil thoughts, words, and deeds which emanate from the heart within: "That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed . . . .

Therefore, whatever ethical teachers may say, the heart of man is the seat of his uncleanness. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). This was so from the beginning, for before the flood God declared of man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21). In consequence of his overt acts of wickedness men of that epoch became so perniciously corrupt that the direct judgment of God swept the antediluvian world away.

Always and everywhere scripture testifies to this inward taint. Man is said to be shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and estranged from the womb (Psalms 51:5; Psalms 58:5). It is in the heart that man erred from the ways of God (Hebrews 3:10), for the heart is deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9-10), being filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:29). "Ye are they," the Lord said to the Pharisees, "which justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts" (Luke 16:15).

Unquestionably therefore, man’s heart is regarded by God as the source of evil, and because a man’s sinfulness arises primarily from within himself he is held personally responsible to bear his own burden of guilt before the Judge of all the earth.

Mouth, Tongue and Lips

"Proceeding out of" is a simple but expressive term occurring three times in this short section (vers. 20-23), and is used in connection with both thoughts and acts. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is frequently used with reference to the spoken utterance, and in a good as well as in an evil sense. Thus, we learn that the scriptures form the spiritual food of man who lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). The Lord’s solemn pronouncements of righteous judgments upon human sin are likened to a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth (Revelation 1:16; Revelation 19:15; Revelation 19:21), But the term is also used with sinister associations, as for instance, when the believer is warned to be careful lest any corrupt communication should proceed out of his mouth (Ephesians 4:29). And in the lurid visions of the Apocalypse John saw the destructive powers of judgment proceeding out of the mouths of the appointed agents in the emblematic forms of fire and smoke and brimstone (Revelation 9:17-18; Revelation 11:5), John further saw unclean spirits proceeding out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, that trinity of evil power which may soon appear (Revelation 16:13). The tongue therefore is regarded in scripture as a mighty instrument which a man may wield for good or ill among his fellows. Speech is the great means for the publication of the thought which arises in the heart and of the dissemination of its purifying or defiling influences among others. The mouth is the medium whereby man may worship God or blaspheme His holy name. So James says, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men who are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (James 3:9-10). Hence, he that ruleth his spirit is mightier than he who taketh a city, and "whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Prow. 16: 32; Proverbs 21:23). But who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? The seriousness of this problem James teaches when he says, "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly member," and, further, "So is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body" (James 3:6; James 3:8). In the sense of this guilty contagiousness, Isaiah confessed that he was a man of unclean lips, and accordingly it was upon his mouth that the coal of cleansing was laid (Isaiah 6:7).

Clearly, it is in agreement with the whole tenor of the word of God, that in the matter of guilty uncleanness, the functions of the mouth in speaking are of greater moral importance than those for eating, for "meat will not commend us to God: neither if we eat [things offered to idols] are we the better: neither, if we eat not are we the worse" (1 Corinthians 8:8), but for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). The Issues of Life In reply to the questions put to Him in the house, the Lord declared to his disciples (1) what was the root, and (2) what were the fruits of evil in men. The root was the evil thought of the heart, and the fruits were the specific acts of wickednesses some of which He named. In the evil thought

therefore the evil deed is contained in embryo. Jesus said to them, "From within out of the heart of men evil thoughts proceed. . . .;" then He enumerated a list of some of the vile deeds which spring from man's inner motives, adding, "all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."

Evil thoughts. These are the inward reasonings and debates of man's mind. Within himself he deliberates, he calculates, he plans his schemes of sinful indulgence or wilful rebellion. "Things come into his mind, and he devises an evil device" (Ezekiel 38:10; Micah 2:1-2). Thus, in describing the appalling moral degradation of the human race, the apostle traces it to this inward source: "knowing God they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings [thoughts] and their senseless heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Hidden within the heart, it is one of man's strange delusions that his thoughts are thereby concealed from Omniscience, yet it is written, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain" (1 Corinthians 3:20; Ps. 94: 51). The incarnate Son possessed and displayed this omniscience; indeed, according to the word of Simeon to Mary, one of the purposes of His mission was that "the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Luke 2:35).

There are several recorded instances wherein our Lord showed an intimate acquaintance with the secret workings and motives of men's minds — that is, their inward thoughts and lusts whereby they are drawn away and subdued (James 1:13). Jesus perceived those of:

(1) the disciples when He bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:7-8; Mark 8:16-17);

(2) the scribes when He forgave the sins of the palsied man (Mark 2:6-8; Luke 5:22);

(3) the scribes when He was in the synagogue where was a man with a withered hand (Luke 6:8);

(4) the disciples when they had been discussing who should be the greatest (Luke 9:45 Mark 9:33).

1917 325 The use of the word "thoughts" (dialogismoi) to express inward cogitations is illustrated in the following passages, in which the same Greek word occurs, though it is not always translated "thoughts." (1) Mary "cast in her mind" what manner of salutation that made by the angel was (Luke 1:29). (2) The people "mused" in their hearts whether John the Baptist was the Messiah or not (Luke 3:15). (3) Jesus said to the disciples when He appeared in their midst, Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? (Luke 24:38). (4) When the chief priests asked Jesus concerning the baptism of John, they "reasoned" with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe on him? But if ye shall say, Of men; we fear the people, for all hold Jesus as a prophet (Matthew 21:25-26). (5) The rich man whose crops were plentiful elaborated his plans for future ease after he had "thought within himself" (Luke 12:17). (6) The wicked husbandmen, when they saw the heir of the vineyard, "reasoned" among themselves, saying, This is the heir: let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours (Luke 20:14). (7) Caiaphas advised the council to "consider" how expedient it was that one man should die for the people (John 11:50). In these instances the inward tendencies of the thoughts of men's hearts are plainly indicated. They are opposed to God, and also to His Son. In this latter respect the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled which said, "All their thoughts are against me for evil"; "their thoughts are thoughts of evil"; "all their imaginations are against me" (Psalms 56:5; Isaiah 59:7; Lamentations 3:61).

Evil deeds. There now follows after the mention of "evil thoughts" a brief catalogue of sins, springing out of the evil heart of man, enumerated by the Lord to His disciples on this occasion. Comparing the first two Gospels, seven evils are named by Matthew (15: 19) and twelve by Mark. The agreements and differences in the two lists are as follows:- (1) Six are mentioned by both Evangelists, viz., adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, wickednesses, blasphemy*.

{*Matthew records this sin in the plural, viz.: "blasphemies," translated "railings" in the R.V.} (2) One by Matthew only, viz., false witness.

(3) Six by Mark only, viz., covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness.

(1) The six sins recorded by both Matthew and Mark are the grosser forms of man's evil doings, and, with the exception of blasphemy, which is Godward as well as manward, they relate to the ways in which man does hurt to his neighbour.* In the variety of action here specified man shows his habitual breach of the second table of the law, the provisions of which are mainly manward (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). Love is the fulfilling of the law; it thinketh no evil, and no harm. Love of one's neighbour therefore secures the observance of the several prohibitions against trespassing upon his rights. The apostle Paul sums up obedience to these particular commandments in this one act. He writes thus to the church at Rome: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Romans 13:9). This is the "royal law," which if we fulfil, we shall do well (James 2:8).

{*These six sins are in the plural form, the other seven being in the singular. For the case of blasphemy" see previous note.} This commandment is "good" (Romans 7:12), but the will of man is opposed to obeying it. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7). The inward impulse is to infringe its precepts, and this unruly disposition results in a succession of overt acts of a gravely criminal nature, such as are here specified for condemnation. This disobedient nature is characteristic of all the sons of Adam, who in consequence are in absolute contrast with God's Righteous One of whom it was prophetically written, "The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide" (Psalms 37:31).

(2) False witness. — This form of sin is named by Matthew only, and while it is at all times prevalent among all men, it is specially characteristic of the Jews as a nation. A man or a nation may become false as to witness (1) for God, or (2) in the mutual responsibilities among men. Thus (1) Israel was as a nation selected to become the depositary of the truth of Jehovah's Godhead and of Jehovah's law, and to testify to these great truths among other nations who were idolaters. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God" (Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 43:12; Isaiah 44:8). In this trust however, they notoriously proved themselves false witnesses, for they openly worshipped idols in imitation of neighbouring nations, and dishonoured the law. In the points of Israel's failure as a witness for the truth, because of their evil heart of unbelief, their Messiah was perfect throughout; and when the righteous government of an evil world is to be undertaken, He is introduced for the purpose, and one of His titles which express His competency is that of the Faithful and True Witness (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 3:14).

Untrue testimony by one man against another (2) is also pernicious. The law of Sinai expressly forbade the Israelite to bear false witness against his neighbour (Exodus 20:16), and it was written that a false witness should not go unpunished (Proverbs 19:5; Proverbs 19:9), but should perish (Proverbs 21:28). He was a menace to the nation, and is figuratively described as "a maul and a sword and a sharp arrow" (Proverbs 25:18), for lying testimony bore down its victim by sheer force, and cut asunder the very vitals, and wounded even from afar.

Moreover, as a nation, Israel was specially guilty of false witness against the Messiah. This sin was foreshadowed by the Spirit of Christ in the prophets: "False witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty" "they laid to my charge things that I knew not" (Psalms 27:12; Psalms 35:11). And so it came about when in the fulness of time the Anointed One presented Himself to the chosen people, not the rabble, but the religious chiefs of the Jews sought to find false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, themselves breaking in this respect the law they were set to administer (Exodus 23:1); as we read, "Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put him to death: and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. But afterwards came two and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days" (Matthew 26:59-61; Mark 14:56). On this false evidence, the Lord was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin. Taken next to Pilate, the chief priests themselves bore equally lying witness against Jesus before the Roman governor in order to secure His crucifixion (Luke 23:2). This sin against judicial equity lies even now upon the nation, and upon them will yet come the just retribution of God. Under the law it was enacted that if a man "be a false witness and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother" (Deuteronomy 19:15-19). And if false witness against a man’s neighbour was regarded with such gravity, of how much greater guilt was it to deny the Holy and the Just One? As Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, so Israel is trodden down of the nations until their times be fulfilled.

(3) Sins named by Mark only. These six offences covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness are intimately associated with the inward workings of man’s heart. If the others previously named may be described as the lusts of the flesh, these are the desires of the mind (Ephesians 2:3); if they illustrated the filthiness of the flesh, these show the filthiness of the spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). These inward propensities are the dead bones, the uncleanness of the hypocrisy and iniquity within the whited sepulchres, of which the Lord spoke in another place (Matthew 23:27-28).

Covetousness. — This is the selfish greed within a man’s heart which desires to appropriate other things than those God has given him and are therefore his legitimate possession. The Gentiles fell into this snare no less than the Jews (Romans 1:29). The covetous man is called an idolater (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5), for he sets up another god within himself whom he serves with his whole heart. Hence the apostle John exhorted the followers of Christ, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21)

Deceit. — This word is often translated "guile" in the New Testament, and is expressive of cunning, of craftiness, of plotting to deceive, while it is usually associated with a person’s words. There was no guile found in the mouth of Christ (1 Peter 2:22), nor will guile be in the mouth of the future Jewish remnant who follow the Lamb (Revelation 14:5), of whom Nathanael was a figure

(John 1:47). But it was by guile that the Jewish council sought to arrest Jesus and put Him to death (Matthew 26:4; Mark 14:1). Elymas the sorcerer was full of it, for it was part of his nefarious stock-in-trade (Acts 13:10). While it is declared of Jew and Gentile alike that "with their tongues they have used deceit [guile]" (Romans 3:13), the apostle Peter quotes the Psalmist who says, "He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (Psalms 34:13; 1 Peter 3:10).

Lasciviousness. The indulgence of impure subjects in the imagination promotes the performance of corresponding acts of impurity. An evil eve. The eye is the principal organ whereby impressions from without are received by us. And an "evil eye" would seem to be one habituated to seek out and dwell upon unworthy and noxious objects. The epithet, "evil" is poneros (malignant), and not merely kakos (defiled, corrupt). The same term is applied to Satan as the principal agent in the infliction of harm upon man. He is called the Evil one (Matthew 6:13; Matthew 13:19 : 1 John 2:13-14). The eye, therefore, is a main thoroughfare to and from the heart. Through the eye sinful lusts are awakened and put into exercise, so that as the Lord taught on another occasion, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:23). In the Scriptures, the evil eye is frequently regarded as a close companion of covetousness and selfishness and envious jealousy. The sufferings of others are disregarded by the evil eye if personal gain is thereby secured. Jehovah warned the people of Israel against having an evil eye towards a poor brother in need and withholding due succour from him (Deuteronomy 15:7-9 Deuteronomy 28:54-55). Men were counselled to avoid stinginess of spirit and to cultivate the bountiful eye which gives liberally to the needy (Proverbs 22:9). The eye is never satisfied with riches, and the man, pasting to be rich and having an evil eye, is warned that poverty shall come upon him (Proverbs 28:22; Ecclesiastes 4:8).

King Saul is a personal example, for he was filled with jealous hatred against David because the daughters of Israel praised the slayer of Goliath more than they praised himself, and he "eyed David from that day forward (1 Samuel 18:9). A similar spirit of envy against others who appear to have been better favoured than themselves was displayed by the labourers who murmured against their fellow-workers who having been hired only at the eleventh hour received as much as those who entered the vineyard at the beginning of the day. "Is thine eye evil," said the householder to one of the grumblers, "because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15).

Another and somewhat different example of the evil use of the eye is recorded in the history of the crucifixion of our Lord. This is an instance, not so much of envy and jealousy, as of a morbid interest, if not a pleasurable satisfaction in viewing the sufferings of another. We read that while the rulers derided and the soldiers mocked the Saviour on the cross, the "people stood beholding" (Luke 23:35). To the multitude the occasion was as a public show. They had come to Golgotha for a holiday spectacle.

Many eyes saw the Holy Sufferer on the cross, as many will see Him on the clouds of glory. By-and-by they will see Him with guilty fear and trembling, as of old they beheld Him in callous indifference. Then their vulgar gaze gave an added pain to the sensitive spirit of the Christ, as we learn from the plaint of the prophetic Spirit of the Messiah recorded in the Psalm: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn"; "They look and stare upon me" (Psalms 22:7).

Pride. There are several words so translated in the Greek Testament. The one used here (hyperephania) conveys the sense of a spirit of self-exaltation in a man coupled with the disparagement of others. The Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others (Luke 18:9) are flagrant examples, but the Gentiles are not free from guilt in this respect any more than the Jews (Romans 1:30). This arrogance displays itself in boastful words and vain-glorious deeds, but its origin is within the heart, as is shown by that sentence from the Magnificat: "He scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart" (Luke 1:51). This particular form of haughtiness is obnoxious to God and amenable to His summary judgment, for both James and Peter write that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). The root idea of the word is that of lifting up oneself to show oneself off above one's fellows, a personal puffing up which brings into the condemnation of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6). The full development of this sin of unmitigated arrogance in man was not seen in the Pharisee, but will be fully displayed in the coming "man of sin," the son of perdition, who "opposeth and exalteth himself" exceedingly against everyone that is called god, or object of veneration: so that he sitteth down in the temple Of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). That great personage having exalted himself to heaven in the folly of pride, will be brought down to hell in swift abasement by the epiphany of the coming in glory of Him who humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Foolishness. — Folly or lack of sense closes the catalogue here given of the foul emanations of man's evil heart. It does not follow, as some have thought, from its position on the list that foolishness is the most serious sin of all, as if the list was arranged to express degrees of gravity. Neither, on the other hand, is foolishness negligible in importance, so that it maybe passed over without concern.

Foolishness seems to be that gross form of stupidity which excludes God from the regulation of the life. In the words of the Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God" (Psalms 14:1). Though the natural heart is the seat of uncontrollable passions which impel the whole man into courses of vile action, the senseless refuse that divine help and guidance which alone can enable them to live lives of purity and obedience. Can there be greater folly than this? Foolishness is placed last in the list, says one writer, because it renders all the others incurable. This foolishness arising from man's own nature is defiled and defiling, in contrast with that wisdom that comes down from above and is "first pure" (James 3:17). Counsel and instruction are to be had of God for the seeking, but the natural man wilfully disregards them. This is his foolishness. He allows himself to be carried away by the violence of his sinful desires, and ignores the mercy and grace of God which would lift him above himself into the plane of light, life and holiness. Such is his foolishness.

Pure in Heart

"All these things proceed from within and defile the man," were the Lord's concluding words to the disciples here. How futile therefore was it for the Pharisees to contend for the ceremonial washing of the hands and the person, forgetful of that inward defilement which is moral and from the heart, and cannot be cleansed by the washing of water. The Lord's teaching with regard to the kingdom of the heavens was opposed to this, for He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). And the Jews should have known how this essential purification of heart could be effected. Ezekiel had declared that the cleansing of the nation was Jehovah's work and

promise: "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:25-26). The water is a figure of the word of God, as the Lord Himself shows, referring to the effect of His own word upon the disciples who received it by faith. He said, "Already ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" John 15:3). But the ritualistic practices of the Pharisees in this respect were vain and delusive as the Lord taught, yet in spite of that teaching, and heedless of His warning, some in the early church fell into the snare of relying upon human ordinances for purification. Against such Titus was warned: "Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:14-15). According to the "proverb of the ancients," quoted by David to Saul, "Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness" (1 Samuel 24:13).

Religious lustrations are highly esteemed among men, but not seldom they are an abomination to God in their vanity and hypocrisy. James writes "Pure religion and undefiled before God and our Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

41. — Crumbs of Grace for Gentile Dogs

"And from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it: and he could not be hid. But straightway a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race. And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. And he said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs. But she answered and saith unto him, Yea, Lord; even the dogs under the table eat of the children’s* crumbs. And he saith unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out" (Mark 7:24-30, R.V.).

{*The woman uses a different word for children. The Lord said, It is not meet to take of the bread of the teknon, that is, the natural-born children of the family. She replied that the dogs might receive crumbs from the paidion, that is from the little ones of the household, which would include the servants.} The time was now approaching when the Servant of the Lord would complete His ministry of grace in Galilee, and would go up to Jerusalem to deliver His final testimony to the "daughter of Zion." And we find from the Gospel records that in the later journeyings of Jesus in Galilee, there were some notable occasions when the grace and truth of which He was "full" overflowed to those of Gentile blood. These examples, amongst which that of the Syro-phoenician woman is not the least striking, were foreshadowings of the (then) coming time of unrestricted grace when it would be proclaimed to all men that the Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Romans 10:10). At Capernaum the Pharisees in their religious pride stumbled at the saying of the Lord (Matthew 15:12) that the heart of man is the true seat of his spiritual defilement, sin spreading outwards from this inward source like a leprous disease. These Jewish teachers refused to believe in Jesus and in His word, condemning their tradition as it did: hence they were "confounded," and missed receiving that purification of heart which comes alike to Jews and Gentiles who believe (Acts 15:9). But it was made clear in the days of the Lord that if they of the favoured nation

stumbled at the Stumbling-stone through unbelief, heathen strangers, humbly confessing the extremity of their needs, would stretch out arms of entreaty and faith to the mercy of Jehovah that was then visiting the people of His covenant. And in His zeal to help the needy He showed that no plaint for pity should be addressed in vain to the just and lowly King of Israel, not even the voice of a Canaanite. In accordance with this purpose we here read that "from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon."

Tyre and Sidon The geographical limits of our Lord’s ministry were much circumscribed in comparison with those assigned by Him to His followers at His departure. His own service was confined to the "cities of Israel," that of the apostles in His absence was extended to the ends of the earth. When Paul and Barnabas were preaching the word of God to the Jews in Antioch, and the audience refused their testimony, the apostle said to them, "Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). But though our Lord’s words and deeds were rejected in Capernaum and elsewhere in Galilee and Judea, the Lord did not Himself preach the gospel of the kingdom to Gentiles, nor did He enter Gentile territory. He, however, on this occasion approached the borders of His own country. The branches of the fruitful bough ran over the wall of partition (Genesis 49:22), though the millennial day was, in fact, far distant, when the leaves of the tree of life would be for the healing of the nations everywhere (Revelation 22:3). Nevertheless, those of Tyre and Sidon, who even then cared to seek help and healing from God’s Minister of grace, would not be denied, as the record of the Evangelist proves.

Tyre and Sidon, or Zidon, were cities of great antiquity, the latter being the elder; for Zidon, first-born of Canaan, founded the city, and called it by his own name (Genesis 10:15; Genesis 10:19). Hence, in Matthew the woman of Tyre and Sidon is called a Canaanitess (Matthew 15:22). In the time of Joshua, it had grown to be a place of considerable size and importance, and was known as "great Zidon" (Joshua 11:8; Joshua 19:28). Zidon was included in the inheritance apportioned to the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:24-31), but the Asherites failed to take full possession of their inheritance. They did not drive out the inhabitants of Zidon, but dwelt among the Canaanites (Judges 1:31-32).

Tyre, twenty miles distant, though the younger city, excelled its neighbour in commercial prosperity and influence, and its worldly grandeur is described in vivid terms by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 27:1-36), and Hiram its king was a useful ally of David and Solomon, and provided workmen and materials for the building of the royal palace and the temple at Jerusalem. But Tyre broke away from the "brotherly covenant," and incurred the divine displeasure (Amos 1:9). Because of their sinful pride God’s judgments came upon these two cities, according to the prophecies of Isaiah (Isaiah 23:1-18) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 26:1-21; Ezekiel 27:1-36; Ezekiel 28:1-26; Ezekiel 29:1-21), by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and subsequently by Alexander the Great of Greece. This punishment came to pass in the words of another prophet: "Tyre did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire" (Zechariah 9:3-4). Their wickedness was so great that they are classed by our Lord with Sodom as monumental examples of the world’s iniquity and departure from God (Matthew 11:22-23). And yet the Lord also declared that if the mighty works done by Him in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, even as Nineveh did at

the preaching of Jonah. The House of Mercy

"And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid." At the dedication of the magnificent temple on Mount Zion, Solomon, contrasting its significance with the infinite and essential glories of Jehovah, exclaimed, "Will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house that I have builded" (2 Kings 8:27). Neither could the house on the borders of Tyre and Sidon contain nor confine the glory of Jehovah's Servant. "He could not be hid," though in His humility and the lowliness of His heart, He retired from the populous districts bordering the Sea of Galilee, where He was unwanted, and sought some privacy in a house (as Mark alone tells us) near the land of the Gentile.*

{*Compare the words of the prophet, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaiah 45:15).} This voluntary seclusion illustrates to us the amazing perfection of this Servant of God who accepted so meekly the rebuffs to His service. Though arising directly from the men of Israel, the hand of His God was seen by Him to be above all. He bowed to them therefore, as to the will of Him that sent Him. Finding Jerusalem and Galilee leagued against Him, He sought a secret place away from the face of His enemies, where He might spread out the disappointment of His heart of love before the face of His Father. There was a further display of the same spirit later, when the crucifixion became still more imminent, and we read that as the Lord and His disciples "passed through Galilee, he would have no man know it" (Mark 9:30; Mark 9:32). This self-abnegation was of great moral beauty. The act of self-effacement, but most of all the spirit of the act, was rare and choice among men. It was not yet the effulgence of the glorified Son of man shining upon the willing and unwilling, like the lightning from the east unto the west, nevertheless, the glow of this heavenly gem in its earthly setting "could not be hid." It was not yet the appointed time when all flesh should see the glory of Jehovah, but One here and another there, like this Canaanite, discerned and owned in Jesus the Hope of Israel, and the Blesser also of all men.

Lingering still, for a moment, over this phase of moral glory, it will appear to us to be a special feature of Mark's Gospel to record occasions when our Lord withdrew Himself from men because of their opposition and persecution, and when the very act of retiring before the power of His enemies was accompanied by further witness to His glory from needy suppliants who pursued Him unto His solitude. Thus, when Jesus withdrew from the synagogue of Capernaum to the sea, great multitudes followed Him (Mark 3:6-8). When he crossed the Sea of Galilee to the wilds of Gadara, a man with an unclean spirit met Him for healing and conversion (v. 1, 2). When the Lord with His apostles went apart into the desert place after the execution of John the Baptist, great multitudes followed Him (Mark 6:30-33). And in this instance, when Jesus retired to a house after encountering the wilful obduracy and blindness of the guides of Israel, as well as the ignorance of His own disciples, the Syro-phoenician stranger sought Him out, and by her earnest solicitations obtained mercy and found grace to help in time of need. This unnamed house on the borders of Israel became by reason of the Illustrious Presence tarrying there, a tenement of heavenly mercy — a Bethsaida indeed. The house itself, honoured as it was, has passed into oblivion, but the fame of its Heavenly Visitant abides. To this house the woman of Canaan came, lifting up her hands in dim but true faith, not to the temple on Mount Zion where no Shekinah then dwelled, but to the Word of God made flesh and tabernacling among men. In the millennium the house of God "shall be called of all nations the house of prayer." And in these requests made by Gentile

strangers direct to Jesus we have individual instances of Jehovah’s comprehensive reply to the petitions of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, when he besought the LORD, saying: "Concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake (for they shall hear of thy great name and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm), when he shall come and pray towards this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for" (1 Kings 10: 41-43). When this "stranger" woman "heard of Him" she, who was forbidden to enter the temple at Jerusalem, came to Jesus as to the true Temple of God upon the earth, and He answered her according to all that she sought of Him. The Mother’s Prayer

1918 7 It was a mother who sought the presence of Jesus on the borders of the land of Israel. As a parent, she was torn with anxiety and distress for the sufferings of her little daughter, who was "grievously vexed" with a demon. "A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syro-phoenician by race. And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter."

We cannot but observe in the Gospels what respect the Lord paid to parental concern for their families. In dispensing His blessings, He had special regard for the institutions of family life. Among the comparatively few specific cases of the Lord’s miracles of healing which are recorded, we find that the Lord hearkened to the prayer of (1) a mother for her daughter (Matthew 15:21-28);

(2) a father for his daughter (Matthew 9:18-26);

(3) a father for his son (Matthew 17:14-18);

(4) a courtier for his son (John 4:46-53);

(5) the mothers for their infants (Luke 18:15-16) (6) a centurion for his servant (Luke 7:2-10). In the home life the influences of natural affection are mightily powerful upon the young for good or for ill. In the same circle the terrible effects of the presence and operation of sin are perhaps more visible than anywhere else. There, too frequently, alas, cases are found where example and counsel are unavailing to deliver from corrupting and destroying evil. But mothers, fathers, masters, the responsible ones of the household, are encouraged by the cases given in the Gospels to make believing appeals for their charges to Jesus who is able to control and heal the evils of the soul, even as He did the diseases of the body. The woman of Canaan had heard of Jesus; we read that for some while before this date His "fame had spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee" (Mark 1:28), and when the multitudes flocked to Capernaum because "they had heard what great things He did" those about Tyre and Sidon were among them (Mark 3:7-8; Luke 6:17). It was a wealthy queen among the Gentiles who heard of the wisdom of Solomon and came to him with her choice gifts from the ends of the earth that she might see and hear for herself. A greater than Solomon was now lodged in an obscure corner of Galilee, but it was only one of the descendants of Canaan, weighted from the days of Noah with a curse (Genesis 9:25), who came to do homage at His feet and to present her petition. The Psalmist prophesied that when Jehovah’s King came to Zion the daughter of Tyre would be there with a gift (Psalms 45:12), but this poor woman had nothing to bring to Jesus save the fruit of her body, possessed, alas, by an evil demon. Baffled by the power and subtlety of the wicked spirit, she, in her womanly weakness, and in her mother’s love, cried out to Him who had blessed so many of the afflicted daughters of

Israel, Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25). The Children and the Dogs The case of the poor mother was a pathetic one, and would naturally awaken the sympathies of the tender-hearted. But the Great Prophet of the kingdom of God could not be swayed by sentiment or emotion merely, and thrown from His just balance in the administration of the mercy of Jehovah. In Him mercy was perfectly tempered with truth and righteousness, as was the case with none other of the servants of God. Jonah, that former prophet of Galilee, knew neither mercy nor grace, and repined in his bigotry, at the forbearance of God shown to the Ninevites who repented at his preaching. Though he had himself experienced how Jehovah's power and mercy miraculously delivered a disobedient servant from a just retribution, Jonah could not endure that the ignorant Gentiles unable to "discern between their right hand and their left hand" should be spared from the threatened judgment. But Jesus, while full of compassion for the stranger, was equally full of truth as of grace. His mercy, "the sure mercies of David," was exercised according to the inflexible truth of God. Bounds were set to the flow of the living waters. Jehovah had for many centuries drawn broad and deep distinctions among the families of mankind, based upon His promise and His oath.* In Abraham the olive tree of promise was established, and successive prophets had declared that his seed were the appointed participants in its "root and fatness."

{*At the beginning it was said of Canaan, "a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Genesis 9:25), and many were made bondservants in the land in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 9:20-21).}

According to the oracles of truth, therefore, the seed of Abraham were the chosen people of God, and nationally were brought into filial relationship with Him. "Out of Egypt I have called my son," said Jehovah, carrying the nation out of the house of bondage into the land of plenty, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Because of their gross idolatry and moral depravity, the aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan were driven out to make place for those known in prophetic language as "sons of the living God."

Dispensationally, therefore, as the whole scheme of Old Testament promise and prophecy showed, the descendants of Israel were nearer God than the Gentiles. And the Lord Jesus in His ministry of the abundant grace of God recognised the divine restrictions imposed in former days. He had not come to destroy the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17); and what God had established He would not permit man to waive or ignore. Even in this case of dire extremity, the woman was not entitled by reason of her necessity to set aside the ruling and ways of God for centuries. The Messiah was sent to Israel, and salvation was of the Jews. She must learn that her only hope lay in the sovereign mercy of God. The question involved in the woman's plea, therefore, was one of proper decorum in approaching the Majesty of heavenly grace. Seemliness in the eyes of heaven is the due recognition of the dignity and authority of what is of God. Distinctions must not be set aside save by the One who made those distinctions. Soon it would be declared of human depravity that "there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and further, of divine sovereignty, "there is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 3:23; Romans 10:12). But in the days of our Lord's ministry, there were still those who nationally were of the family of God and those who were not. In relative dispensational position, therefore, the two classes were as far removed from one another in the household as children and dogs. Hence the Lord said to the woman, "Let the children first be filled; it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." In this reply, the Lord,

as it were, appealed to what was in harmony with divine appointment in the matter of government among men. When the order of the coming heavenly kingdom is fully established upon the earth, there will then be a class who have a right to eat of the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city: there will at the same time be "dogs," but these are said to be "without" (Revelation 22:15). The words of our Lord challenged the woman whether she would accept these limitations imposed by God in the course of His sovereign dealings with men. The divine decree to Joshua was that the Canaanite should be exterminated from the land, and now the anointed King in that land had used to her a term of reproach which seemed to be harsh and humiliating. What would she do? In her self-abasement, she accepted the term in its full religious import. She could not claim to be a child, and she did not refuse to acknowledge herself before the Lord and His disciples to be an unclean dog. The word of truth had truly entered her soul, and cast out all Gentile pride, convincing her that by race she was an outcast from Israel, and therefore without any prescriptive claim upon the Messiah of that nation. The Woman’s Saying of Faith The woman’s reply to our Lord indicated what was in her heart. She did not dispute His word that the children had a prior claim and should first be filled, nor that it would be unseemly to cast the children’s bread to the dogs. Outward appearances at that time seemed to suggest that the relative position of the two races was the reverse, for the Jew was under the yoke of the Gentile. Nevertheless, the suppliant owned that Israel was the people of God, as Rahab, another Gentile woman, by a similar faith, had done at an earlier day (Hebrews 11:31). But the faith of this stranger went a step farther. She believed the prophet’s word that the seed of Abraham were "children" in the sense of Exodus 4:22; Hosea 1:10; Hosea 11:1; but she also trusted God and His messenger to whom she had come that somehow there would be help for her and her daughter, in spite of her Gentile extraction. From whence did her faith arise? It is written that she had "heard of him;" and "faith cometh by hearing." The news she heard of the Lord brought her to His feet in supplication. Then His word to her, moulding and correcting the terms of her request, further developed the faith of her heart which, like Jacob of old (Genesis 32:26), would not part with Him without His blessing. The Lord described the woman’s faith as great" (Matthew 15:25), and there is but one other instance besides recorded in the Gospels, which He similarly characterised that of the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:10; Luke 7:9). And it is noteworthy that the same Discerner of hearts who pronounced the faith of these two Gentiles to be "great" declared that of the disciples and that of Peter to be "little" (Matthew 8:26; Matthew 14:31).

"Great" faith appears to have grown out of a sense which these two believers had of the illimitable (1) power and (2) grace of Jesus. The two Gentile claimants freely acknowledged their personal unworthiness, but their "great" faith did not consist of their humility. Each presented to the Lord with much fervour a case of great urgency, but their faith did not become great in proportion to the importunity of their petitions. In addition, however, to lowliness of spirit and earnest appeal, they both placed themselves unreservedly in the hands of the Great Benefactor. In other words, they showed unrestricted confidence in His will, acting in His love, to help and heal. Such faith the Lord had not found in Israel, for they said to Him, "What doest thou for a sign that we may see and believe thee?" (John 6:30)!

There appear at the same time to be differences between the cases. The centurion trusted the power of Jesus, especially in His capacity as the administrator of the Kingdom of God. He did not at all expect the Lord to come beneath the roof of a Gentile; indeed he did not consider that His

bodily presence was essential. The Master needed only, as he said, to utter the word of command, and his servant would be healed (cp. Psalms 107:20). These expressions of the Roman officer showed his absolute confidence in the supreme power wielded by the Nazarene; and the Lord recognized this when He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." In the second instance, the woman of Canaan expressed her confidence, not so much in the fulness of the authority as in the over-flowing goodness and bounty of Jesus. The Master who had prepared a table for the children of the kingdom did so, she believed, with a lavishness worthy of the God of heaven. The Messiah had come to fill the hungry with good things. At His feast there was ample provision for all. And while it was not meet that bread should be withdrawn from the children and thrown to the dogs, there were fragments from the feast that remained, crumbs that fell from the table loaded with the Master's benefits, portions of the plenty unneeded, neglected, despised by the rightful guests. Of these fragments, the dogs of the household under the table might surely, she pleaded, be permitted to eat with freedom, though indeed Lazarus desired in vain those that fell from the table of Dives (Luke 16:21). As a Gentile stranger, she could not claim a chief seat at the feast, nor indeed could she claim a seat as guest at all. Nor, to anticipate the apostolic figure, had she, as of the wild olive, any desire to "boast herself against the branches" (Romans 11:18), but in singular and appropriate humility she abased herself to a dog's place beneath the table that there she might be authorised by the Master to partake of the crumbs of heavenly mercy. Thus, humbling herself to the lowest, but clinging ever to the All-highest, she became to the Lord's eyes "great in faith," giving glory to God. Her Perseverance in Prayer The pertinacity of the woman in presenting her requests is marked in the narratives of both Matthew and Mark, and she affords a striking example of that continuance in prayer to which the apostle of the Gentiles exhorts the church at Colosse (Colossians 4:2). The persevering suit of the woman was based, as indeed all real believing prayer must be, upon a sense of the love and grace of God revealed in His Son. This active cause is brought out in the following quotation (slightly abridged).

"Need and faith in the goodness and power of the Lord give perseverance, as in the case of those who carried the paralytic man when the crowd pressed around Jesus (Mark 2:3-5). But there is something in the woman's heart beside confidence, which grace had produced there. She recognises the rights of the Jews as God's people; she owns that she is but a dog with regard to them: but she insists upon her demand, because she feels that, even though she be but a dog, the grace of God is sufficient for those who had no rights. 'Even the dogs,' she says, 'eat of the children's crumbs.'

"She believes in God's love towards those who have neither rights nor promises; and in the manifestation of God in Jesus outside of, and above, all dispensations. God is good, and the fact of a person being in misery is a claim with Him. Could Christ say to her, 'No, God is not good as thou dost suppose'? He could not say this: it would not have been the truth.

"This is great faith, faith which recognises our own wretchedness, and that we have a right to nothing, but which believes in the love of God clearly revealed in Jesus. We have no right to expect the exercise of this love towards us, but we can be sure that coming to Christ, impelled by our wants, we shall find perfect goodness, love that heals us, and the healing itself.

"Let us remember that true need perseveres because it cannot do without the aid of the power which was manifested in Christ, nor without the salvation which He brought; nor is there salvation

without the help which is to be found in Him for our weakness. And that which is in God is the source of our hope and of our faith; and if asked how we know what is in God's heart, we can answer, It is perfectly revealed in Christ.' Who put it into God's heart to send His own Son to save us? Who put it into the Son's heart to come and suffer everything for us? Not man. God's heart is its source. We believe in this love.

"The grace of God was fully shown forth towards the poor woman, who had no right to any blessing, nor to any promise; she was a daughter of the accursed Canaan; but faith reaches even to the heart of God manifested in Jesus, and in like manner the eye of God reaches to the bottom of man's heart. Thus God's heart and man's heart meet, in the consciousness that man is altogether bad, that he has not a single right; indeed he owns truly this state, and gives himself up to the perfect goodness of God. But the Jewish people, who pretended to possess righteousness and right to the promises is set on one side; and, as to the old covenant, is shut out from God's favour."* {*Collected Writings of J. N. D., vol. 24, pp. 398-400.} Features Peculiar to Matthew A comparison of the terms in which this incident is recounted by Matthew and Mark respectively, affords illustration of the distinct purposes of the two Evangelists in their histories.

Mark, who presents Jesus as the Great Servant-Prophet of Jehovah, executing earthly commission with unexampled perfection and grace of manner, shows Him in the outskirts of Immanuel's land, feeding the Syro-phoenician woman with the "bread of heaven." Mark's account is briefer than the companion one, but sufficient to excite our adoring wonder at the readiness of the Lord to take up His active service even when the Gentile stranger sought His presence in the house where He "would have no man know it." This prophet's kindness to the woman who came out of the borders of Tyre and Sidon recalls the mission of Elijah to the widow of Zarephath, a city of Zidon. In the days of famine she was preserved from starvation by the power and mercy of Jehovah through the prophet, though she was a Gentile and not a widow in Israel (1 Kings 17:8-16; Luke 4:26). The principal points which appear only in the account by Matthew, and which illustrate His regal demeanour, are as follows:

(1) The woman addressed the Lord as Son of David.

(2) The Lord remained silent at first.

(3) The disciples in the Jewish spirit of exclusiveness desired that she might be sent away.

(4) The Lord made reference to His mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

(5) The Lord commended the greatness of the woman's faith. The first Gospel presents Jesus especially as of the Royal House of David, and its first verse reads: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." As the Old Testament records those who confessed the fugitive David to be the anointed king of Israel (2 Samuel 23:1-39, et alia), so Matthew most fully of the four Evangelists records those who owned Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of David. There are six such instances: —

(1) two blind men in Galilee (Matthew 9:27);

(2) the multitude in Galilee (Matthew 12:23);

(3) the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:22);

(4) two blind men near Jericho (Matthew 20:30-31);

(5) the multitude at the entrance to Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9);

(6) the children in the temple (Matthew 21:15). But the Pharisees will not own Him either as David's Son or David's Lord (Matthew 22:41-46). There are three Gentile women named in the genealogy of the Royal Child, viz., Tamar, Rahab and Ruth (Matthew 1:3-5), and one other is honourably mentioned, though not by name (Matthew 15:22), among the few who hailed the Nazarene as the Son of David.*

{*Study the contrast with others of her country, who sought the goodwill of that Edomite tyrant who in his arrogancy was blasted by the open judgment of God (Acts 12:20-23).}

Though the Lord remained silent, was not this confession sweet to Him, though coming from the mouth of a Gentile? He was in the territory of the tribe of Asher, of whom Jacob prophesied, "He shall yield royal dainties" (Genesis 49:20). So although there was no table in Zion for David's Son, there was one spread in the wilderness of Asher, where He had royal dainties to eat that Israel knew not of, and where there were crumbs of grace for hungry Gentiles too.

42. — The Deaf Stammerer Healed

1918 73 "And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man; but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He path done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark 7:31-37, R.V.). From the neighbourhood of the districts of Tyre and Sidon, the Lord journeyed in the way of His ministry towards the northern shores of the sea of Galilee, leaving behind Him the grateful woman and her delivered daughter as witnesses of His mercy to the stranger who had sought refuge "within the gates" of Immanuel's land. This tour in its circuit brought Him through Decapolis, where His fame as the Prophet of Nazareth had been previously spread abroad. For it was in this locality that the healed demoniac of Gadara proclaimed the love and power of Jesus his Deliverer. In the fulness of his gratitude the restored man had sought to follow the Lord when He crossed the sea, but was not permitted, but bidden to go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him, and what mercy He had shown him. And we are expressly told that this disciple thereupon published in Decapolis his account of what the Lord was doing, with the result that "all men did marvel (Mark 5:19-20).

Decapolis seems to have been a place where the word of the Sower fell into "good ground," and brought forth fruit abundantly. The name occurs in the comprehensive summary of the labours of the Lord given by Matthew in the early part of his Gospel. Of five districts there mentioned, Decapolis is one of those where multitudes were gathered by His ministry; the others being Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and "beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:23-25). For this territory was the Galilee of the Gentiles, concerning whose inhabitants Isaiah prophesied: "The people that walked

in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isaiah 9:2). This benighted neighbourhood was at that time a very populous one. Modern explorers of Galilee find evidence of crowded cities and villages spread over wide areas in the northern territory, so that the extent Of the population in the days of the Lord must have been far greater than is usually conceived. And the "large crowds," mentioned by the first Evangelist may therefore be understood from this point of view. Referring to this visit of the Lord to Decapolis mentioned by Mark, Matthew records that these great multitudes came unto Him, bringing with them the dumb, and many others, and He healed them all (Matthew 15:29-31); while Mark specifies one case only. We must not fail, in comparing the two narratives, to note the wide and lavish display of Messianic grace characteristically set forth in Matthew's account. The people of the Decapolitan district were no doubt much debased by heathen influence, but nevertheless, the Lord, seated on the mountain, received and, in the regal affluence of His power and mercy, blessed all those who thronged to Him. Matthew's record (to which we may again refer) is that great multitudes came unto Him, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and laid them down at the feet of Jesus, and He healed them all; while this gracious and abundant exercise of the prerogative of mercy by the King of the Jews so moved the populace that they glorified the "God of Israel" (Matthew 15:29-31).

Mark, however, does not summarise the manifold activities of the Lord in this locality as Matthew does, but selects a single typical instance, which he narrates in much detail, portraying the Patient and Faithful Servant of Jehovah in His unutterable love, concerned intimately in the individual case before Him, and displaying the utmost interest and pains in the exercise of His healing grace.

It is noteworthy that this miracle and that of the opening of the eyes of the blind man of Bethsaida (8: 22-26) are two which are mentioned in the Gospel of Mark only. Both miracles were wrought privately, and do not appear to have a special sign-character to the nation like those which were given a more public display. The Deaf Stammerer

Here then we learn that some unnamed friends brought to Jesus a man who was deaf, and who also had an impediment in his speech. The afflicted person was without a sense of hearing, and if he was not absolutely mute, he was unable to speak intelligibly because of some defect in the organs of articulation. Previously to this occasion the Lord had cured many deaf persons (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22), and subsequently He cast a dumb and deaf spirit out of a lad at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:25). The friends implored Jesus to lay His hands upon the sufferer, as Jairus also, on behalf of his little daughter, besought the Lord to do; though the latter, in his paternal distress was the more importunate, for he besought Jesus "greatly," saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; I pray thee that thou come and lay thy hands on her that she may be made whole and live" (Mark 5:23).

It was a way of the Lord to adopt this gracious attitude in the bestowal of blessing. In the early days of His ministry, when the crowds came to Him at Capernaum for succour, He laid hands upon all who were needing relief: "And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him: and he laid his hands upon:every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40). On another occasion He "laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them" (Mark 6:5). Similarly, He laid His hands upon the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23; Mark 8:26), and upon the bowed woman (Luke 13:13).

Love and sympathy were conveyed by this act, but not necessarily the power of cure, for this went with His word and will, as we see from those instances in which He sent forth His word and healed, even at a distance. This distinction is of importance to note always, for there are still many who erroneously attach a primary value to the formal act of this nature on the part of those who unwarrantably claim to be the Lord’s delegates for the purpose. The Way of the Lord in this Healing

1918 88 The Lord displayed a special, personal interest in this case of the deaf stammerer, and the record shows very fully how the Lord performed this cure, and how deeply He was affected by the sad condition of the sufferer. It is interesting to note in the next chapter that a similar fulness of detail is found in the narrative of the other miracle peculiar to this Gospel. There is also a general correspondence in the Lord’s procedure in the two cases, as may be seen from the following comparison of the sevenfold descriptions of the recorded actions and words, though it also reveals peculiarities in each of the cases.

Placing the clauses of the two accounts side by side, we find that the Lord —

1. took the deaf man aside, 1. took the blind man by the hand, 2. put His fingers into his ears, 2. led him out of the town, 3. spat, 3. spat on his eyes, 4. touched his tongue, 4. put His hands on him, 5. looked up to heaven, 5. inquired whether he saw, 6. sighed, 6. put His hands again on his eyes, 7. said, Ephphatha (7: 33, 34). 7. made him look up (8: 23-25).

Taking the features which are analogous, the Lord in both instances, (a) healed privately, (b) touched the afflicted members,

(c) spat,

(d) spake.

But, distinctively, the Lord, in the first instance, looked up, sighed, and said, "Ephphatha"; and in the latter case He took the man by the hand, inquired whether he saw after He put hands on him, and made him look up. Thus, there is general agreement in four of the clauses, and differences in three. A few remarks upon these various points are offered by way of suggestion.

(1) Privacy. The Lord took the deaf man aside (kat idian) This Greek phrase is used in several instances in the Gospels, and is variously translated "apart," "privately," "when alone," as well as "aside." On seven occasions the Lord sought privacy for Himself alone, or in company with a few of His disciples, separately from the multitudes. They were as follows: —

(1) when He went into the mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23);

(2) when He called His disciples into a desert place to rest awhile (Matthew 14:13; Mark 6:31-32; Luke 9:10);

(3) when He took Peter, James and John into the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2);

(4) when He expounded the parables to the disciples (Mark 4:34);

(5) when He impressed upon the disciples their exceptional privileges (Luke 10:23);

(6) when He instructed His disciples concerning His coming death (Matthew 20:17);

(7) when He took the deaf man aside for healing (Mark 7:34). In addition to these, there are two instances of the use of the same phrase, when the disciples sought the Lord in private, viz. —

(1) when they failed to cast out a demon (Matthew 17:19; Mark 9:28);

(2) when they inquired concerning the future (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3). From these references, as well as from other instances where the exact Greek phrase under consideration is not used, though the occasion was similar, it appears that retirement was sought by the Lord (1) at specially solemn epochs in His ministry in order that they might be spent in communion with His Father, and (2) for the communication of such instruction as was of particular interest and special importance to the disciples as distinct from the crowds. It was on such occasions that the apostles were prepared for their future service in the world as the Lord's witnesses, when He Himself should be absent. In the present case it would certainly be for the man's own moral and spiritual benefit that he should be alone with the Divine Healer, while the Lord, with delicate regard for the acute sensibilities common to most persons so afflicted, spared him in this way from the coarse and curious gaze of the gaping mob. With a similar observance of due propriety in circumstances of solemnity and sorrow, He removed the hired mourners from the death-chamber of the daughter of Jairus. While in a matter of moral wrong and personal offence, the Lord taught His disciples the value of a private interview, enunciating His golden rule for the adjustment of differences between man and man: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone" (Matthew 18:15).

If privacy has its value in an interview between man and man, how much more was this so when the interview was between the man and His Saviour? There were spiritual impressions of the rarest character to be received as well as a physical benefit. The Messiah of Israel was present; was it not important that the man should experience for himself the loving regard which He showed in the case of every individual sufferer? Such an experience would be ineffaceable. Hence the deaf man was taken apart from the curious crowd and from his excited friends, so that his attention might not be distracted from the Master, and that His demeanour, His words and His doings, in their full sweetness and power, might ever live in his memory.

(2) The touch. The kindly friends besought the Lord to lay hands upon the man. Accordingly, when He had gone aside privately with him, He put His fingers into the deaf ears, and touched the fettered tongue. Without pretending to assign specific motives to the Master for these actions, we may surely, without presumption, learn from the incident how thoroughly the Lord in His exquisite sympathy placed Himself in contact with the infirmities of those whom He blessed. If in Him there had been power alone, He might have exhibited it from afar, but there was love also, and this in its exercise must be near at hand.

Hence the Saviour in His compassion came near enough to touch the ear and the tongue, that in an undisturbed privacy the deaf and the dumb might learn the marvellous ways of the God of love present to restore His sin-blighted creation. For the divine love for the sinner was even more wonderful than the divine power to heal. Had He not, by that same power, first fashioned the organs of hearing and speech? Should He not therefore well understand how to recover them when their functions were deranged? The Lord therefore touched, communicating healing and

strength, but contracting no defilement. It was as the touch of the sunlight upon the noisome places of the earth, which vivifies and purifies, but is never soiled. In the service of His healing mercy, Messiah fulfilled what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17).

(3) The upward look and the sigh. With His hands upon the five loaves and two fishes, the Lord had looked up to heaven and blessed, and thereupon the tiny store of food was multiplied to satisfy the famished multitude (Mark 6:41). Here with His hands, as it were, upon the ears of the deaf and the tongue of the dumb, He looked up to heaven and sighed. As food and gladness are associated gifts of God (Acts 14:17), awakening thanksgiving, so sickness is accompanied by sadness and sorrow, which are audibly expressed by sighing.* The perfect adaptability of Christ is seen in each of the two instances. Looking up to heaven was His habit, whether the occasion called for joy or grief. We also see that while He rejoiced to dispense divine bounties to the hungry and the weary, He mourned to see before Him the mutilated image of God without a tongue to bless His Maker’s name,or ears to hear the voice of His Sent One.

{*Sighing is an involuntary emotion, usually arising from internal causes.}

Heaven, as we learn from the Lord’s attitude is the only resource for the sin-stricken earth. There the Father is, and thence His kingdom will in due course come. Meanwhile, the presence of sin abides below, and sighing over its grievous fruits is the lot of all, wittingly or unwittingly. The prevalence of this under-current of sadness the apostle expressed when he declared that "the whole creation groaneth [lit., is sighing] and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only so, but ourselves also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan [lit., are sighing] within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-23). In another Epistle, Paul wrote, referring to the body and its infirmities, "In this we groan [sigh] . . . for we that are in this tabernacle do groan [are sighing], being burdened" (2 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:4) * It is to be observed that in each of these instances the Spirit, in conformity with the action of our Lord in the presence of the deaf man, directs the eye of hope upwards for that release from bodily imperfection to be granted when the Father’s kingdom shall come.

{*The same word is used in connection with the affliction of the people of Israel in Egypt, for Jehovah said, "I have heard their groaning [sighing], and I am come down to deliver them" (Acts 7:34).} For in the day of God’s glory in the earth, this constant burden of the spiritual heart will certainly be removed, and the sigh or groan of the needy and of the imprisoned (Psalms 12:5; Psalms 79:2) will no longer be known. Then will be the fulfilment of that prophecy of which this Galilean miracle was the earnest: "Behold your God . . . will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped . . . and the tongue of the dumb shall sing . . . and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion . . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:4-10).

(4) The word of authority. Following His touch of sympathy, the Lord uttered His word of command, Ephphatha. The Servant of Jehovah, in the plenitude of His rights as the Son of God, spoke, and it was accordingly done, for His word was equally potent to control and to correct as it was to create. Had He not "planted the ear" (Psalms 94:9)? If He made the hearing ear (Proverbs 20:12), should He not cause the deaf ear to hear His voice? Addressing therefore the impotent member rather than the man himself, the Lord said, Be opened, and accordingly the ears of the deaf man were

unstopped, and the bond of his tongue loosed, so that he spoke aright. The miracle was wrought in secret, and not as a public sign. Hence the Lord, having opened the ears and mouth of the man brought to Him, gave direction that no one should be told. But this command fell upon the deaf ears of disobedience, for the more He charged this upon them, so much the more a great deal they published it. . . . Being beyond measure astonished they said, "He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Ears and Tongue in Divine Service

1918 108 It may be of some help and interest to bring together a few remarks by way of suggestion on the subject of the connection between dumbness and deafness, and of the general analogy in spiritual things presented by them. The subject of service, too, has a direct bearing upon the special feature of the Second Gospel.

Deafness and dumbness are frequently associated as disorders in the same person, and, except in cases where there is malformation in the organs of speech, inability to speak is the direct result of an inability to hear. So that, generally speaking, the deaf man is also dumb. And, in consulting the various occurrences in the New Testament of the word kophos, usually in the A.V. rendered "deaf," we find that in some instances it is translated "dumb."

Thus, in the case of a certain demoniac brought to Jesus for healing, we read, "They brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out the dumb spake" (Matthew 9:32-33 Luke 11:14). Literally, in these instances the word "dumb" might be translated "deaf," the fact being that the man was both deaf and dumb.

Take the case of another demoniac. A father came to Jesus with his lad, saying to Him, "I have brought unto thee my son which path a dumb (alalon) spirit." But the boy appears to have been deaf as well as dumb, and presumably he was dumb because he was deaf: At any rate, the Lord, in ejecting the demon, addressed him as, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit (to alalon kai kophon) (Mark 9:17; Mark 9:25). It will be noticed that in the narrative of this incident a distinct Greek word (alalos) is translated "dumb."

Further, the dumb persons in the Decapolitan region who were made to speak by the Lord’s power were, according to the literal translation of the description, deaf (Matthew 15:30-31). Also, Zacharias became speechless (kophos), but it is clear from Luke’s account that he was deaf at the same time (cp. Luke 1:22 with 62). In connection with these foregoing examples of Scriptural usage, it may be useful to quote from modern encyclopaedias the following extracts, which present the intimate relation of deafness and dumbness from a physiological standpoint. One authority states: "It is not an uncommon supposition that deaf mutes are dumb on account of some vocal or organic defect, whereas the dumbness arises, with very rare exception, from the deprivation of hearing caused by some natural or accidental disease." Another says: "Dumbness is the consequence of deafness. Children ordinarily hear sounds, and then learn to imitate them, 1:e., they learn to repeat what they hear other persons say. It is thus that every one of us has learned to speak. But the deaf child hears nothing; it cannot therefore imitate, and remains dumb. . . . The ear is the guide and directress of the tongue; and when the ear is doomed to perpetual silence, the tongue is included in the ban: though if we could by any means give to the ear the faculty of hearing, the tongue would soon learn for itself to fulfil its proper office. To correct the

error involved in this apparent misnomer, some authorities use the term deaf simply, others speak of the deaf-dumb and deaf-mute. The latter term is common in America, as in France is its equivalent Sounds-muets. In the Holy Scriptures the same original word is translated 'deaf' in some places (as in Mark 7:32) and 'dumb' or 'speechless' in others (see Matthew 9:33 and Luke 1:22)."

It is therefore well-established that the function of speech is dependent upon the function of hearing, and in order to communicate rightly to others it is necessary to hear well. The two faculties are indispensable to a person who acts as a medium between one and another.* {*Written communications are in a different category, and are obviously not in question here.}

Applying this principle in the spiritual plane, the faithful and useful servant would be the one whose ear and voice are so accurately attuned that he transmits without failure the exact message he receives. Accordingly, Jehovah, in commissioning Jeremiah to be His prophet, said to him, "Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jeremiah 1:7). Also, the Lord, when sending forth the twelve Apostles, said to them, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27; Luke 12:3). The Apostle Paul writes in one of his epistles, "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). And again, John writes similarly, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard . . . of the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). In the Apocalypse the Lord's "servant John" (as he terms himself in the first verse) on about thirty different occasions states his record to be what he "heard." The Son as Hearer and Speaker The Incarnate Son of God in the exercise of His office of Mediator between God and man was pleased to exhibit an absolute dependence upon God in the presentation of the grace and truth that came by Him. His ear and His tongue were ever in perfect accord with the' divine will with respect to His service. This obedient attitude was fore-determined in the eternal counsels when the Son voluntarily elected to take the place of the coming Servant to do the will of God with great delight. The Holy Spirit revealed this secret planning in one of the Psalms: "Mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psalms 40:6-8). This great purpose, originating in eternity, was fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son and by His sacrifice, as the apostle expressly declared (Hebrews 10:5-10). The marvellous spirit of meek submission assumed by the Creator Son is also the subject of one of the prophecies of Isaiah. Looking forward in the power of the inspiring Spirit, he saw that the ear of the Servant of Jehovah would be opened continually to receive directions from the Lord God, and His tongue guided from on high to speak the words of divine comfort. The beautiful passage runs thus: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Isaiah 50:4-5). The New Testament records the fulfilment of these predictions, for in the Gospels the acts of the Lord Jesus all testify how He "emptied Himself," and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And in the Fourth Gospel especially, where the Son of God stands most revealed of the four, there are writ ten many of His own verbal testimonies to this subjection of His own will to that of the Father.

Thus, surveying at its close the execution of His earthly mission, the Son, in the outpouring of His heart to the Father, declared, "The sayings which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:8).

Similarly, the Lord instructed His disciples concerning the true source of that stream of heavenly wisdom which had come down to them: "All things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you": "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 15:5; John 14:24). To the Jews the Lord testified that God was then speaking to them in a manner different from the days of old, for they were, in His teaching, listening to the Son (Hebrews 1:1), who had assumed a relation of obedience for this purpose. On one occasion He said to them, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). Again, "the things which I have heard of him [the Father], these speak I unto the world": "For I speak not from myself; but the Father which sent me he hath given me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (John 8:26; John 12:49).

These passages all combine to show that the Servant-Prophet in His work as Jehovah's Spokesman to the nation was Himself first of all the Hearer of God, illustrating thereby for all time the essential nature of true and approved service. So absolutely was this attribute true of the Lord, that even when speaking of the exercise of the divine prerogative of judging which the Father had committed to Him as Son of man, He said, "As I hear, I judge." The whole passage reads, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me" (John 5:30).

Israel a Deaf Servant The term "servant" is frequently used in Scripture with reference to persons commissioned by God for the performance of some special duties for Him. Amongst others it is applied to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Job, and even to the first great head of Gentile dominion, Nebuchadnezzar (Genesis 26:24; Numbers 12:7; Judges 2:8; 2 Samuel 7:8; Job 1:8; Jeremiah 25:9; Jeremiah 43:10). Each of these men was called of God to serve Him in some particular capacity. The same term is employed in a national sense with reference to the chosen people of God. As Adam was set in the world to be the representative of his Creator, and to rule for Him over the works of His hands, so Israel was elected from' among all other nations to be the accredited representative of Jehovah in the earth. They were formally appointed as a people to execute certain important functions of direct service to the Lord. This high purpose with regard to the seed of Abraham was clearly enunciated by Jehovah to Moses in mount Sinai, when He said, "For unto me the children of Israel are servants: they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 25:42; Leviticus 25:55). This national relationship was recalled by Isaiah in words which Jehovah spoke to the people through him: "But thou Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend; thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the corners thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant" (Isaiah 41:8-9; cp. also Isaiah 44:1-2). Accordingly, this favoured people, in their capacity as God's agents, were made the recipients and custodians of His holy oracles, the exponents of the worship of the One and Only Deity, and the seat of Jehovah's earthly government among the nations of mankind. In consequence of the service due from them in these and in other respects, it was necessary that Israel should be faithful to this trust and obedient to all the precepts of Him who dwelled between the cherubim in their Holy of holies. The people, however, did not possess a circumcised ear for the messages which came to them from on high. Their attention was continually claimed by Jehovah, and the great declarations by Him when they became the repository of the divine law were prefaced by that significant formula which they vainly made their boast: "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 5:1; Deuteronomy 6:3-4; Deuteronomy 9:1; Deuteronomy

20:3). But Israel was deaf to all the revelations made. Their condition of irresponsiveness to the divine communications is the charge brought against them by the prophet Isaiah, who said to the Servant-nation, "Thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from of old thine ear was not opened" (Isaiah 48:8). Again, deploring their spiritual deadness, the same prophetic messenger said, "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? his ears are open, but he heareth not" (Isaiah 42:18-20). They had a separate and favoured position given them as a nation, and they are accordingly described as the "blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears" (Isaiah 43:8), inasmuch as they utterly failed to utilize the privileges and opportunities afforded them.

Clearly then, the Jews were spiritually incapable of hearing the voice of God, even as the Lord said to them, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (John 8:43). Still mere inability to hear was not a condition without remedy. There was a Great Physician for those who were not obdurate. He had come to make such as were not wilfully deaf "hear joy and gladness." Did not the prophetic Spirit of Christ invite the nation to listen to the voice of mercy? saying "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 4:3). And when Messiah was present in Jerusalem, He said, "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). But in addition to those who were so incapable of hearing that they are even described as "dead," there were those who would not hear. They were deaf also, but wilfully so. Like the deaf adder, they deliberately stopped their ears (Psalms 58:4 Isaiah 33:15; Zechariah 7:11), lest they should hear the words of wisdom and truth and life spoken unto them by the Great Prophet of God. They were the rebellious people who had ears to hear but heard not (Jeremiah 17:23; Ezekiel 12:2). This obstinate refusal on the part of the Jews to hear their Messiah aggravated their guilt to the utmost, as the Lord declared, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). The stage of wilful deafness is followed by serious results. For Scripture speaks of a third category which consists of those who, having refused to hear the word of God, become subject to the terrible infliction of a judicial deafness. Having exceeded the limits of the divine forbearance by closing their ears in the day of their visitation, they are no longer permitted to hear.

Isaiah warned the people of Israel that such a judgment would come upon them if they failed to receive the messages of Jehovah. The sentence pronounced upon them would be, "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy . . . lest they hear with their ears . . . and be healed" (Isaiah 6:10). This solemn prophecy is cited by each of the four Evangelists in connection with the stubborn unbelief of the Jews in the face of the Lord’s teaching and miraculous signs (Matthew 13:13-15 Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:37-40).* {*See further remarks on this topic made in connection with Mark 4:9-12 (B. T. vol. 8, N.S., pp. 371-373).} A comparison of these passages shows that the quotations from this prophecy made in the Synoptic Gospels, as well as that by the apostle Paul in his address to the Jews at Rome, refer to the wilful closing of the ears on the part of the nation. "Their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes have they closed" (Acts 28:27); this wording being taken from the Greek version of the Old Testament which gives this turn to the passage. Their sin therefore was due to their own deliberate action, for which the nation is accordingly held responsible.

John, however, views their conduct in a stage subsequent, as it were, to their wilfulness. Having hardened their own hearts, their hearts are there-upon hardened penally. They would not believe, therefore they could not believe. John’s words are emphatic that a judicial infliction from God had fallen upon the people. He says, "For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40). This quotation is made from the Hebrew text of Isaiah, where the ultimate result of unbelief upon the nation is the prominent theme.

It will be observed that only a part of the original prophecy is quoted in the Fourth Gospel, and that the clause relating to their hearing is not included. From the context we see that the Evangelist is speaking of the signs of Jesus rather than of His teaching (ver. 37), and His miracles were for the eyes of the people while His doctrine was for their ears. John brings forward therefore only the clauses referring to their eyes and heart, which God had blinded and hardened because of their stubborn opposition to the gospel of the kingdom. But the principle of judicial penalty is equally applicable to the ear, as the actual form of the prophecy of Isaiah shows. The Sea of Galilee. As this occasion is the last one in which the Sea of Galilee is mentioned in this Gospel, it may be of interest and help for further study to bring together the various passages where the name occurs. They serve at any rate to show how large a portion of the recorded ministry of Jesus was exercised in the northern province.

Mark 1:16, walking on its shores, Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John;

Mark 2:13, Jesus taught the crowds gathered by the seaside;

Mark 3:7, Jesus withdrew to the sea from the plottings of the Pharisees and Herodians;

Mark 4:1, from a boat Jesus taught the people who were assembled on the shore;

Mark 4:39, Jesus stilled the storm upon the sea;

Mark 5:1, Jesus crossed the sea to the country of the Gerasenes;

Mark 5:13, the herd of swine under the impulse of the demons stampeded into the sea;

Mark 5:21, Jesus re-crossed the sea;

Mark 6:47, Jesus walked upon the sea to His disciples during a storm, and stilled it;

Mark 7:31, Jesus returned to the sea of Galilee after His journey to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. This beautiful lake, which is a striking natural feature of the North of Palestine, is only mentioned three times in the Old Testament, where it is referred to as the Sea of Chinnereth in connection with the division of the land of Israel among the several tribes (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 12:3; Joshua 13:27).

43. — Another Miraculous Meal

1918 121 "In those days, when there was again a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to

their home, they will faint in the way; and some of them are come from far. And his disciples answered him, Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commandeth the multitude to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he brake, and gave to his disciples, to set before them. And they set them before the multitude. And they had a few small fishes, and having blessed them, he commanded to set these also before them. And they did eat, and were filled; and they took up, of broken pieces that remained over, seven baskets. And they were about four thousand and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into the boat with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha" (Mark 8:1-10, R.V.). The first two only of the Evangelists record that on a second occasion our Lord multiplied a few loaves, and therewith fed a great concourse of Galileans. Taught the gospel of the kingdom and fed by the King, these people may, in a sense, be said to have tasted "the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." For the two miracles constitute a double testimony to the coming blessing for the chosen nation under the direct rule of their Messiah that time of relief from weary toil of which the great year of jubilee was a type. The terms of the institution of this feast provided that while the people of Israel were not to sow nor to reap, yet they should "eat their fill," and the children of the strangers sojourning in their land should likewise participate in the special bounties of the year (Leviticus 25:8-55). The blissful era of the anti-typical jubilee is always in Old Testament prophecy associated with the reign of the Seed of David. The ancient men of God lived in joyous anticipation of the day when David’s Son and David’s Lord shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and when the blessings of sinless Eden shall be restored to mankind in a multiplied fulness. As we read of the Lord taking in His hands the few loaves which were to satisfy the multitude before Him, do we not hear again these picturesque words of the millennial psalm: "there shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Psalms 72:16)? For in the regeneration the primal penalty upon Adam and his race" In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19) — shall be displaced, and the tree of life, yielding month by month her twelve manner of fruits, shall be constant evidence that the curse has gone from the ground for ever (Revelation 22:2-3). Of that day of abundance the Lord gave a pledge to the few Galileans before Him when, without waiting with long patience for the precious fruits of the earth, their hunger was satisfied by the bounty multiplied a thousandfold before their very eyes. The Weary and Hungry Crowd The miracle was performed in the Decapolitan district which lies to the northward of the Sea of Galilee. The population of this neighbourhood was numerous, and their race of a mixed character, giving rise to the term, "Galilee of the Gentiles." There the Lord healed the deaf-mute who was one of a great company of persons, diversely afflicted, also brought to Him and restored to health. There, also, it would seem, the Lord "taught" those assembled, instructing them in the new kingdom-doctrines. Attracted by the sweetness of those lips of heavenly knowledge, they tarried and tarried around Him for three days, nor was He loth to continue His ministry. The great multitude had assembled from far and near to see the works and hear the words of Jesus. These sheep of Israel and also other sheep not of that fold were "consumed with hunger in the land." For the Pharisees and scribes were hireling shepherds, and their days were like those of which the prophet Amos wrote, saying, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a f amine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to

seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12). Is it any wonder, then, that the crowds listened with untiring eagerness to the words of life from Jehovah’s diligent Servant who spoke with authority and love, not as the scribes, nor indeed as any other man? How many of them, listening to the divine utterances, felt, though they could not express it as the Psalmist had already expressed it for them in the fulness and beauty of that stanza: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:10). At any rate, they thought not of departure from Him, but waited for Him to conclude His discourses and His healings, and to dismiss them to their homes. This attentiveness on the part of the simple peasantry of Northern Galilee to His heavenly message was surely gratifying to the soul of the Great Teacher, burning in His zeal that they might "hear," and their souls live. He beheld a great company round Him, imbued to a degree with that fine spirit of the patriarch who said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). But the Lord Jesus, while joying to serve them with the wonders of divine mercy and truth, marked their physical faintness. The bodily exertions of bringing their numerous invalids to the Great Physician, their excited joy at the recoveries, and the mental strain of attention to the prolonged discourses had a reactionary effect upon the physical condition of the great crowd. This weakness the Lord saw and pitied, for He who healed their diseases and forgave their sins knew their frame also, and remembered that they were dust. Was He not among them as the Servant of

Jehovah, who was a God full of compassion and gracious (Psalms 111:4)? Nay, was He not Himself Jehovah, gracious and full of compassion? (Psalms 113:4; Psalms 145:8). According to the multitude of His mercies, therefore, His heart yearned over their frailty, and He purposed in Himself to satisfy their mouth with good things and renew their strength for their journey home. The people were weary with listening, and foodless; but was not the Lord Himself weary with speaking and serving them throughout those three days? The Blessed Master, however, had come not to be ministered unto but to minister. He was most truly that Servant raised up to Israel "like unto Moses," to whom the people in the wilderness came daily with their problems, and "stood by him from morning unto evening"? But in Galilee there was no Jethro to remonstrate with Jesus, and in love, if not in intelligence, to warn Him: "Thou wilt surely wear away . . . this thing is too heavy for thee" (Exodus 18:18). Consumed with zeal for the Father’s will, the Lord was the Ideal Servant of God, flawless in perfection and glory. Paul spoke truly of his own ministry in the gospel carried on "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:27); but in all these respects he was but an imperfect imitator of the self-denying service of Christ, sustained in his devotion, however, like Him, by that secret food of which the world knows not (John 4:31-34). The Lord’s Call for Co-workers The Lord then beheld this great company of famished men, women and children, with a full knowledge of the physical infirmities, the mental anxieties, and the spiritual cravings that brought them to His feet, of their reception of His ministry during the three days, and of the extent of the journey home. In the spontaneity of His love for them, His heart overflowed with compassion, and He who looked in vain for some to take pity upon Himself in His sufferings sought to awaken the sympathy of His disciples in the needy condition of this people. The Lord called His disciples to Him, and spoke to them, for He would not have them see their brethren in need, and, shut up the "bowels of their compassion" against them, as if the love of God did not dwell in their hearts. He said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their homes they will

faint by the way; and some of them are come from far." But there was no sympathetic response on the part of the disciples. They, under the influence of Jewish prejudice possibly, expressed no pity for the people, and offered no suggestion for their help. Could the memory of the Lord’s former goodness in feeding the seven thousand under similar circumstances have altogether gone from them? It would seem so. Helpless themselves, they utterly failed to realize what an inexhaustible fund of help there was in the Saviour. The disciples had yet much to learn. When the Great Shepherd of the sheep was brought again from the dead, then they, as under-shepherds, would be responsible to "feed the assembly of God which he purchased with his own blood." Then the same voice would come to them with a new significance, "Give ye them to eat," and then they would not fail in the exercise of the ministry allotted to them. The Lord had said to the disciples, "I would not send them away fasting" (Matthew 15:32), but they reply, "Whence shall one be able to satisfy these men with bread here in a desert place?" Foolish forgetfulness and unbelief! Whence was food given for the tribes of Israel in the deserts of Sinai? whence was it supplied to a similar company only a few weeks earlier, and not so many miles away? They themselves had wrought many mighty works in the name of the Lord (Mark 6:13), but while they must have known that divine power had been exercised in other circumstances, they failed to remember that divine power might be applied in this instance, and their captious words were not like the words of apostles. Even Satan knew that the Lord had but to command it, and the very stones would become bread. The King Serving at His Table The Lord thereupon called upon the disciples to mobilize their resources, saying to them, "How many loaves have ye?" He was about to illustrate before their eyes His own adage, "To him that hath shall be given." They answer, Seven. And these loaves the Lord took as a nucleus of the food-supply for the people. He did not as of old call down bread out of heaven, but He made use of what came out of the earth (Job 28:5). To this fruit of human toil, already multiplied from the bare grain, He gave a further increase.

After Himself commanding the people to sit down on the ground (on the previous occasion the disciples were told to do this) the Lord took the loaves in His hands, and in consequence all eyes would be fastened upon Him. All the people would know that their food was coming to them from His hand. Would David’s song of praise have occurred to any of them? "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom . . . The LORD upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalms 145:13-16; also Psalms 104:27).

While the eyes of the multitude were waiting upon the Lord, they could but observe that His eyes were upturned to heaven, as He gave thanks. Had He not taught His disciples to pray to their Father in heaven, and in addition to petitions of a spiritual order to say, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Now He who had taught to pray for daily sustenance teaches by example to tender thanks for the same. The Lord who was the Guest of Simon the Pharisee and of Simon the leper and of many others, sometimes welcome, sometimes, alas! unwelcome, acted as Host on that day to the great assembly. He it was who broke the bread. The disciples, as stewards of His bounty, distributed from His hand the broken pieces to the multitude, who ate and were satisfied.

Besides the loaves, there were a few small fishes. These the Lord also took and blessed, and the disciples passed them to the people. Thus He provided bread and fish for their repast, as after His resurrection He did for the seven apostles in Galilee (John 21:9). It was not then the day of the

glory of the kingdom. When that day comes, He, as Melchidezek, will dispense bread and wine to the men of faith. When the ark is brought to its final resting-place in Mount Zion, the Lord will re-enact, but far exceed the bounty of David, who gave "to the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine" (2 Samuel 6:17-19). But the joy of full victory over the sin of the world was still future; hence the Lord said to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). He also said, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come and serve them" (Luke 12:37). The Riches of the Lord’s Goodness The word "riches" conveys the idea of an excess of supplies beyond the bare necessity. The rich man of the parable, for instance, required. larger barns wherein to store the goods not immediately in demand for passing needs. As applied to men and to their actions and possessions, riches must be understood in its limited sense, and but seldom in a good sense. For the Lord said that only with great difficulty can those that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand the dealings and ways of God manward are ever characterized by richness and riches. Both His grace and His glory are revealed to men in their riches (Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 3:16). And the Lord Christ in His unsearchable riches is rich unto all that call upon Him (Ephesians 3:8; Romans 10:12). Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and the free gifts of God are ever bestowed in overflowing profusion. That affluence which marks the act which is purely divine was witnessed by the crowds that day in Galilee. The beneficent Power that causes the sower’s grain to yield a hundredfold multiplied the seven loaves and the fishes until every one of the thousands present was satisfied, and even then there was abundance to spare. For "they did eat and were filled," and gathered up of the broken pieces sufficient to fill seven large hampers.*

{*In this instance the baskets were not the small wicker hand variety as on the previous occasion (kophinoi), but rope baskets or hampers, large enough to hold a man (spurides). In such a one Paul was lowered over the walls of Damascus to make his escape (Acts 9:25).} This miracle was a great and a special exhibition of the active love of God in a selfish world, and it would be worth while, in our private meditation, if we did not hurry past this beautiful picture of the grace of Christ who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. It was in the days of His "poverty," that our Lord gave these instances of divine compassion. He Himself, the Son of David, knew hunger outside the gates of royal Zion (Mark 11:12), and at Sychar weariness and thirst also (John 4:6-7), as well as in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). Humbled thus, bearing their infirmities and carrying their sorrows, He pitied the hungry and weary throng before Him on this occasion, while the people themselves found abundant grace in Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, to help in time of need.

There is none good save One, that is, God, said our Lord, and in the bountiful meal of His free provision, these Galileans beheld a vivid illustration of what the apostle in a striking verse calls the riches of the goodness of God. Appealing to those who neglect such evidences, Paul inquires, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"? (Romans 2:4).

First The Kingdom, Then Perishing Bread

1918 142 In this incident we may observe that the Lord acted in harmony with His own previous teaching concerning the kingdom of God. He had publicly taught the supreme importance to men that they should in the formation and prosecution of their aims and plans place first the broad principles of the coming kingdom of the heavens. The dominating love of God in the heart, love for one’s enemies as well as for one’s neighbours, self-denial, secret prayer to the Father in heaven, and alms-giving purely done as in His sight — such qualities as these were pleasing to God rather than the all-absorbing pursuit of temporal benefits and possessions which is common to mankind. Having set in their true relative proportion eternal verities and physical necessities, the Lord declared to His hearers a new commandment, as it were, with promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these [temporal] things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord, then, as the Expounder of the polity of the new kingdom and as its anointed Administrator, was publicly pledged to redeem this promise to those who acknowledged Him to be the Teacher sent from God. This congregation of people had sought the face of the Lord that He might graciously remove the infirmities of their bodies and the ignorance of their hearts. In their zeal they continued with Him three days, beholding His marvellous works and hearing those heavenly precepts which were beautified with a grace unknown to those of Sinai. From one point of view the people might well be charged with imprudence for neglecting to provide themselves with food for the three days in the desert. But what had the Lord taught in respect to this matter? He had said, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." "Is not the life more than food? The birds of the air do not reap nor gather into barns: your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Be not anxious therefore. Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

Whether the people remembered these assurances by the Lord or not we do not know. But the Lord did not forget His own word. Waiting in His presence their stocks of food were exhausted; would He, who had publicly counselled them not to be anxious for the morrow, fail or forsake them in this extremity? On the contrary, having first loaded them with spiritual and physical benefits, He gave them bread to eat in the overflowing measure of the coming kingdom.

Comparison of the Two Food-miracles

There are many resemblances between the accounts given of the two food-miracles wrought in Galilee, but only such as might be expected to be found in records of two successive incidents so similar in their nature. There are, however, definite points of distinction between them, which should not escape us. The beauties of creation in many cases possess striking similarities, but they are never found to be exact duplicates. For instance, the glories of two sunsets may be analogous in general character, but only the casual observer would pronounce them to be identical. Upon careful scrutiny, individual features of beauty are invariably discovered, as in all the works of God. In like manner, while there is given in the first two Gospels a double testimony to the divine beneficence, present in the person of the Servant of Jehovah, each miracle is represented with its own special characteristics. Some points in each record are placed side by side to facilitate the study of the two miracles in this respect.

Mark 6:34-44

1. The compassion of the Lord was moved towards the shepherdless multitude, and He taught them and healed their sick. The question of food arose at the close of the day's ministry.

2. The disciples take the initiative, and suggest the dismissal of the crowd, because of the lateness of the hour.

3. The Lord bids the disciples provide food, but they object on the score of cost and of the difficulty of purchase.

4. Five loaves and two fishes were brought to the Lord.

5. The company numbered five thousand men, besides women and children.

6. Twelve baskets of the broken pieces were collected after the meal.

7. The Lord sent away the disciples across the sea.

Mark 8:1-9

1. The compassion of the Lord was awakened after three days of service and healing, because He saw the people were hungry and weary.

2. The Lord draws the attention of the disciples to the condition of the people, and to the distance many are from home.

3. The disciples express no compassion, and although not asked to supply food mention the difficulty of purchase in the wilderness.

4. Seven loaves and a few small fishes were brought to the Lord.

5. The company numbered four thousand men, besides women and children.

6. Seven hampers of the broken pieces were collected after the meal.

7. The Lord went with His disciples across the sea.

These various points of difference are perhaps of a more suitable character for personal study than for general exposition, and only a few remarks upon them of a general nature are now offered. The predominating feature of the latter incident as compared with the former seems to be the Lord's sovereign compassion and mercy towards those who sought Him and continued with Him three days. As before, He made use of His disciples in dispensing His blessing to the crowd, but it was He who remarked their fainting condition and who arranged the details of the feast. The occasion of the miracle as it is presented in the Gospel history is striking. The Lord, at this period of His ministry, was journeying in Galilee as an outcast, for Herod the Idumean king of that province had but recently beheaded John the Forerunner, and sought His life also (cp. Luke 13:31), while Pharisees and scribes had come down from Jerusalem seeking some ground, too, for His apprehension. But His hour was not yet come, and the Lord retired from this personal hatred which had not grown to its climax. Nevertheless, in face of this opposition of evil in the high places of earthly government and power, the Lord was still willing and ready to exhibit His rich stores of grace to the poor.

It is good for us to note the royal demeanour of the lowly Nazarene in these days of His humiliation. Though an exile from the throne of Zion, He scattered in profusion His regal gifts, recalling, by contrast, an Old Testament passage.

David, in hasty flight from Absalom, "hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness" at Mahanaim, was, with companions, made the honoured guest of the Gileadite and the Ammonite (2 Samuel 17:27-29). Then the Gentile strangers across the Jordan prepared a sumptuous feast for the outcast king of Israel, but in Decapolis David's Son and Jehovah's Servant, though possessing no more than a handful of loaves and fishes, spread therewith an ample table in the wilderness for the hungry crowd gathered to Him in those outskirts of the favoured land. In this impressive manner, the Anointed One offered Himself to the people as their Saviour King, proving Himself to be such to those who had eyes to see. For in this little picture of the personal government of the Messiah, it might be clearly seen that Jehovah was in the midst of the people as the Shepherd of Israel, seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and leading His flock into the "green pastures" in the spirit recorded in that ancient prophetic song of praise: "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Psalms 147:14).

Another feature of this miracle which may be remarked is the character of the multitude. The company on this occasion was not composed mainly of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to keep the passover (John 6:4-5), but of the poor populace from the Gentile borders of Northern Galilee. Nevertheless, the Lord displayed His transcendent grace to them as He had formerly done to those who were zealous and devout enough to journey up to Jerusalem to observe the feast. Thus His mercy is here seen to overleap the narrow boundaries of the law. And this overflow towards those not wholly of Israel was anticipated in the prophetic word, though this miracle was no more than a trickle, as it were, in comparison with the floods of blessing which are to be poured out upon the "pleasant land," and to extend even to the ends of the earth. This kind of open-hearted ministry towards all men by Jehovah's Servant was particularly foretold by Isaiah, in language to which this incident is allusive. According to his prophecy, the Great Servant should not only raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel, but also be a light to the Gentiles. He whom man despised and the nation abhorred would cause the people to "feed in the ways and their pastures shall be in all high places." They should no more hunger or thirst. And in that reclaimed company the prophet in vision saw, as the Lord saw in Decapolis, those that came from far (Isaiah 49:1-26), for the gospel of the kingdom embraces the dispersed among the Gentiles.

Whether some such were actually among the assembly before the Lord that day in Galilee it is not stated, but He Himself noted that divers of them came from far (ver. 12). And as Peter declared in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the word of the promise was to the Jews and to their Children, and also to them that are afar off (Acts 2:39). The provision of needful sustenance by divine power is a frequently recurring figure in Scripture, and one other instance may be cited in this connection. In one of the Apocalyptic visions, John saw a great company gathered out of all nations, clad in white robes, and bearing palms in their hands. They had come up out Of the great tribulation, and their robes had been made white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God in His temple, and they worship Him day and night. Immanuel is among them, and they hunger no more: for the Lamb in the midst of the throne feeds them and leads them into living fountains of water (Revelation 7:9-17). The following extract may help in the understanding of this passage, in its relation to the dispensational character of this Gospel:

"Power was not exercised [by our Lord] in the midst of manifest unbelief. This clearly marks out the position of Christ with regard to the people. He pursues His service, but He retires to God because of Israel's unbelief: but it is to the God of all grace. There His heart found refuge till the great hour of atonement.

"It is on this account, as it appears to me, that we have the second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The Lord acts again in favour of Israel, no longer as administering Messianic power in the midst of the people (which was implied, as we have seen, in the number [of baskets] twelve), but in spite of His rejection by Israel, continuing to exercise His power in a divine manner and apart from man. The number seven* has always the force of superhuman perfection — that which is complete: this, however, applies to what is complete in the power of evil as well as good, when it is not human and subordinate to God. Here it is divine. It is that intervention of God which is unwearied, and which is according to His own power, which it is the principal object of the repetition of the miracle to display."*}

{*It may be remarked that [of units] seven is the highest prime, that is, indivisible, number; twelve, the most divisible there is.

{**Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby; Mark, in loco.} 44. — The Grieved Servant of Jehovah

1918 156 "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why Both this generation seek a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and again entering into the boat departed to the other side. And they forgot to take bread; and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned one with another, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus perceiving it saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces took ye up? And they say unto him, Seven. And he said unto them, Do ye not yet understand?" (Mark 8:11-21, R.V.). In this section the Evangelist shows how the Servant of the Lord was tried from "within and without." He was obstructed in His ministry (1) by the evil machinations of the leaders of the people and also (2) by the ignorant dullness of His immediate followers. The Pharisees who had recently criticised the Lord Jesus because they saw His disciples eat bread with unwashen hands (Mark 7:1-37) now came forth to oppose Him upon other grounds. On the earlier occasion they sought to invalidate His teaching, now their attempt was to detract from the value of His miraculous works of mercy and power. Accordingly they sought by cunning questioning to discredit the Lord before the eyes of the Galileans to whom He had given such cogent evidence that the kingdom of God was among them. Tempting Him, they asked for a sign from heaven, as if the fame of His many miracles had not previously spread throughout the province. The Lord's works were not done in a corner. For instance, were there not at least five thousand witnesses to the second multiplication of the few loaves? And was not this sign, like all the Lord's works, of a heavenly order? But these Pharisees had the will to doubt and

disbelieve; otherwise the Lord might have said to them as He did to the messengers from John the Baptist, who asked Him, "Art thou He that should come?" The Lord’s answer to these men was, "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 unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be stumbled in me" (Matthew 11:2-6). The "honest and good heart" of John the prisoner was sincerely in doubt, and the Lord, though He did not work a fresh and special sign, sent to him the gracious reminder of the supernatural facts which none could deny, and which his messengers themselves witnessed (Luke 7:21-22). The Pharisees, however (who came with the Sadducees, as Matthew tells us) were hostile in intent: "They began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him." This request was made in shameless unbelief and hypocrisy on their part too, for in their heart of hearts these men knew that the Lord was "from above," and not "from beneath." Nicodemus confessed, being himself a Pharisee, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." The evidences of the heavenly mission of Christ were ample and indisputable, and open to the sight of all men. So manifest were they that Peter charged the Jews on the day of Pentecost with a full knowledge of His credentials. When the apostle declared: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22), not a single dissentient voice from the crowded audience was raised in protest. Indeed, during His ministry, the people said as they saw His wonderful works, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?" (John 7:31). And the Lord Himself, when surveying the whole course of His service said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24). The Pharisees wilfully ignored all this display of loving power, and their obduracy of heart, particularly noticeable as it was after the repeated miracle of the multiplied loaves, was characteristic of the nation as a whole from the day when Jehovah brought them out of the land of Egypt. Then "they remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered from the enemy; how he had wrought his signs in Egypt and his wonders in the land of Zoan" (Psalms 78:42-43; Psalms 106:7; Psalms 106:13; Psalms 106:21). The hardness and insensibility of their hearts to God’s marvellous mercies which all the Old Testament prophets charged upon them, were still unchanged, even when Messiah Himself was in their midst. A Sign from Heaven This occasion was not the only one on which the Pharisees sought from the Lord a sign from heaven. The first occasion was a plain indication that the nation would eventually reject their Messiah (Matthew 12:38; Luke 11:16), and the Lord thereupon began in public to teach by parables that the kingdom of heaven would assume a new form. But on both the former and the latter occasions, the request of the Jewish teachers was a tacit denial that the Lord’s miracles were signs from heaven, implying at the same time that His marvellous energy was Satanic in origin, as if He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. For if the miracles were not from "above," they must have been from "beneath." This foul aspersion arose from a gross form of wilful unbelief in the Messianic miracles, wonders and signs, but, in point of fact, the Lord Himself, apart from His works, was a sign from above to the people. He was the Second Man, "the Lord from heaven," come to them as Immanuel, according to the prophecy of Isaiah: To the house of David, Jehovah had said, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Hence the Incarnate Babe was the sign of the introduction of the promised gospel. This

sign-character was mentioned expressly by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds of Bethlehem "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).* Further, Simeon alluded to this same characteristic of the Heavenly Babe, saying, as he blessed Joseph and Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

{*The Revised Version makes the sense and the prophetic connection clear: "This shall be the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe." The allusion is to the definite promise of a sign made by the prophet, and that the sign should be a babe. Compare the instances when the prophet Ezekiel was a personal sign (Ezekiel 12:6; Ezekiel 24:24-27).}

Looking ahead also to the future Advent there will be appointed premonitions from above. The second coming of Christ in power and glory for the redemption of Israel is to be heralded by the sign of the Son of man in heaven. This we learn from the prophetic discourse of our Lord to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. In reply to their query, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" He said, after naming certain coming events, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). The Sign of the Son of Man

Mark preserves for our adoring contemplation a record of the profound emotion of the Master at this display of unbelief and malice on the part of the Pharisees and Sadducees. "He sighed deeply in his spirit." There was no expression of wrath nor of a desire for vengeance, but we are permitted to know how keenly He was affected by the evil purpose of those who "lay in wait for His soul." "His heart was wounded within Him." As Jehovah’s righteous Servant, He bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of His people in loving sympathy, but this oppressive burden of griefs was augmented by the plottings of those who had become His enemies, and whose secret thoughts stood revealed before His holy eyes; and He "groaned upward" at the sight. The Lord was the Great Prophet sent with a message of deliverance for the enslaved people of God, and their obstinate refusal to hearken to the pleadings of His love begat sorrows within Him too deep, as it were, for utterance then. Later this inward sorrow found articulation, and His weeping lamentation over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) expressed the spirit of the Psalmist who said, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psalms 119:136). The faithful servants of Jehovah in a former day of apostasy were distinguished by their grief over the waywardness of their people: they were marked off as those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations in the midst of Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 9:4). Here in this Gospel, by this unique phrase, the veil over the inner feelings of the Master is lifted for a brief moment that we may catch a glimpse of His loyal zeal for God and His passionate yearning over the guilty people. The heart ever sighing over Israel’s perversity was always before the eyes of Jehovah, and gave cause for His unbroken complacency in that elect Servant in whom His soul delighted.

It is a profitable reflection that our Lord had a perfect knowledge of the value of His own service as well as of the depravity of those opposing Him. Without thinking of Himself more highly than He ought to think, He accurately appraised the character of His labours among them. His "judgment was just," and He knew that His own works were such as man never did before, and also that His

words perfectly presented the ineffable love of the Father to man as well as the earthly things of the kingdom. But He also saw with equal vividness that His unremitting service, His self-consuming zeal, His absolute surrender to the interests of His mission were barren in result. His enemies, tempting Him, ask to be shown a sign from heaven, while His friends and followers are blind and deaf to the true significance of His ministry. The great impulses of His loving heart towards the sons of men were thus doubly resisted and thrown back upon Himself. The joy of the Shepherd in rescuing His flock was denied Him. He could adopt the language in the prophecy: "All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21; Isaiah 65:2). Accordingly, we read that at this juncture the Man of sorrows sighed deeply in His Spirit. The Spirit of Christ

There are three recorded occasions on which the Spirit of Christ was perturbed. In each case human sin was the agitating cause, and in these instances He was confronted with its grievous effects; (1) upon the nation, (2) upon the family of Bethany, and (3) upon one of the apostolic band.

(1) The first instance is given in this section of Mark. Sin wrought so effectually in the midst of the chosen nation that its religious leaders refused to own the signs of His prophetic calling, and in malicious unbelief sought from Him a sign from heaven. He "sighed deeply in his spirit" at this unbelief.

(2) Sin wrought in the midst of the pious family of Bethany, where the Messiah was wont to turn aside to rest for a while, and where He was welcomed and honoured. Death removed Lazarus, and plunged the sisters into sorrow. Coming with the bereaved to the sepulchre, the Lord groaned in spirit at their grief (John 11:33).

(3) Sin wrought in the midst of the chosen twelve, and one of them became a tool of Satan for the betrayal of his Master. On the night of the last Supper, the Lord expressed to His disciples His knowledge that the doer of this infamous deed was even then among them. He "was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). One of you — one of my familiar friends — one of the holy circle (cp. Psalms 41:9; Psalms 55:12-14): this troubled His spirit.

These instances in some respects differ from each other, but their common origin may be traced back to the presence and action of sin in the world. Sin was always grievous and saddening in the eyes of the Lord, but these cases of its evil effects were the more deplorable because they occurred in a select circle, as it were, 1:e., in the elect nation, in the godly household, in the apostolic band. The pure and holy spirit must always be shocked in the presence of the horrid fruits of sin. It was so with the Lord: and it is a test of His followers, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). No Sign to be Given In reply to the Pharisees, the Lord said, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" They were then in Magdala, and it was in this very locality that the Lord wrought His marvellous cure upon Mary the Magdalene out of whom He cast seven demons (Mark 16:9). What greater testimony could there be Of the presence of the Mighty One subduing the power of the Evil One? Was not this the sign from heaven? But the blind Pharisees attributed all such signs of the Lord to the energy of Beelzebub, and not to Him as the Messianic Servant anointed by the Spirit of God.

It is noticeable how the Lord in declining to yield to the provocative request of His opponents speaks with the dignity and authority of His own right: "Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." This language is not that of a delegate, even though commissioned from on high. The introductory formula of the Old Testament prophets was, "Thus saith the Lord" but the Lord Jesus replied to these Pharisees who despised both His words and His works in His own name: "Verily I say unto you In truth, the Godhead was there amongst them in the Person of their Messiah in humble guise, and no more transcendent sign than this could be given them. The Lord therefore refused any further sign to that guilty generation which notoriously killed the prophets sent unto it. The Stone of Israel had been laid in Zion. If the nation stumbled upon it and rejected it, all hope must be abandoned. God anyhow would exalt that Stone, and it would eventually fall upon the wicked builders in Zion and grind them to powder. Thus the humbled Christ was the final test to Israel upon the ground of law, and no other Saviour-Prince but He would be offered to them. In seeking a sign the Pharisees were governed by an evil motive. It was altogether otherwise with John the Baptist. To him, as the Forerunner, a special sign from heaven was appointed for the identification of the Messiah. His own testimony on this head was that he saw the Holy Spirit like a dove descending from heaven, and it rested upon the baptized Jesus. And this public anointing constituted to him the promised assurance that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:32-34). John’s mission was to prepare the way of the Lord before Him, and the sign from heaven given at the Jordan indicated that the Deliverer had come to Israel, and that his own service, as the voice of the Forerunner crying in the wilderness was accomplished.

John the Baptist was a Nazarite devoted to the will of God, but the Jews were a wicked and adulterous generation, and their determined will was to disbelieve and resist the gospel. These Pharisees in Dalmanutha were imbued with the same spirit as those which afterwards cried, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe" (Matthew 27:42). Had a sign been given they had no intention of believing. They were tempting the Lord to yield to them, as they did at other times (Matthew 12:38; John 2:18; John 6:30). Their request was modelled upon that of Satan in the wilderness, who said to the Lord, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:3). The Lord, therefore declined to accede to their request, and told these adversaries, that no sign would be given to them, except (as Matthew adds) the sign of the prophet Jonah. That prophet of Galilee, after being three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, preached to the Ninevites their imminent doom, and they repented at his preaching. The Son of man would lie three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40), and if the men of Israel, even after the sin of crucifixion, would repent at the preaching of His apostles, God would send again to them His Servant Jesus, whom they had crucified, that He might restore all things (see Peter’s address, Acts 3:19-20). But as the people refused the sign of a humbled Messiah in His life, so they rejected the sign of His crucifixion and death. To them, a veil being upon their hearts, He was a stumbling block, and the apostle so described their state, when writing to the Corinthians: "Jews ask for signs and Gentiles seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:22-23). But those who reject the signs of truth are open to receive the signs of error. The studied resistance of the Jews to their Deliverer who came to them as the Virgin’s Child, and who like the prophet of Galilee lay three days and nights in the heart of the earth will duly receive in the governmental dealings of God its meet and merited punishment. The generation, not yet passed away, who refused the appointed signs of the Holy and the True will be blinded to accept the signs

of the Evil and the False. For when Antichrist comes he will show signs ostensibly from heaven in imitation of those the Christ did, and men will believe the lie. Paul declares that the coming of this Lawless One will be "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The apostle John prophesies in like terms concerning the False Lamb who is yet to appear. Speaking in the predictive present, he says, concerning the Antichrist, that "he doeth great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell upon the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast" (Revelation 13:13-14). The Danger of Leaven in the Kingdom

1918 170 The Lord thereupon turned away from the representatives of the "wicked and adulterous generation," and left them (solemn action!) in their obstinate unbelief, crossing again the Sea of Galilee. He then uttered one of His profound sayings to the apostles, bidding them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod." If the King was rejected, what would befall the kingdom? The influence of the Pharisees and of Herod aroused violent and insidious opposition to the spread of the ministry of Christ Himself; what a powerful and inimical influence would they not subsequently exercise upon the ministry of His servants? He bade them beware of these corrupting influences.

Looking back, the disciples might have remembered that before leaving the opposite shores they witnessed an example of the power of Pharisaism to befog the heart and prevent the acceptance of the Lord whom they loved and revered as the Messiah of Israel. Looking still further back, they might have recollected that terrible exhibition of the power of Herod when John, the prophet and forerunner, was murdered in circumstances of horrible barbarity. These forces of religious hypocrisy and of civil government at work in these typical instances were proved to be alike antagonistic to the progress of the truth, and the Lord had turned away in avoidance of both. For the future guidance of His followers, the Lord now warned them against these sources of contamination and corruption. The time had come when the children of the kingdom must break away from those who professed to be teachers of the law and who sat in Moses’ seat. The Pharisees were unreal pietists, and, the Herodians were political time-servers. It behoved the disciples in the exercise of such power and authority as the Lord had given them as His apostles to take heed lest empty-formalism and the fear of or undue subservience to worldly power should enter and vitiate the kingdom of God. Love of self and love of the world would, if allowed, work insidiously, like leaven, to the corruption of the followers of Christ, as it had already done in the Jewish nation. The warning of the Lord was uttered with a full knowledge of the coming menace, and, we find, historically, that evil afterwards crept into the churches of Galatia and Corinth, and is alluded to under this figure of leaven (Galatians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). When the Lord was with His disciples it was, as it were, the days of unleavened bread, for He Himself was the Bread of God come down from heaven to give life to the world. But in the succession of Jewish feasts, the feast of wave-loaves followed that of the unleavened bread and the first fruits, and it was provided from the time of institution that the two wave-loaves should be baked with leaven (Leviticus 23:17). So the results of the public and united testimony of the Lord’s followers, which would immediately succeed His own pure and untainted witness, would be leavened in character; and counselling them in view of His own absence, and of the coming dangers of corrupting influences, He bade them "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod."

Dullness of Hearing But the disciples did not apprehend the meaning of these cautionary words of our Lord. They did not, in the scriptural sense, "hear His word," and therefore they did not understand His phraseology (John 8:43). "Leaven" was the key-word to help them to the true explanation of the utterance, but, forgetting that their Master's kingdom was not of this world, they assigned to the word a physical not a spiritual significance: an error similar to that made by Nicodemus in a different connection (John 3:4). The disciples could think only of their own negligence in stocking the food-baskets of the company. Their hearts had not yet grasped the inner purpose of His teaching, and, therefore, His figurative expression concerning leaven was of the nature of a parable to them. It was a "hard word" to them (cp. John 6:60, New Tr.). "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread."

Why were they so dull? Truly the words of the Lord were spirit and life, while the Great Teacher was skilful and wise in utterance, and spoke to the disciples as they were "able to hear" (Mark 4:33). They however failed to use rightly those "ears to hear" which they possessed as those born anew for the kingdom. They were engrossed with earthly or secondary matters, and missed the heavenly harmonies of His words. When the Lord warned against certain sources of leaven, their thoughts at once flew to food for the body. They had had but one loaf with them in the boat, and their conscience charged them with negligence in providing an adequate supply on reaching the other side (Matthew 16:5). No doubt they were the more concerned when they recalled the previous poverty of their stock on each occasion when the Lord inquired on behalf of the hungry multitude. But if it was a good thing for the disciples to recall their former failures, it would have been better still for them to have remembered the Lord's teaching. For He had already in one of the parables which He specially explained to them, associated leaven with the kingdom of the heavens, and showed how its surreptitious introduction resulted in the leavening of the whole mass (Matthew 13:33). The three measures of meal affected as a whole by the foreign element brought into it was set forth as a figure of the new religious organization which was about to be established in the place of Judaism. The Lord taught thereby that the kingdom in its coming phase was not the ideal one. When the great city, the holy Jerusalem, shall have come down out of heaven from God, and become the seat of government in the earth for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, the kingdom will then assume its incorruptible form, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27). But until the dawning of that day of glory, the kingdom of God in the earth will not be homogeneous:, but leavened by the presence of evil.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the leaven was the work of the enemies not of the faithful friends of the kingdom. Indeed, the faithful in the midst of a tainted assembly were held responsible for its presence, and exhorted to purge out the old leaven, and to "keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Seeing, then, that our Lord had delivered this parable of the leavened meal in the course of His public ministry, and interpreted its significance to the disciples privately (Mark 4:34), they possessed a key to the meaning of His words on this occasion. But as they had forgotten the first miracle of the loaves when the necessity for a second arose, so they forgot the parable of the leaven when the Lord used the figure to warn them against the evil influences of the spirit of Pharisaism and(Herodianism — of insidious corruption, religious and political. The Seven-Fold

Interrogatory The Lord corrected His disciples by a series of questions which gave them the opportunity for self-conviction and self-condemnation. The gentle and forbearing manner in which He dealt with them is instructive too. We see in the Prophetic Servant a perfect exemplification of those qualities afterwards enjoined by the apostle Paul upon his dear son Timothy: "the servant of the Lord must not strive: but he must be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, forbearing, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24).

Let us proceed to inquire what was the cause of the erroneous thoughts of the disciples, and why they failed to profit by the Lord's teaching. It was needful for them that the true source of their dullness should be exposed, in order that their eventual spiritual progress might be secured. The stumbling-block to their understanding could not lie in the matter nor in the manner of the Lord's instruction; for, with regard to the subject of His teaching, He taught them such things as they were able to bear (Mark 4:33; John 16:12), and, with regard to His method of teaching, His representation of His subject to His hearers could not but be perfect: "as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). The fault and the failure to apprehend the meaning of the Lord's words therefore lay with the apostles themselves. They failed most of all in that they were not sufficiently appreciative of the incomparable worth of the One who was their Instructor, in whom were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It was then, though they did not fully realize it, the day of their visitation. The Dayspring from on high was with them, but they did not set such store by His presence as they might have done. They slighted the Lord's testimonies, they disobeyed His precepts, and they forgot His wonderful works. The nature of the Lord's questions seems to imply that they were guilty of neglect, and that this was the real cause of their want of progress in divine things. The skilful Physician of their souls by this exposure laid before them the inward cause of their weakness and spiritual backwardness. If they confessed their errors, as they were given opportunity to do, they would be forgiven and cleansed from their secret faults. For it is written, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). To bring before the disciples the truth concerning their hearts the Lord made use of the interrogative method, and His questions imply censure. It was by a similar but more extended "cross-examination" that Job's self-conceit was broken down. Jehovah's series of questions to the patriarch from the whirlwind is recorded in four lengthy chapters (Job 38:1-41 — 41), and, in result, Job confessed, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

We may observe a sevenfold succession in the questions put by our Lord to the disciples. They all imply condemnation, and "work wedge-like to the proof." The series may be set out in the following order, and the implied charge is suggested for consideration in each case.

(1) Why reason ye because ye have no bread? implying a lack of confidence in the Lord on the part of the apostles.

(2) Do ye not yet perceive (vow)? implying lack of observation during their recent experiences.

(3) Do ye not yet understand (suniemi)? implying an absence of due reflection upon the Lord's words and acts.

(4) Have ye your heart hardened? implying a lack of sensitiveness to divine things.

(5) Having eyes, see ye not? implying the non-use of their spiritual faculties in relation to the Lord's doings.

(6) Having ears, hear ye not? implying the non-use of their spiritual faculties upon the Lord's words.

(7) Do ye not yet remember? implying a lack of spiritual intelligence, and specifying their forgetfulness of the two recent food-miracles, especially of the bountiful supply of broken pieces over and above the amount required. This series of seven is followed by another question, which is separately introduced in the narrative, viz., Do ye not yet understand (suniemi)? This is in a sense a summary of the foregoing series, and it will be considered in its due order.

While considering this display of the dullness of the disciples, it is well to recall that there were many matters which The apostles were incompetent to understand until the Lord was glorified, and the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them at Pentecost (cp. Luke 18:34; John 12:16). But their incapacity in some respects did not exonerate them from their slackness in others. And the Lord dealt with their responsibility to make good use of their exceptional privileges as special eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of His ministry as the Great Prophet of the kingdom of God. They were apostles; should not they, as such, display some intelligence of their Master's ways? It was written in the law concerning the whole nation: "there is none that understandeth" (Romans 3:11). If the same indictment was true in any degree of the twelve, after their special opportunities, were they not the more blameworthy?

1918 188 Let us now briefly consider these several points raised by our Lord with His disciples in this series of questions (vers. 17-21).

(1) Lack of confidence in the Master. — The Lord's first inquiry was, "Why reason ye because ye have no loaf?" The disciples had been discussing among themselves the meaning of the Lord's remark concerning the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Not understanding the figurative significance of the allusion, all or some of them (for it was a matter of discussion, and they may not have been unanimous) concluded that the Lord's reference was to their lack of bread for food. Uncertain of their interpretation, they sought enlightenment one from another, although the Source of all wisdom was in their midst. That they turned to one another for help was evidence that they lacked confidence in the love and sympathy of Christ for them. Otherwise, would they not have appealed direct to Him, owning their dullness, and seeking to be instructed? They, however, reasoned and questioned and debated and argued one with another. The Divine Teacher was with them, and the promise was even then good: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5). But the disciples did not ask, and therefore they did not receive. On the contrary, the Lord had to inquire of them, Why do ye debate the question? He who opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45) could He not open their minds to understand the things of the kingdom?

(2) Lack of perception. The Lord said, "Do ye not perceive (noeo)"? This verb implies the giving of earnest attention to what is passing so that the event is impressed upon the mind. Its sense is stated to be "to weigh with intelligence, so as to understand." Levity and unconcern would hinder and even prevent perception. An instance of its use in the sense stated occurs in connection with the prophecy concerning the future days when the abomination of desolation will be set up in the holy place. Whoever reads Daniel's prophecy, quoted by our Lord, is exhorted to "understand, or perceive," 1:e., to ponder, to consider seriously, to heed the prophecy (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Again, the apostle Paul states that the invisible things of God are "perceived" from the

world’s creation (Romans 1:20). Due perception therefore of the Lord’s teaching is the result of studied attention with the heart. Had the disciples been attentive to the Master’s service? If so, why was it that after His ministry had been exercised in their view for some two years so little impression had been made upon their minds? Their education and training to become able ministers of the new covenant by actual experience of the Lord’s ways of working and teaching was being frustrated by their own lack of interest. Spiritual progress cannot be attained by mere outward contact with the workings of divine power and mercy. The doings of the Lord must be weighed and considered seriously. "Consider (noeo) what I say," Paul said to Timothy, "and the Lord give thee understanding (sunesin) in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7). In a like strain the Psalmist sang of what will be true in the coming kingdom, "All men shall fear, and they shall declare the work of God for they shall wisely consider of his doing" (Psalms 64:9).

(3) Lack of reflection. Spiritual perception is followed by spiritual understanding. The disciples first failed to receive and retain accurate impressions of the many acts of our Lord’s power, wisdom, and grace, and they further failed to meditate upon the significance of the abundance and repetition of His works, and their superhuman nature. They had seen miracles of healing, the exercise of the power of Christ over the forces of nature, over the spirit-world, over death itself. They had heard the expositions of kingdom-truth, introducing what was altogether brighter and better than the law. But the apostles were not yet wise. "Whoso is wise shall give heed to those things, and they shall consider the mercies of the LORD" (Psalms 107:43).

Understanding is of the heart (Matthew 13:15). It was in her heart that Mary kept the deep sayings about the Christ, and in secret she kept pondering them that she might eventually understand (Luke 2:19; Luke 2:51). The next question bears upon the right heart-attitude of a learner in divine truth.

(4) Lack of sensibility of heart. — "Have ye your heart hardened?" Hardness or callousness of heart was attributed to the Pharisees (Mark 3:5). But it is also used with reference to the disciples. And in this case we notice that the term is associated (a) with failure to perceive spiritual truth, and (b) with the first food-miracle. In that connection we read in an earlier passage that they perceived not concerning the loaves, and that their heart was hardened (Mark 6:52). The amazement of the apostles at the stilling of the storm was was because they understood (suniemi) not the miracle of the loaves, their hearts being dull and insensible in both instances.

It is most important to see that want of spiritual perception is the result of deadness of feeling in the heart. And from the questions which follow we see that spiritual sight, hearing and memory are all affected by grossness of heart. In commissioning the prophet Ezekiel to be His messenger to the house of Israel, Jehovah said to him, "All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears" (Ezekiel 3:10).

(5) Lack of visual activity. — "Having eyes, see ye not?" The disciples are clearly credited with the possession of spiritual vision. Their eyes were gifted to see what the world could not. It is ever so with men of faith. Aged Simeon saw in the Holy Babe whom he took in his arms what the priests of the temple did not see. He discerned in the Infant the Lord’s Christ, the salvation of Jehovah (Luke 2:26; Luke 2:29). The eyes of faith, when in exercise, behold what is unseen and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

These eyes are not our mental faculties, but the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:18, R.V.). They are associated with the emotions rather than the intellect, and are inseparable from inward affection and loyal devotion. They are the eyes which see in the Christ of the Gospels a supreme Person for our worship and service. The apostles undervalued the ministry of Christ because they undervalued Christ Himself. A follower of the Lord may fall into the same weakness still if the eye be not single for the Master. He loses the vision of his soul, and becomes guilty of the blindness of Laodicea (Revelation 17:1-18). Having eyes, let us therefore, turn them in the right direction, and sec Jesus, crowned and glorified.

(6) Lack of aural attention. — "And having ears, hear ye not?" It was an essential qualification of the apostles' service that therein they declared what they had seen and heard. So John wrote in his First Epistle: "that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). Paul's instructions were to the same effect (Acts 22:14-15). The Lord's question thus revealed a serious defect in the conduct of the disciples; having ears, they did not hear. Those who turn away their ears from the truth are false and evil teachers (2 Timothy 4:4). There is a proper attitude in which to hear rightly, but they had neglected the Lord's warning, "Take heed how ye hear." They should have listened attentively. Mary chose the good part of sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word. She had "ears to hear," and she used them well. It is not sufficient to be in possession of ears, they must be exercised. Hence the recurring exhortation to each of the seven churches of Asia was, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear" (Revelation 2:3). But the disciples had become "dull of hearing," like some of the Hebrew Christians, and therefore the saying of the Lord was hard of interpretation to them (cp. Hebrews 5:2 , R.V.).

(7) Lack of recollection. — "Do ye not remember?" and then the Lord cited the two miracles of the loaves. The things which are behind, which relate to our former measure of attainment in the Christian life, we may usefully forget (Php 3:13). But the memory of the great goodness of the Lord should be ever with us to incite us to continuous praise (Psalms 145:7). The recollection of the Lord's ways with us in the past gives us guidance for the present. When we remember the food-miracles of yesterday we do not fear a famine today or tomorrow. A vivid and accurate memory is a great factor of the spiritual life. The importance of an active remembrance of divine things is emphasized by Peter, who makes four references to the subject in his Second Epistle (2 Peter 1:12-13; 2 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 3:1). In thus exhorting others, did he recall his own experience, when the remembrance of the warning words of the Lord caused him to repent of his shameful denial of his Master? (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:61). The Lord's Supper is an act appointed to perpetuate the remembrance of the death of Christ by the church. Two Psalms (Psalms 38:1-22 and Psalms 70:1-5) were specially written "to bring to remembrance"; and the recollection of the marvellous works of the Lord is stated many times in the Psalms to be the basis 0f confidence and trust in God. To the assembly at Sardis, the Lord sent the solemn warning, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard" (Revelation 3:3). In this instance in Mark, when the disciples were thinking that the Lord was chiding them for the shortage of their food-store, He reminded them of His double miracle so recently worked, and the number of baskets of broken pieces they were able to collect owing to His overflowing bounty. Might He not well say, O ye of little faith, do ye not remember? The Final Question When the Lord definitely

inquired concerning the, miracles of the loaves, their memories were refreshed. They could reply accurately when He asked the number of baskets of fragments they had taken up. Whereupon the Lord put the question which was a repetition and a summary of the preceding ones: "and he kept saying to them, Do ye not yet understand; ver. 21)?" The question embodied a charge of reprehensible dullness How could they think that the Lord feared that He might have to make use of the bread of the Pharisees? Matthew, who does not record the sevenfold series, states the final question in a fuller form, "How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:2). Did they suppose that the Lord who had taught them not to be anxious about what they should eat and drink was Himself anxious lest He and His disciples should be compelled to eat the bread of the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

We also learn from the same Evangelist that after these words light dawned on the hearts of the disciples: "Then understood (suniemi) they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12). Their rabbis had leavened the holy bread of the law as it was given originally by the introduction of the leaven of the precepts of men (Mark 7:7). Their teaching was permeated by the traditions of the elders, and thus the unleavened bread of the scripture was spoiled for the children of the kingdom by the leaven of hypocrisy and formalism, making the word of God of none effect, as it did, by their tradition.

45. — Dim Vision Made Clear

1919 200 "And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him. And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Do not even enter into the village"* (Mark 8:22-26, R.V.).

{*The additional injunction appearing in the A.V. — "nor tell it to any in the town" — is maintained by many scholars, though omitted in the R.V.} In the course of His tour, the Lord and His party of followers reached Bethsaida. This appears to have been the town or village known as Bethsaida Julias, situated on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near to which the first miracle of the multiplied bread was wrought. Here the Lord opened the eyes of a blind man in private, as Mark only records. A notable feature of this miracle is the gradual manner in which the sight was restored. He received first the faculty of sight, and secondly the ability to use the newly-given sight. The physical benefit granted to the sufferer affords an illustration of spiritual facts wrought by the power of Christ in the kingdom of God. Since man is blind by nature, and also blinded by wilful works of evil, he requires inward eyesight of heart and soul, and moreover that his newly-given eyes should be able to perceive the glory of Christ’s person and the truth of His teaching. This dual blessing, both in the physical and in the spiritual sense, was sometimes conferred by a single act of the Lord’s power, but in this instance of miraculous healing successive stages are displayed. First, the power of vision was bestowed, and then the power of perception.

While those totally bereft of natural sight were figurative of the spiritual state of the nation at large, the man with partially restored sight illustrated the spiritual condition of those who so imperfectly apprehended the truths of the kingdom which the Lord was proclaiming. They represented the

believing remnant of Israel as distinct from the mass. Truly they had come out to the Messiah, but they were in a transitional state until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, and by Him they were guided into all truth. Then they saw the King in His beauty, and the "land that is very far off" (Isaiah 33:17). Then their eyes were fully opened, and they beheld wondrous things out of Jehovah's law (Psalms 119:18). Previously, when Jesus came to them across the waves for their deliverance in the storm, they supposed He was a spectre. And as they failed to recognize Jesus as their Deliverer, so they afterwards failed to recognize Him as the King of kings. For when the three apostles in the holy mount saw their Master transfigured before their eyes, Peter with a confused judgment assigned Him no higher place than he did Moses and Elijah. A unique panorama of heavenly deeds was daily moving before the gaze of these privileged men, but none of the apostles rightly discerned the wonder of Messiah and His ways. The Lord Himself said to His disciples privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24). But to those thus blessed He also said reprovingly, "Having eyes, see ye not? Having ears, hear ye not?" A Sign Wrought in Secret This miracle along with that of the healing of the deaf stammerer in the same neighbourhood, form companion pictures. They are both peculiar to the Second Gospel, and the figurative reference of both of them seems specially to be to the "little flock" of Israel who welcomed Jehovah's Righteous Servant, and who followed Him in His services, while the great majority of the nation refused His gracious overtures, and, in consequence, perished in their unbelief. Some remarks upon the analogies of the two incidents have been offered in connection with that section (Mark 7:31-37), to which the reader may refer (supra, pp. 73-75; 88-91).

It cannot but be noted in these verses with what scrupulous care the Holy Spirit records in detail the gentle and loving service rendered by the Son, who had become the Servant of God. The Lord assumed personal charge of the afflicted man. He took hold of him by the hand, and led him in his blindness and darkness away from the habitations of men. What did this action suggest? To those whose hearts were filled with the ancient prophecies, would it not recall Jehovah's promise to the nation: "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not: in paths that they know not will I lead them: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight" (Isaiah 42:16). The Lord then supplied moisture from His lips for the darkened eyes before Him, and laid His hands of beneficent power upon the blind man. Healing virtue was communicated, and the sightless orbs became sensitive to the light of heaven. Thereupon the Lord questioned him concerning the efficiency of his newly-given eyesight: "What dost thou see?" His organs of vision were made sound, but were they working in harmonious cooperation with their fellow-members? Along with ability to see, did he possess the faculty of perception, of discernment, of recognition? This the Lord tested by His question, "Seest thou anything?" The man's reply showed there was" still the incompetency of the inward eye. Images of outward objects were transmitted through the eyes, but the mind lacked the power of accurate perception and cognition. The man was able to see, but not to discriminate between the objects of sight. Looking up, he said to the Lord, "I now see the folk, because I see them walking as trees."* The light of his body — the eye — was no longer darkness (Luke 11:34), but its vision was obscured, veiled. There was new light for him, but it was the dawn, rather than the noonday. (cp. Judges 9:36).

{*The exact shade of the meaning of the original phrase here may be doubtful, but the general sense seems to be that given by Dr. G. Campbell, "I see men whom I distinguish from trees only by their walking" (The Four Gospels, by G. Campbell, 4th ed., 1813, vol. 2, p. 148). The rendering by Dr. Swete is "I see men, for I perceive objects like trees walking" (Gospel according to St. Mark 3:1-35 rd ed., p. 174.)} The Lord, however, chased away these shadows by a second exercise of His healing functions. He again "laid his hands upon his eyes; and he (1) looked steadfastly, and (2) was restored, and (3) saw all things clearly." The threefold result of this second imposition as thus expressed was that the man (1) instantly gained clearness of vision (2) recovered normal eyesight, and (3) began and continued to see even distant objects clearly. As in some other cases of healing, we are told that the Lord imposed His commands upon the man before His departure. Men who received temporary benefit in recognition of their faith were required to exercise their faith yet further, and obey the Lord's directions in respect to their immediate movements. Like the sick of the palsy, and the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 2:11; Mark 5:19), the restored blind man was bidden to go to his own house, and moreover not even to enter the town of Bethsaida, from which the Lord had led him.

What does this Miracle Teach?

1919 216 The miracle was performed privately, and the Lord's expressed will was that it should be kept secret; clearly, therefore, it was not wrought for the wicked and unbelieving generation who had rejected his teaching. To them the Lord shortly before had said emphatically that no sign should be given: and the healed man was accordingly bidden not to advertise his cure, but to go straight home. But it may well be inquired whether this miracle has any significance beyond the evidence it affords of the inexhaustible love and compassion of the Lord and of His ready power and will to relieve the afflicted; and, if so, in what way it illustrates the general purpose or design in this part of the Gospel; further, if it was not for the people at large, whether it had any significant application to the followers of Christ.

Clearly, the prominent features of this case of healing are (1) that the man was taken apart by the Lord and healed in seclusion, and (2) that the process of the cure was not instantaneous but in stages. Now a close analogue to this sight-giving miracle will be found in the preparation of the disciples to receive and retain the Lord's teaching, and by this means to become His competent witnesses in the world when He Himself was not bodily present. The apostles were specially chosen by the Lord out of His followers, and led apart from others. "He ordained twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). They, at their call saw sufficient of the supreme attractiveness of Christ to forsake all and to follow Him. They believed that He was the appointed and promised Redeemer come to restore the kingdom to Israel. But their vision of the true nature of that kingdom was by no means accurate and complete, as such of their sayings as are recorded amply prove.

There are many instances which show that these disciples of the Lord could not clearly see the true spiritual value of the kingdom of God: they were, as it were, confused between men and trees. And it will be noted that this defect of the apostles is one of the connected threads woven into the texture of the Gospel.

Let us take a few items from the preceding narrative which illustrate the imperfect spirituality of the apostles. In the first storm at sea they concluded that the Son of David and His followers were all

about to perish, but at the same time they thought that only He could save them. Their despairing conduct was in striking contrast with that of the serene assurance of Paul throughout the storm of many days' duration.

Then, when a crowd of listeners was famishing with hunger, the disciples, so imperfectly understanding the love and the compassion of their Master, besought Him to send the multitudes away to shift for themselves.

Again, when the Lord came to the deliverance of the apostles in the second storm, walking to them on the waves, they were affrighted at His unexpected appearance, and cried out in fear, mistaking their Beloved Master for an apparition.

Afterwards, when the Lord reproved the folly of the Pharisees in their ablutionary rites and their connected formalism and hypocrisy, the disciples confessed their ignorance of His meaning, showing themselves "without understanding" like the mass of the nation.

Further, when a large audience was again present and without food, the disciples, oblivious of their former experience of the Lord's resources, were unable to suggest any means of feeding the people. Also when the Lord passed from the physical to the spiritual things of the kingdom, and spoke of the dangerous leaven of the Pharisees, their thoughts rose no higher than loaves of bread.

All these events follow one another closely in the earlier part of the narrative, and combine to exhibit the immaturity of the Lord's immediate followers as "co-workers" with Him. To state their spiritual condition in the Lord's own figure, they had eyes to see, but they did not perceive. At this juncture in the history, the duplex cure of the blind man is introduced. He was taken aside, and, first of all, a measure of restoration was given to his organs of sight, so that they became susceptible to impressions of external objects. But, according to his own testimony, he was unable to discern the real nature of those objects, for he confused such dissimilar objects as men and trees. A further effusion of power was needed, and this the Lord bestowed, so that the man thereupon saw all things with clearness. The application of this object-lesson to the undeveloped spiritual condition of the apostles is plain, and harmonizes with the plan of the Gospel, which not only shows the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah Himself but His preparation of His followers to carry on a divine witness in the earth when He should be absent. They had been chosen and ordained by the Lord to preach the gospel of the kingdom, but how could they efficiently undertake this service, if they were themselves unable to discern the mysteries of the kingdom? The new features which were to characterize the people of God were put before the multitudes in parables, but the underlying truths were fully explained to the believing remnant (Mark 4:34). These doctrines were placed before the apostles in word and illustrated by miraculous deeds, but in' this last year of the Lord's ministry it is clear they still needed to have the eyes of their heart strengthened to discern "things new and old" — the teaching of Messiah Himself and the scriptures that foretold Him and His doings. No subject seemed more difficult of apprehension to the disciples than that of the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah as a prelude to His displayed glories. And this subject of all-surpassing importance the Lord was about to introduce to them. By a tableau in the holy mount, He would afford some of them a glimpse of the kingdom in its coming glory (Mark 9:1), but teaching them of the sufferings and death of the Son of man (Mark 8:31) which must necessarily precede that manifestation. Could their eyes bear the sight and their

hearts receive its meaning? The result showed that their vision in these matters was indistinct, and like this imperfectly restored blind man, and like the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 22:31-32) a further application of the power of the Lord was necessary.

Other Gospel Instances of Physical and Moral Blindness The cure of the blind is used in other parts of the Gospels to illustrate the Lord's power to illuminate the mind and the heart. A striking instance occurs in Luke. He records several cases of spiritual blindness, and then brings in the healing of Bartimaeus, showing by this acted parable how the Lord delivered those who sought His mercy (Luke 18:1-43).

First, there is the Pharisee in the temple blinded by pride and self-sufficiency, a strong contrast with the publican whose eyes were opened to see the sinfulness of his own heart before God (vers. 9-14).

Secondly, there is a further contrast between the little children, on the one hand, who in their simple way saw enough of the divine winsomeness of the Saviour to come to Him, and were suffered to do so, and on the other, the rich young ruler who had many moral and religious qualifications, but nevertheless was so blind that, like the nation as a whole, he saw no beauty in the Lord that he should respond to His call and follow Him (vers. 15-25.)

Thirdly, the apostles whose eyes were opened sufficiently to leave all and follow the Lord were still so blind of understanding that when He spoke to them of His coming sufferings and death in accordance with prophecy, they perceived nothing of His meaning (vers. 31-34).

Fourthly, we have the introduction of the healing of the blind beggar, in immediate sequence to these passages, showing that although men were blind (1) to themselves, (2) to the Saviour, and (3) to the scriptures and the Lord's own teaching, there was One present who would open the eyes of all those who sought His power. Bartimus implored mercy like the sinner in the temple; he was brought to Jesus like the infants; he followed the Lord like the apostles. In contrast with the Pharisee he was aware of his poverty and his blindness; and in contrast with the young ruler he saw that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Son of David.

Take another instance. In the Gospel of John the man blind from birth constitutes a typical example of the work of grace in the spiritual world, which is so fully presented by the Evangelist. In John 8:1-59 the Lord's revelation of Himself as the Light of the world is recorded, but the Jews did not follow Him, as is shown, and consequently they walked on in darkness. The Light was shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. But in John 9:1-41 there is given the case of a blind man living from birth in a world of darkness, whose eyes were opened upon his submission to the Lord's directions. In his case there was an effect upon the heart as well as upon the eyes. His apprehension of the worth of his benefactor developed in ascending stages in contrast with the opinions of the Jewish teachers. He spoke of Him as the man called Jesus (ver. 11), as a prophet (ver. 17), as "from God" (ver. 33), and finally he confessed Him as the Son of God (vers. 35-38).

After this record, the Evangelist immediately makes reference to the perverse type of blindness which characterized the Pharisees who were spiritually blind, but who deceived themselves by assuming they could see. This condition of blindness was demonstrated by their attitude towards the Lord Himself. Perfect goodness was before them, but they discerned Him not. The Lord said of them, "For judgment am I come into this world that they which see not may see, and that they

which see may become blind." The Pharisees were saying, "we see," therefore their sin remained (John 9:39-41). They were of that generation who in the language of prophecy, "call evil good and good evil: that put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

Cases of Blindness in the Gospels

Omitting the general references to the healing of the blind; of which there are several, as in Matthew 11:5, there are seven specific cases mentioned in the four Gospels, viz.

(a) Two whose eyes Jesus touched, Matthew 9:27-28.

(b) One blind and dumb, Matthew 12:22.

(c) One at Bethsaida, Mark 8:22.

(d) One in Jerusalem, blind from birth, John 9:1-41.

(e) Two near Jericho, Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35.

(1) Of these seven cases, five are named by Matthew, two by Mark, one by Luke, and one by John. None of these cases is mentioned more than once with the exception of the two near Jericho. In this instance Matthew refers to both men, but Mark and Luke to one only. Matthew also records the greatest number of cases five.

(2) These seven witnesses were distributed between the northern and southern provinces. Four (a, b, and c) occurred in Galilee during the earlier part of the Lord’s ministry, and three in Judea (d and e) during the latter part, and these were three who sat and begged.

(3) Three of these blind men (a and e) asked that they might be healed; three others (b and c) were brought to the Lord; and one who was blind from birth (d) was first addressed by the Lord.

(4) In every case but one (b) the Lord laid His hands upon them, or touched their eyes. On one occasion (c) He touched twice. In two instances (c and d) the Lord made, use of spittle.

(5) Two blind men in Galilee (a) and two in Judea (e) acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David, and after the healing of another (b) the people said, "Is not this the Son of David?" Besides these four men, no one confessed Him in this character, except the Syro-phoenician woman (Matthew 15:22), and the women and the children upon the occasion of His public entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9; Matthew 21:15). These testimonies to Jesus as the Royal Seed of David are recorded almost entirely in the First Gospel, which from the outset (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 1:20) presents Him particularly as David’s Son and David’s Lord.

46. — Jehovah’s Anointed Servant disowned by many, confessed by few.

"And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Caesarea Philippi: and in the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged him that they should tell no man of him" (Mark 8:27-30, R.V.).

Accompanied by His disciples, the Lord Jesus went northward towards the sources of the river Jordan. The neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi, some 120 miles from Jerusalem, was the most northerly point recorded among the scenes of the Lord’s ministry. Thence the Lord turned southward to Capernaum first, and then to Judea for a final presentation of Himself to the "daughter of Zion" as the Anointed of Jehovah. The period of this visit to the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi coincides therefore with the commencement of the last year of His public service. But up to the then present moment, what was the fruit of His labours? Jehovah’s Servant had spent His strength in zealous and loving ministry among the lost sheep of the house of Israel, doing among them works such as man had never seen before. Truly God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. The Great Prophet had preached the good tidings of peace, and had gone about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil, God being with Him. What degree of conviction had this unique service of word and deed wrought upon the hearts of men? How did the people regard this Man approved of God unto them by the mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of them?

Such was the question raised in Northern Galilee at this juncture in the history of the Servant of Jehovah. And the Lord made inquiry of His disciples, not, of course, that He needed that any should testify concerning man, for He knew what was in man. But for their own sakes He put the queries, that they might share with Him the burden of unrequited love, and learn the secret of serving God in the face of apparent failure. It is noteworthy that the Lord’s own knowledge of the obduracy of man’s heart in no wise diminished His energy nor His love. Nevertheless the sorrow was there that the sons of Israel were not all prepared like aged Simeon to receive Him as the Lord’s Christ, and His lament might be expressed in the recorded words of Jehovah to Jeremiah: "They have turned unto me the back and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction" (Jeremiah 32:33). In the Way

It has been computed that the various journeys of our Lord in the course of His public ministry in Galilee and Judea extended considerably more than two thousand miles. These journeys would have been slowly accomplished on foot, and throughout them the Lord was, for the most part, accompanied by His disciples, and particularly by the twelve apostles who were specially chosen that they "might be with Him."

Two thousand miles of heavenly intercourse with the Son of David and the Son of God! Well might one of the apostles as he recalled with adoring reflection those marvellous travels with his Master add to his Gospel that striking conclusion: "there are many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25.) Of that antediluvian patriarch who "was not, for God took him" it is recorded that he "walked with God." Here were twelve men who walked more than two thousand miles with Him who was God "manifested in flesh." It was theirs to see, to hear, to contemplate, to handle the Word of life (1 John 1:1). As the Lord said privately to His disciples on one occasion, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see and saw them not, and to hear the things which ye hear and heard them not" (Luke 10:23-24).

Very, very little of these communications is recorded. The effect of them upon the apostles was however abiding, and was manifested when the Lord had departed out of this world unto the

Father. Then after the baptism of the Holy Spirit they became the foundation of that new spiritual building in the earth, growing now, as it is, unto a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-22).

It was on such occasions that the Lord and His followers took "sweet counsel" together. Like the communications in the house at Capernaum (Matthew 13:36) and those also in the upper room at Jerusalem (John 13:1-38. et seq.), these conversations in the way near Caesarea Philippi were for the most part private, intimate, choice, personal, precious. Of a correspondingly private character, as we have already noted, are such of the Lord's works as are recorded in this part of the Gospel. A further instance of this sacred privacy we gather from that touching description of the incident which occurred shortly afterwards, "in the way," when the Lord was setting Himself steadfastly to visit for the last time that city so "beautiful for situation," but defiled with the blood of Israel's martyred servants. "And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed, and they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen to him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again" (Mark 10:32-34; Matthew 20:17).

These intervals of seclusion were opportunities to be prized highly, and to be used to advantage, but on another occasion we find the apostles misused their privilege as companions of the Lord. While "in the way" with Him, they forgot that they were disciples of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, who was made a little lower than the angels, who had come, humbling Himself, not to be served, but to serve. The apostles had heated arguments among themselves, when travelling to Capernaum, on the question of pre-eminence. The Lord rebuked them, but not publicly. When He was in the house He asked them, What were ye reasoning in the way? But they held their peace, for they had disputed one with another in the way, who should be greatest" (Mark 9:33-34),

Popular Opinion The ways of the Great Servant of Jehovah in instructing His co-workers beforehand concerning the true character of coming events are found full of interest as we meditate upon them. Before making the first announcement of His imminent crucifixion and death, He prepared them for the news by drawing from their own lips the general thoughts of men regarding Himself. The disciples, both in company with and apart from the Lord, had traversed the country in all directions, teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, the word being accompanied by corroborative signs. They had therefore come into personal contact with the crowds, and had special opportunities to ascertain their real feelings.

Now when the Lord was in a private place praying, as Luke tells us, bearing the burden of men's obduracy of heart upon His spirit in His Father's presence, He asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" He Himself knew the answer, as He necessarily knew all things, but for their sakes He asked this question. It would be good for them not only to think vaguely in their hearts, but to say definitely with their lips that the world was against their Master's claims, that the best of men's judgments was short of the truth, and was therefore detrimental to the Lord's person and damaging to His glory and kingdom. The priests and the Pharisees, the professedly and zealously religious parties, were undoubtedly His strong opponents, but were the taught as well as the teachers antagonistic to the Lord? "Who do men say that I am?" was His question. In reply, the

disciples did not recite the worst sayings about their Master. There were those that said He was a Samaritan, that He had a demon, that He was mad, that He was a blasphemer, a gluttonous man and a winebibber. All classes were against Him, from the officials in the gate of justice to the drunkards in their ribald songs (Psalms 69:12). The disciples knew these things, but their love for their Master filled them with a solicitous regard for Him. They were sensitive to His honour, and sought to shield Him to the best of their ability from what would be painful to His feelings. So, on another occasion, when He spoke of going into Judea, they, out of a similar regard, sought to restrain Him, saying, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? (John 11:8). Now, as there was a division of opinion among the people concerning Him (cp. John 7:12), they gave Him the best of the common reports regarding His person and mission. Some, they said, declared that He was John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others, One of the prophets. And yet how very far from the truth was the best of the thoughts of men: it was, indeed, the distance between heaven and earth, between God and man. John the Baptist as a man and a prophet was indeed highly-favoured of God. And the Lord's own testimony regarding him was remarkable: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." But the greatness of John, however, was relative, not absolute, official not personal. He was a light-bearer (John 5:35), but not the Light itself, though he bore witness to the Light (John 1:7-8). Nevertheless, he was pre-eminent among all prophets and messengers of God since the world began, in that he alone among them witnessed the fulfilment of his own Messianic predictions, and as the great forerunner, he was able to declare of One standing before him: "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." This office was the choicest service given to men; "yet," the Lord added, "he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

John himself, whom all the people held to be a prophet, gave no ground for the popular saying. His plain testimony was, "I am not the Christ. He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11; John 1:20; John 3:28). And when John saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and abiding upon Him, he knew that He was the Son of God. The thoughts of men in these matters were foolishness. Some said John the Baptist was the Christ, while others said Christ was John the Baptist. Some said He was Elijah, the prophet of stern judgment, but none said He was the minister of heavenly mercy and grace. The truth was as the Lord declared, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither Both any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). The opinions of the populace showed how they were under the leavening influence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, of which evil effects the Lord had just previously bidden the disciples beware.* They, while glad of the Lord's beneficent miracles, altogether missed the sweetness of the grace of Christ. How otherwise could they mistake the meek and lowly Saviour for Elijah, the prophet of devouring fire from heaven and famine on earth, the precursor too, of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5), or John the Baptist with his fierce denunciations of the sins of Israel. In their blindness the people utterly failed to discern the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ.

{*The connection between the warning to the disciples and the questions put to them on this head, is very marked in Matthew (Matthew 16:12-14), In Mark the miracle of the Lord's power over the dim-sighted intervenes, and is, in itself, a close link of topical connection,} Personal Confession of the Christ The Lord then turned away from the unworthy thoughts of the multitude, who had ever

been the special objects of His loving service, to the circle of His own immediate followers. He now appealed to the judgment of their love and intimacy, saying, "Who say ye that I the Son of man am?" The question was a direct challenge to their loyalty and affection, like that one in the Canticles: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Do you regard your Master as a John, an Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets? Their reply was undoubtedly refreshing to Him who was so depreciated and under-valued elsewhere. Peter answered and said unto Him, "Thou art the Christ." From Luke we learn that the Lord addressed these questions to the disciples after He rose up from private prayer. In hallowed communion with the Father, He bore upon His spirit the anguish of a baffled and spurned love. After all His service in the midst of the favoured people He, their Messiah, was still unknown, and the Father whom He came to manifest was also unknown. The Lord could have said even then, as He did later, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me' (John 17:25).

Only that part of Peter's confession which bears directly upon the special character of the Gospel is given. In Matthew, the words, "the Son of the living God," appear also, for there the announcement by the Lord of the building of the assembly upon that acknowledgement follows. Here the Lord was owned simply as the Christ, the Anointed One, for this is an essential feature of the Gospel which sets Him out as the Servant of Jehovah upon whom the Holy Spirit rested. The disciples, whose affections the Lord had kindled towards Himself by His love were filled with the serene confidence that He was the Sent One of God, while in the uncertainty that unbelief engenders the people were distracted with conflicting opinions. It is faith alone that gives assurance, and Peter and his fellows believed that Jesus was the Christ. They told the Lord so, even as Jonathan came to David in the wilderness of Ziph, while Saul sought his life, and expressed his confidence that David was anointed to be the coming king in Israel (1 Samuel 23:17). Jonathan's confession of allegiance, we read, strengthened David's hand in God, and may we not say that He who "sought for comforters and found none," rejoiced at the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ"? But the time of public testimony to His rights as Israel's Messiah was now past, and He charged Peter that he should tell no man of him. W. J. H.

S. The Changeless Christ.

The Changeless Christ.

Hebrews 1:12; Hebrews 13:8. The permanence of the new order of things (i.e. of Christianity), in contrast with the temporal nature of things under the law is a prominent theme in the epistle to the Hebrews. It was necessary that those accustomed to what was visible and tangible in their worship should be taught that they were now introduced to a sphere where only faith was in exercise, and where the objects of faith were not less but more real than those specially before Old Testament saints. Yet not only did the remnant of Israel, "according to the election of grace," need to be enlightened as to the immutable basis upon which all the spiritual blessings of the believer are founded, but the saints of every succeeding age have and do find amazing comfort in the remembrance that the whole christian edifice is reared upon the Impregnable Rock, Christ Jesus.

It was ever the ordinary expectation of the Jew that Messiah when He came would bring in something lasting as well as blessed. As the people said to the Lord, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever" (John 12:34). But the cross seemed to put an end to all such hopes. And so in point of fact it did, as far as present earthly realization was concerned. But through the superabundant grace of God it nevertheless became the introduction to heavenly blessings, which were on that account so much the more real and permanent. This is the central thesis of the epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the all-important fact is established that Jesus Christ is the One to Whom the believer has to look for every blessing he enjoys both now and evermore; and, above all, that upon Him no change can come. The ancient system of ordinances was vanishing away to make room for the substance of which it was but a shadow. This and more the Holy Spirit unfolds in detail. But though Moses and Aaron, Elijah, and the prophets had been superseded, the work of the Man, Christ Jesus was as changeless as His Person was infinite and unvarying. In Hebrews 1:1-14 :, accordingly, the glories of the Lord Jesus are set forth. And it is as the incarnate Son that He is therein viewed; for this is in keeping with an epistle addressed to the remnant of that nation to whom He came as the chosen messenger of the Most High. Hence the apostle does not commence in the unthinkable ages of a past eternity as does John in the Gospel, but at the moment when Messiah was born in time as God’s spokesman. How He exceeds in virtue of His intrinsic worth all that was revered under the law! For could prophets be compared for one moment with Him Who ranked as Son, Who was both the Creator and Inheritor of all things, besides being now enthroned on high as the great Sin-Purger? Angels, too, He infinitely transcended. Though in grace He became a servant, the more excellent name of Son is His inalienable heritage. They, as the scriptures abundantly prove, were created for a state of servitude beyond which they can never advance; moreover by the homage they render the First-begotten when He cometh into the world, they testify to His divine superiority.

Again, the Psalms are cited to show that the Son is therein addressed as God (Psalms 45:6-7). And as if anticipating the objection of a captious Jew that rulers and magistrates were similarly designated in the same book (Psalms 82:6) another scripture is advanced in which the

incommunicable Name is ascribed to Him. "Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." "Jesus" to Him (Matthew 1:21) was not a mere appellation, as to the son of Nun, but accurately descriptive of His person and work as Jehovah the Saviour.

Indeed, the word is the more striking since it is quoted from Psalms 102:1-28 :, wherein the solitude and humiliation of the suffering Messiah are vividly portrayed. It is there we read, "For my days are consumed like smoke," and "My days are like a shadow that declineth: and I am withered like grass," and again, "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days" (Psalms 102:3; Psalms 102:11; Psalms 102:23-24). This is the "prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before Jehovah." And this cry from the depths is immediately followed by the remarkable declaration of the immutability of His person, ascribed to Him at the very moment of His apparent weakness (Psalms 102:12; Psalms 102:24-27). The heavens and the earth, His own handiwork, and the recognised emblems of stability among men, shall perish in contrast with His everlasting existence.

Thus, before the Spirit of God speaks of "eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9), the "unchanging priesthood" (Hebrews 7:1-28 :), "eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12), "eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15), the ever-efficacious sacrifice, (Hebrews 10:1-39 :), the "immovable kingdom" (Hebrews 12:28), the "everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20), He reveals the wondrous truth of the person of the Lord Jesus from Whom the blessings enumerated take their character of "eternal." Because He is the same and His years unfailing, His work abides without decay. Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, the lustre of the believer’s portion in Him is undimmed, its value undiminished, and its possession unalterably secure.

How good of our God to give us (ourselves changeful in a changeful scene where naught is dependable) One Who is unchanging and in Whom we, and all we possess that is worth possessing, are secured from the depredations of the foe and from the corruption of evil within and around us. May we with the tenacity of faith lay hold of this blessed attribute of the Person of the Lord which alone can keep us "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." W. J. Hocking.

S. The Comfort of the Scriptures.

The Comfort of the Scriptures.

W. J. Hocking.

1894 26 It forms no small portion of the power and preciousness of the holy scriptures, that they afford the only substantial basis for "solid comfort" amid the numerous trying and harassing circumstances from which few, if any, are altogether exempt. Nor is this consolation by any means confined to certain parts of the word; but it may be gathered throughout the whole field of revelation, if only there be patient waiting upon Him Who is the Comforter or Paraclete (John 14:16; John 14:26); whose present office it is to expound the word of truth, and apply its soothing, cheering, and strengthening power to those who would otherwise be orphans indeed, exposed to the cold charity of a heartless world. In Romans 15:4 we have a very explicit statement in this connection. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Here there is a veritable storehouse thrown open to the needy, downcast, and sorrow-stricken soul. For where else but in the scriptures can we see the ways of God with His own? And where but in that blessed Book can we find such a rich and varied store of divinely-chosen examples, giving (as they do) practical exposition to those counsels of comfort which might otherwise seem impracticable and incredible to our weak and dubious minds? Thanks be to Him — "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" — Who was pleased to give such a full record of His gracious dealings with the sons of men. The special point in view, in the passage referred to, is the comfort to be experienced amid the trials, incident to those intimate relationships, into which saints are brought socially as well as in the assembly of God. The apostle was exhorting every one of the saints to please his neighbour with a view to that which is good for edification. In support of this he alludes to the historical fact that Christ, the Great Exemplar, pleased not Himself. He further proceeds to point out that this was in accordance with the prophecy of the Psalmist, "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Psalms 69:9). So ran the prediction, and in due time it was to be seen, in public fulfilment of the scripture, that the life of the Lord Jesus was pre-eminently one of obloquy. And this came about because He was here to represent God, because He came from God, and because He was God manifest in the flesh. In spite, nay because, of the fact that He displayed the fulness of divine grace, man directed upon Him the full measure of the enmity working in his heart against the God of love.

However, the apostle would have us mark that this bitter spirit of animosity against the Messiah of God was plainly foreseen. The principle was placed on record "aforetime," but only received its perfect fulfilment and exemplification in the life of our Lord Jesus. He it was that bore the burden of unlimited reproach as no other ever did or could. But the sorrow, poignant though it was, did not overwhelm Him; for, the foreshadowing word being hidden in the heart of that Blessed One, it was no matter of surprise to Him that for His love He was rewarded hatred. This may be seen on that occasion, when after a full contemplation of the stubborn unbelief of the highly favoured towns of

Galilee, the obedient Son thanks His Father because He had concealed "these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:1-30 :).

Thus did the Lord pass through and emerge from the trials of a repulsed and apparently defeated purpose, serenely confident and triumphant. It was enough for Him, in the hour of His subjection, that such was His Father's will and that so it seemed good in His sight. Inasmuch as He, the perfect and adorable Man, lived by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God, He was prepared for this and for all that befell Him. Nothing could take Him unawares; for His whole life was a strict accomplishment of what was written of old, as the Gospels show without exception. Hence, amid the tireless malevolence of the scribes and Pharisees, the waywardness of the fickle and changeful multitudes, and the perversity of His unsympathizing disciples, He could say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul" (Psalms 94:19). But what application has this to us? The very closest; for we are called to follow Christ in the path of self-denial, and to be brought face to face with sorrow in an unwonted degree. Whence then shall we derive our comfort? If we, as here (Romans 15:4) counselled, emulate the Good Samaritan and seek the good of others, regardless of ourselves, we shall often find it to be, seemingly, a thankless task, and be forced in our measure to echo the apostle's words, "The more I love, the less I be loved." Where shall we seek encouragement in such a case? We are directed by our good and wise God to the holy scriptures, wherein He has provided for every possible spiritual need of His children at any time and under all circumstances. Even as the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, was maintained in His course of perfect obedience by the knowledge of the revealed will and purpose of God, as contained in the ancient oracles; so the faithful disciple is pointed by the inspiring Spirit to "whatsoever was written aforetime" as the present spring of patience and comfort. But while the trials particularly in view in this portion are undoubtedly those which attend the workings of divine love in the hearts of brethren one toward another, the passage is of the most general application, and assures of the encouragement the scriptures render under the most varied circumstances. It is not intended, however, on this occasion, to refer to the consoling truths themselves which abound on every page of holy writ; but, while mentioning two of, perhaps, the most general methods by which comfort is administered, to point out that the effect of the rationalism, so prevalent in our day, is to destroy the very source whence such comfort emanates. Both from the examples and from the precepts of scripture, the saints of God may gather unbounded solace; and against both the enemy directs his malignant attacks. As when king David sent servants to Hanun, king of Ammon, to comfort him for the death of his father, the Ammonitish king mocked and despised him for his commiseration, taking the servants, shaving off half their beards and cutting off their garments in the middle and sending them back as tokens of his savage contempt for the interference of the king of Israel (2 Samuel 10:1-19 :); even so does modern unbelief, instead of receiving the scriptures as divine messengers of consolation, mock and set them at nought, treating their history, on the one hand, as fable and myth, and their teaching, on the other hand, as the exploded opinions which passed current in a barbaric age. Let such freethinkers fear Him Who is able to work upon them a worse fate than did David upon the children of Ammon. In the first case, then, of all the scriptural biographies none is, or could be, so replete with inspiriting facts as the fourfold one of the Lord Jesus. According to the prophecies given by holy men of old, He was to be the Consoler of Israel (Isaiah 40:1, Isaiah 61:2; Luke 2:25), and indeed not of that nation only, but of all the children of God wherever scattered. If not yet fulfilled in the full degree of millennial blessedness, even now the perfection of the gracious ways of the

Master affords an inexhaustible fund, whence the disciple who seeks to follow His steps may derive abundant power of endurance. Hence we are exhorted to run the race of faith with steadfast eyes, abstracted from temporal and inferior objects, and directed to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. And to meet those who might found a captious objection upon the very sinlessness of Jesus, the scripture provides us with biographic sketches of men of like passions to ourselves; so that, while in the life of our Lord we have what should be done, in the lives of the saints we have what has been and may be done. Now the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 11:1-40 :) shows that the historical portions of the Old Testament, no less than of the New, largely contribute to this end. There the eventual triumph and reward of faith is, for our encouragement amid trial and conflict, illustrated by a series of divinely-selected examples, commencing hard by the very gate of Paradise from whence our first parents issued in sinful disgrace. This "cloud of witnesses" is seen to be always confident, ever maintaining an unbroken trust in God, in spite of the most adverse circumstances. But how is it possible to glean consolation from these alleged facts if they have no more historical basis than the exploits of Thor, the labours of Hercules, or the wanderings of Ulysses? If the godly walk of Enoch, and the self-renunciation of Moses are but legendary tales handed down from prehistoric days, of what influence can they be upon a life, shadowed by disappointment and apparent failure? Is it not simple mockery to refer a sorely afflicted soul to a "poetic fiction," for support in the midst of the overwhelming trials of bereavement? But we know, when we ask our Father in heaven for sufficient bread, He will not mock us with a stone? For we are assured that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

1894 38 The basis of all true comfort is unbounded faith in God’s love and grace. Implicit trust is the soul’s sure anchor in every storm. And the spiritual apprehension of the word of God is the means of establishing the believer in serene confidence amidst the greatest difficulties and sorrows he may be called to encounter. As has been already remarked, Bible history is given with a view to cultivate in the children of God such an acquaintance with His ways, as shall brighten their darkest hours by a firm reliance upon His unerring wisdom. The life of Abraham, as written in the Scriptures, is especially abundant in those circumstances which inspire confidence in God as the Author of nought but good and as the Supreme Controller of all events to the accomplishment of His beneficent purposes. In himself Abraham was a singularly good man, lofty and noble in character, generous and magnanimous in his relations with men, obedient and self-sacrificing before his God. Yet in spite of such excellence as highly elevated him above his fellows, he was not on that account exempt from fiery trial and blasting adversity. On the contrary, there have been few, perhaps, who have been brought face to face with such bitter disappointment as he; and without doubt, there has been no saint whose faith through long years in the bare and unsubstantiated word of God has been so stringently tested as was his. Nevertheless, Abraham was sustained throughout by Him Who said, "I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward"; and all things are shown to have worked together for the blessing of faithful Abraham, and not of him only, but of Jews and Gentiles also throughout all ages. For Abraham occupies a prominent place in the dispensational dealings of God with mankind. He was the first of the post-diluvian worthies. He is declared to be the father of all that believe, even though they be not circumcised (Romans 4:11). He was the root of the olive tree of promise, according to the word of the Lord God — "In thee shall all nations be blessed." He was the honoured progenitor of that race which has, in the face of extraordinary vicissitudes, been maintained in existence for four millenniums; and

though its name be now a by-word in every land, it shall even yet in God's good time be exalted to be again the chief among the peoples of the earth. But though Abraham holds this distinguished position, he was none the less human, none the less a man beset with similar temptations, possessing similar evil propensities and encountering similar obstacles to the saint of today. For it would be entirely subversive of that purpose of Holy Writ, which we are considering, to suppose with the rationalist that the history of Abraham is merely an ideal picture, a spiritual parable, the natural outcome of the universal practice of hero-worship, the imputation to Israel's great forefather of the scattered traditions of many centuries. There is small comfort to be derived from a fable; since it is certain that if Abraham's trials are supposititious, his victories must be imaginary. And if the conquests of his faith are legendary, his biography becomes valueless to us as that of a brother saint triumphing over the manifold difficulties attendant upon a godly and obedient walk.

It may be sufficient for the purpose of this article to glance cursorily from this point of view at the transcendent act of Abraham's life This was undoubtedly the solemn scene enacted on the lonely heights of mount Moriah. It was there the patriarch's faith received its final test; and it was there the angel of the Lord stayed the descending knife, and declared "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me" (Genesis 22:12). And it is upon this part of the history that the rationalist first lays his ruthless hand. By him it is summarily dismissed as some mythic tale of the hoary past, or at least as a purely fictitious narrative invented by some unscrupulous religious teacher.

Though it is undeniable, it is regarded by him as of no importance, that this offering up of Isaac is referred to in unequivocal terms on two separate occasions in the New Testament. In one case Paul, writing to the Hebrews (chap. 11:), gives the incident as an instance of Abraham's faith along with other historical facts in his life, such as his migration from Mesopotamia, his pilgrim life in the promised land, and the miraculous birth of Isaac. These leading points in the patriarch's history are quoted as illustrations of the power of faith; but if fabulous, they are absolutely worthless for that purpose. The truth is, however, that they are not fables but facts which the Spirit has recorded in the Old Testament and authenticated in the New. The other case is James, who gives the same act as the great proof and manifestation of the mighty faith possessed by this eminent man, who was called the "friend of God." "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (James 2:21-22)? Is it possible to seriously entertain for one moment the supposition, that the apostle is thus referring to a baseless tradition? Moreover, the apostle goes on to say, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God; and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23). So that this sacrifice is here definitely stated to be the proof of the faith expressed by the childless man on that starlight night when Jehovah promised the lonely wanderer that his seed should rival the countless hosts of heaven for multitude. Abraham believed the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness. So it was said of him in Genesis 15:1-21 :; but some forty years later (Genesis 22:1-24 :) this confession of trust was proven to the utmost, and by his works was faith made perfect. Thus the entire force of the apostle's reference is grounded upon its historical accuracy. If the offering up of Isaac is no more than an untrustworthy legend, it is of no avail to quote it as being the abiding and pre-eminent testimony of that living faith in God which characterised the father of the faithful. In effect, therefore, for the historic truth of the event in question, we are called to choose between the

inspired witness of two apostles and the ipse dixit of overbearing and arrogant man — no difficult task for those accustomed to learn in meekness at the Master’s feet.

It is not overlooked that the author of the recent essay on Inspiration in "Lux Mundi" grants that the historic age commences with Abraham, everything prior to the migration of the Mesopotamian "sheikh" being shrouded in the mists of dim antiquity. In sooth, this is beyond our concern; for we leave those to establish the exact locality of the boundary line between the historic and the legendary, who refuse to accept the teaching of the inerrant Scriptures that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Besides, Mr. Gore and his followers should not forget that ante-diluvians are classed in the same category with post-diluvians (Hebrews 11:1-40 :), — Abel, Enoch, and Noah, along with Abraham and Moses, with Gideon, Samson, and Barak. So that neology has no support from Paul.

God fearing souls have good cause to tremble, when daring men thus seek to divide the sacred word of God into the historic and the pre-historic, the inspired and the uninspired. It is not faith that works such havoc with the messages of the Most High. It is rather the reckless unbelief of that impious king of Judah, who first cut the roll of the prophet to pieces and then proceeded to burn it with fire. So that when we see men approaching the Scriptures with the shears, we may well fear lest they follow with the firebrand.

No: if there be any comfort in the Bible, it is because we have therein facts; and more, not facts partially observed and even distorted by our imperfect vision, but facts divinely selected, divinely recorded, and divinely illuminated. Undeniably the trials and sorrows of this life are stern realities. And how can we be better strengthened to hear them cheerfully, than by seeing the way in which God, in former times, ministered to others placed in similar trials and sorrows or even worse? This under divine guidance we are permitted to do in the historical portions of the word. In the case before us, — the extraordinary and unparalleled trial of Abraham’s faith — we have what is unusually rich in supplies of comfort. For it is a feeling common to almost all afflicted persons that no one since the world began was ever called to pass through such bitter trials or make such extreme sacrifices as they. Now to quench such distress of soul, much more frequent than creditable, it is placed on record how the greatest possible sorrow a man like Abraham could meet, was faced in the power of faith and completely vanquished. In order to apprehend the severe nature of the task set before the man of faith (Genesis 22:1-24 :), it is necessary to briefly recall the leading events of his life of which this was the climax and the crown. The first demand upon his faith was to leave his own country and his kindred and his father’s house and to go into an unknown land, with the promise that he should become a great nation, and that in him should all nations be blessed. At the age of seventy-five, Abraham came into the land which he was afterwards to receive as an inheritance, though it was then occupied by the vile and vicious Canaanite. Soon he had to part from his worldly-minded nephew, Lot, who walked by sight and not by faith. Through ions and lonely years did Sarah and he dwell in this foreign land, possessing not so much as a foot of it, and without a sign of that heir to whom he might bequeath his flocks and his herds, his silver and his gold, and in whom the word of God should be fulfilled. Once again, however, while meditating in the silent night-watches, the voice, first heard by Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, assured him that’ the promised seed should be duly forthcoming. But not till eleven years after his entrance into the land was Ishmael born, and then not of Sarah. And the son of

Hagar could not live before God. Abraham had still to wait; for "Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him." And though twenty-five years elapsed since he had left Haran; yet hope deferred did not make the heart-sick. On the contrary, Abraham "against hope believed in hope. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:18-21). But this faith, in which he had been thus educated through no small space of time, had yet, to receive its final test. Accordingly, when Isaac had fully supplanted Ishmael, when the affections of the old man for his long expected child had developed and matured by years of exercise, when Isaac was grown into a goodly youth, the joy and support of his father's declining years, then the well-known voice from on high demanded, without a word of explanation, that the promised seed should be sacrificed upon one of the mountains in the land of Moriah.

Here then was the crucial test. As a man even, he would shrink from shedding human blood. As a father, he would be horrified to think of sacrificing his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved. As a saint, he would he tempted to doubt the Divine origin of a command to extinguish that seed which was itself the witness of God's special intervention in fulfilment of His promise. None of these things however moved him, but with a dignity and serenity, only characteristic of a ready and unquestioning obedience, he bowed his head in submission. But what comforted his heart? What sustained him throughout the journey of three days to mount Moriah? What supported his soul when the artless question of his darling boy stabbed him more keenly than could that sacrificial knife his own hand held? It was — in his case as in every other — the WORD OF GOD. It was the firm and unshaken conviction that the word could never fail; that what the Almighty had promised He was also able to perform, and that even death, however disastrous to human plans, was no bar to the accomplishment of the purposes of God. This he found to be an effectual solace for every pang. For his was no blind fatalism but an intelligent trust in the living God. The hand stretched forth to slay Isaac was confident of speedily welcoming him again from the very dead. This incident, therefore, in all its details, is a remarkable exhibition of the way in which God works with His own, not arbitrarily but to compass His own ends and the final blessing of His saints. Herein lies our comfort. Even as the patriarch trusted God and was not confounded, so we are safe in resting on the sacred word, though the earth fail and the heavens fall. Abraham found the verbal promise steadfast, we shall not find the written ones less so. Moreover we see not only that he believed God, but that in a very overwhelming trial he proved the end of the Lord to be very pitiful and of tender mercy, calling the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh. This historical account with the rest was "written aforetime" for our comfort; and what shall we say of those who would discredit the record by insinuating doubts if not total denial? They are no friends of Christ, but cruel robbers, and wanton destroyers of that comfort laid up for His sheep in the holy scriptures.

1894 54 While the scriptural narratives, as has already been indicated, afford a rich supply of comfort to the believing soul, the divine precepts and instructions are equally full of consolation. To this effect the sweet singer of Israel thought and wrote: — "the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me" (Psalms 119:49-50). The reason why the word of God produces this blessed result is not far to seek. Since, in contrast to the imperfect, not to say impracticable, philosophies of mankind, it sets

the sorrows and trials of this life in their true and proper character, shedding the light of heaven upon the gloom of earth. For all mere human efforts to comfort, apart from God and the truth, are inefficient because more or less ignorant. And the failure is the more apparent in proportion to the bitterness of the trial to be faced. This is shown in the history of Job, His three friends were evidently sincere in their regard for the sufferer, and anxious to serve him in the hour of his sorrow. But the cause of the patriarch's affliction completely baffled them. They failed to understand how such a perfect and upright man, as Job was, should be so very severely tried. Hence, after seven days' silence, by their insinuations and misrepresentations they caused that patient man to exclaim in the bitterness of his soul, "Miserable comforters, are ye all." They might have been of service if his were an ordinary case; but when an eminently righteous man was stripped of every earthly possession in an unexampled manner, their tongues were dumb. Not comprehending in any degree the ways of God with His own, they caused Job to feel, by their false and unworthy suggestions, their utter inability to help him and threw him back on God Himself. So that eventually he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

It is thus patent that in the deepest and keenest of the sorrows of the human heart; there were none to sympathize, none to cheer, had not Christ been sent "to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:2-3). But when the Lord of glory came, He declared what sounded strangely enough in mere human ears. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). The fact was, however, that the sweetness of the consolation administered by that Blessed One more than equalled the bitterness of the sorrow which called it forth. In this strain wrote one of God's suffering saints, "I protest in the presence of that all-discerning Eye Who knoweth what I write and what I think, that I would not want the sweet experience of the consolations of God, for all the bitterness of affliction; nay, whether God come to His children with a rod or a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well. Welcome, welcome, Jesus, what way soever Thou come, if we can get a sight of Thee"

It is noticeable in the ways of the Lord here below, that before removing the cause of a person's grief by His mighty power, He bestowed a word of cheer for the assurance and support of the soul. Thus, when He met the funeral procession issuing from the gates of Nain, carrying forth that widow's only son, He did not proceed at once to raise him to life. But when the Lord saw the grief-stricken woman, "He had compassion on her," and banished her tears by His compassionate words "Weep not." The words were effectual, for they were not' the formal utterance of some shallow-minded unfeeling mortal; but they came from the lips and heart of the One Who Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus. He was able to enter into and fully appreciate the inward pangs of her heart as no other could. Bereft of adequate human sympathy, this in itself was as balm to her wounded soul. Besides, there was not only exquisite compassion in the words of Jesus, but power and promise and hope. He was able not only to comfort in the very presence of tribulation, but to deliver out of it. (Compare 2 Corinthians 1:3-10.) The divine voice, that first of all spoke peace to the troubled heart of the bereaved widow, spoke life to the dead youth upon the bier. "And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still, And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke vii 12-15).

Again, when blank despair was settling on the heart of Jairus at the tidings of his little daughter's decease, the Master's words were "Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50). Before announcing her restoration, He graciously soothed the agonized feelings of the newly bereaved father by His sympathizing and encouraging words "Fear not." So, too, before stilling the storm, His voice was heard amid the howling of the tempest, bidding His timorous disciples "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27). It is well, therefore, for us to learn that the Lord not only delivers the godly out of their troubles, but supports them by His word in the very midst of them. And because this "comfort of the scriptures" is ever available in the very hour of sorrow, it thereby becomes of untold value to the saint of God. Human comfort is sometimes liberally administered when the trial is over and gone. In the case of Job we find him left alone in the hour of his grief, save for his "friends" whose offices were more irritating than soothing. But when Jehovah "turned the captivity of Job" and gave him "twice as much as before," we read, "Then came there unto him all his brethren and all his sisters and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and they bemoaned him and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold" (Job 42:11). Such comfort as this may do for fine weather but is useless in a storm. And the experience of Job is by no means unexampled, as most can testify from their own histories. But what sorrowing saint ever consulted the scriptures in faith and sought in vain for cheer and support? There the blessed Lord ever lives and speaks before the eyes and ears of His people. There we have the incomparable fact of God manifest in flesh upon earth, in the very midst of a world like ours. There we see His manhood bringing Him into daily contact with the abundant sorrows of this vale of tears; yet the glory of His Godhead outshining and forbidding us to think of Him as altogether such a one as ourselves. Hence nothing more quickly calms the troubled spirit than a reverent consideration of that Man of Sorrows Who "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses," of that Divine Word Who, while tabernacling among men, began to do what He will more perfectly accomplish in due time — to wipe away all tears from off all faces.

It has been said that the great essential feature of comfort is substantiality; in order to be effective, it must have a solid and permanent basis. And this basis our God has given us in His Son. For what can be more changeless than He Who is "the same yesterday and today and for ever?" And in this we are privileged beyond saints of Old Testament days. They hung upon promises — upon what God had said He would do. But now grace and truth has come by Jesus Christ. In Him God was and is manifested in all the fulness and tenderness of His love, so that no sorrow can withstand His presence. There we see divine tears welling forth from human eyes, for His interest and sympathy in the sorrows of mankind were those, not of a man only, but of God Himself.

It is painful to think that there are those who at this very day, are teaching that the Ineffable Son "beggared Himself of divine prerogatives," and became no more than a man. No more than a man! Alas! alas! For the universal experience is, that there is no man, no, not one, in whom we can implicitly trust and confide. It was not at the feet of a mere man, but of the Omniscient Man that sorrowing and contrite Peter threw himself. To no other but Jesus could he have said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17).

It is worthy of remark that after alluding to the "consolation in Christ," the "comfort of love," the apostle by the Spirit proceeds at once to unfold the essential glories of Christ's person in a most

striking way (Php 2:1-30 :). Thus is the condition of our hearts bound up most closely with the majesty and dignity of the Person of our Lord.

1894 71 The blessed office of the Bible, in which it dispenses comfort to the sorrowing souls of God’s people by shedding the light of truth amid the most gloomy and depressing circumstances, is seen in a striking manner in connection with that revelation peculiar to the New Testament, viz.: — the return of the Lord for the church. This truth was first made known, in essence if not in detail, by the Lord Himself. On more than one occasion during His ministry, He spoke of the coming of the Son of Man — of the effulgence of His presence in a future day which should be the redemption of His people and the destruction of His enemies (Matthew 24:25 :; Luke 21:1-38 :) But in John 14:1-31 : the gracious Master dealt in a direct manner with the need of the hearts of His disciples both at that time and subsequently. He had plainly announced to them His immediate departure; and, in consequence, sorrow had filled their hearts. What would be the world to them without their Lord? For His sake they had left all to become His disciples. Their "all" might not have been great, as some men count greatness. But they could leave no more. And now the One for Whom they had stripped themselves informed them that He was about to depart. They were borne down with grief at the news. But in the midst of their distress the Lord with the most touching sympathy bids them, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). The great fact, thus presented for the support of their souls during His absence is the assurance of His own personal return to conduct them to that special place He is gone to prepare. From the moment of His departure therefore they were invited to stay their hearts upon this promise of His coming to receive them to Himself (Acts 1:1-26 :) As the same Blessed One, afterwards said to the church in Thyatira through the evangelist who records these farewell words, as an encouragement to the faithful watcher through the dreary night, "I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:28). It was not intended, neither was it needful that the disciples should know the day or the hour of His return. It was sufficient that He was coining, and, as He assured His waiting Bride, coming "quickly."

It is not to be supposed that this coming in John 14:1-31 : is a figurative reference by our Lord to the believer falling asleep. On the contrary, the decease of a Christian in the New Testament is invariably represented as a departure to be with the Lord, not as the Lord fetching such an one. As the apostle says, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better" (Php 1:23). And again, "The time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6).

We are not therefore at liberty to imagine that anything is meant but what is plainly implied, viz.: — that the Lord distinctly promises to return shortly for those who are His. There could be no more effectual means of consolation than this. The Lord shows thereby that the very cause of their sorrow should in reality be a cause of joy and gladness. It was true, even as they deplored, that he would be absent from them; but they now knew that he would during His absence be occupied on their behalf, and that He would in due time return to lead them into a place of everlasting felicity with Himself. This knowledge of the wondrous activity of His love was meant to raise their hearts and ours from occupation with the trials of a difficult pilgrim path, to read by faith even in the protracted absence of the Lord the proof of His concern in our ultimate blessing. Moreover not knowing the actual moment of His return our souls are kept on the constant stretch in joyous

expectancy .of seeing Him. And in the light of such a prospect of eternal gain, a moment’s loss or pain appears but a trifle indeed. And this truth that is revealed in John 14:1-31 : in a most general way is further expanded and applied in the Epistles, and not seldom with a similar purpose of consolation. Let but one instance only be referred to, viz.: — that of the saints at Thessalonica. They, like the disciples, were in sorrow, though for a different reason. Their sorrow, the apostle intimates, was due in a measure to lack of knowledge of what would be the effect of the Lord’s coming upon the sleeping saints. One purpose of the epistle was to enlighten them upon this matter and by that means to remove the cause of their grief. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Evidently, the Thessalonian saints were imagining that those of their number who had fallen asleep would on that account miss the peculiar joys attendant upon the Lord’s return. For this reason they were cast down. Their loved ones had not only been taken from them, bitter enough where the light of truth had not yet dispelled heathen darkness, but it was an added pang that the departed ones would thereby be prevented from greeting the Lord at His expected advent. The Lord, however, does not deal with them as with the widow of Nain, the ruler of the synagogue, and the sisters of Bethany. He comforted these by restoring their dead to life. Here the apostle is specially commissioned "by the word of the Lord," to administer consolation to their aching hearts by telling them that, so far from the sleeping saints losing their share in the bliss of the Lord’s arrival, they would in point of fact be the first to participate in the manifested power and blessing of His presence.

It is plain, therefore, that their anxiety and grief rested entirely upon a misapprehension. And how much trouble of mind God’s children pass through, which is similarly based! But the scripture, in every such case as in this, disperses the mists of ignorance or distorted truth, and thus afford the truest comfort.

It remains to say a brief word of warning against those who seek to rob the saints of the consolation of the New Testament as well as of the Old. Proud men lacking faith do not hesitate to accuse the apostle of ignorance, of error, and even of worse. They scruple not to annihilate the hope of the church at a blow, and, "feeding themselves without fear," filled with all worldliness, content enough with the pleasures around them, have no desire that the Master should return to bring them to account for their unfaithful stewardship. But let us cherish the word of His promise, which no word of man can ever invalidate. And may "our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17). W. J. Hocking.

S. The Cry of the Suffering Christ

The Cry of the Suffering Christ by W.J. Hocking

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou far from My salvation, from the words of my groaning? My God, I cry by day, and thou answerest not; and by night, and there is no rest for Me: and Thou art holy, Thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel'

Psalms 22:1-3 In Psalms 22:1-31, we have one of the many Old Testament prophecies which refer directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. This one, however, is distinguished from the rest because it foretells facts concerning His unique and unfathomable sufferings which are not to be found in other predictions. Here we have them in all their simple, solemn, and pathetic sweetness from the lips of the Holy Sufferer Himself.

Three Outstanding messianic Psalms

Many Psalms give glimpses of Jehovah's Anointed One Who was to come, but three of them are conspicuous among the rest by the vivid details of His sufferings which they make known beforehand. Besides Psalms 22:1-31, there are Psalms 69:1-36 and Psalms 102:1-28. All three foretell in words of song the amazing pathway of the Hope of Israel laughed to scorn by all who saw Him and the Saviour of men without a place to lay His head. Each of the three Psalms presents its own particular phase of the sufferings of Christ followed by its appropriate sequel, but the one which touches our affection and devotion most deeply is Psalms 22:1-31. The theme of Psalms 69:1-36 is the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ as He unflinchingly bore the reproach of Jehovah in the face of those who hated Him without a cause. High and low were His enemies. Those that sat in the gate spoke against Him, and He was the song of the drunkards. 'Save me, O God' He cried,' for the waters are come into My soul.' Jehovah heard and answered, as the latter part of the Psalm shews. God will bring righteous and overwhelming retribution upon the ungodly generation that rejected and crucified their Messiah. The sufferings caused by the enmity of man are followed by the righteous judgement of those who caused those sufferings.

Psalms 22:1-31 is differently framed, and its theme is unique. here, though the sufferings depicted are far deeper and more poignant, the result for man is not judicial but merciful. Not a word is uttered about wrath and judgement for man. Indeed, one might almost call Psalms 22:1-31 the nearest approach in the Old Testament to the revelation of the super-abounding grace of God in the New. Instead of thunderbolts of wrath from God falling upon those who maltreated the Messiah, the Psalm ends with praise arising to God from all mankind. The sufferings of Christ will yield what the whole world has never yet rendered to God-united and universal praise. Now, there is praise from a few here and a few there; but the Psalm views a time when all the world will be rejoicing in God and giving Him what is due to His name, giving Him, in fact, what man's tongue was designed to render-intelligent and heartfelt praise. And 'in that day' all the 'kindreds of the nations' will worship before Jehovah of Israel in consequence of the sufferings of Christ which are set forth in the prophetic monologue of this Psalm.

Psalms 102:1-28 so celebrates the sufferings of Christ. There Messiah is presented in His humiliation among and by men and in His invariable attitude of meek and lowly submission to whatever was the will of God. The Psalm is called 'the prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed'. In His infinite greatness, Christ 'emptied Himself', and obediently took the poor man's place in a world of self-sufficiency and self-exaltation. he was forsaken of men, and left to mourn 'as a sparrow alone upon the housetop'. In His distress, Messiah cried, 'O My God,' desiring that He might not be taken away in the midst of His days. Thereupon Jehovah vindicates His suffering and outcast Son (Psalms 102:24-27). Though the days of His humiliation might be shortened, was He not the Creator of the earth and the heavens? All creation perishes, but Messiah abides unchanged continually, the Same 'yesterday and today and for ever'. Thus, the prayer of the afflicted One is answered by a divine witness to the intrinsic glory of His person; and the passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 as a crowning testimony to the glory of the eternal Son, by Whom God spoke to men in new Testament days.

Sufferings and Praises In Psalms 22:1-31, however, the sufferings of Christ are from God. Forsaking by God is expressed in its opening stanzas, and affords the key to the whole Psalm. The ferocity of men appears as in other Psalms, but the abandonment of the Messiah of Israel by the Holy One of Israel is, as it must necessarily be, the predominating features of the prophecy. Moreover, it is the holy Sufferer Himself Who confesses that he is forsaken by His God. He Who endured it describes it. He is, indeed, the Speaker throughout this Psalm. And as He records His own sufferings, so He declares the praises to God that follow as their effect. We learn that propitiation or atonement being accomplished, the earth, in due course, will become full of praises to God. you will recollect how beautifully this combination of propitiation and praise is portrayed in Leviticus 16:1-34 by the blood and incense. There the great work of Christ's atonement is foreshewn in type. The blood of both the bullock and the goat is taken from the court of the tabernacle into the most holy place and sprinkled there upon and before the mercy-seat. Aaron enters that most holy place where Jehovah's presence rests enthroned upon the mercy-seat with blood and incense. The sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice in the required manner is accompanied by the fragrant fumes rising from the burning incense and affording a sweet odour to Him Who sits between the cherubim. Thus the type illustrates how the incense of praise is intimately associated with the propitiation Christ made in respect of our sins. His atoning work is the abiding basis for the believer's worship now, and for the homage of all men in the millennial day and kingdom. As we were reminded this afternoon, the Father 'seeketh' worshippers; and if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been constituted worshippers on the basis of the propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus, and the Father seeks that we worship Him as we are thereby entitled to do. What then can we offer to God the Father that will be acceptable? Shall we bring any material offering in our hands? Shall we bring anything in our hearts springing from our own natural affections and efforts? You surely know that we can find nothing in ourselves worthy of His acceptance. Where then as worshippers shall we find what is sure to be acceptable to God the father? everything that concerns the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is well-pleasing to the Father. And if one subject concerning Him is more acceptable than another, it is that which relates to His sufferings and death, whereby 'God was glorified in Him'. As worshippers, therefore, we need to have in our hearts a clear sense of the vast work of atonement accomplished upon the cross when He, the blessed Son of God, Who knew no sin, was 'made sin for us' by God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Scripture often refers to Christ's atonement in easy words that even an infant may recite, but how profound and unfathomable is their full significance! They are, however, for us to meditate upon continually, allowing the Holy Spirit to develop and enlarge their meaning and implication before our eyes so that our hearts may break forth in worthier songs of praise as we remember that the holy, perfect, sinless Son of God was upon the cross 'made sin for us' by God. We cannot fully understand the profound doctrine, nor need we do so in order to worship God. But when we are before God in 'the holiest of all' and recall that the death of Christ is the most notable occurrence in the world's history and that something was done there and then of immeasurable value and requiring no repetition, then songs of irrepressible praise will swell within us. the incense of acceptable praise will ascend to the eternal throne. The Sufferer and His God

Let us bear clearly in mind that in this Psalm we hear the words of Christ Himself addressed to God. Most of us are familiar with the bitter cry which forms the forefront of the Psalm and provides the keynote to its pervading theme. We read, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Here the pathetic words occur prophetically. In the Gospels they are found historically. Matthew and Mark record that the Lord uttered them upon the cross. In the depths of His anguish, the Lord used the words, having the fullest sense of their profound significance and also the knowledge that the prophecies of Psalms 22:1-31 were being fulfilled in Himself. At the due moment He had appeared in the world for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In this work the Blessed One stood alone-the God-forsaken One. This awful experience He Himself proclaimed aloud that whosoever would might hear-'Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?' As so often, those who heard did not understand His speech. Thy said, 'Let be, let us see whether elias will come to save Him.' That this crucified One should thus address God in heaven was beyond their comprehension. The fact is that therein lies the central truth of the propitiation which Christ made for our sins and for the whole world. This occasion is, I believe, the first time that we read in the Gospels of our Lord using the words, 'My God', when addressing Him. The Son was constantly in communion with the Father, hearing His word and doing His commandments. In converse with His Father, we read of Him answering and saying, 'I praise Thee, father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in Thy sight' (Matthew 11:25-26). This communion of the Son with the father was unbroken, not only during His public ministry when He was preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the sick, and doing His multitudinous deeds of mercy among men, but also, as you will remember, during that solemn midnight hour in Gethsemane. There the Lord was alone, apart from His disciples, prostrate upon the ground, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Yet in this agony of anticipation, the Blessed One was not altogether alone. As He said to His disciples earlier that night, Ye 'shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me' (John 16:32). Throughout His 'strong crying and tears', communion with the Father was unbroken. 'Abba, Father', He cried. 'O My father, if it be possible...' 'O My father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done'. Knowing fully what the Father's will had decreed for the morrow, the obedient Son acquiesced in Gethsemane as He had always done. 'The cup which My Father has given me, shall I not drink it?' But here the Lord is speaking from the cross. It is now not 'My Father' as in the garden, but 'My God'. The question of sin has arisen, and God, Who is Judge of all, is the appropriate name of address. God is the righteous governor of the world. His nature is opposed to sin, and His essence demands the punishment of sin. There can be no communion between

holiness and unholiness, between light and darkness. And there, Him Who knew no sin God had made sin for us. In the consciousness of sin-bearing, and of being 'made a curse for us,' He exclaimed, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' So our Lord in the midst of His suffering for sin confessed Himself forsaken by His God, but still addressed Him as 'My God'. This relationship of Jesus subsisted from His earliest infancy. In this very Psalm, He declares, 'Thou art My God from My mother's belly' (Psalms 22:10). From the manger in Bethlehem right onwards He the perfect and blessed Man, recognised God as the One Whom He obeyed and on Whom He depended. But here it was a time of noontide darkness, and there was an immeasurable difference. His God in Whom He trusted God forsaken Him! and Why?

Christ had come into the world to take the place of the unholy and unrighteous under the judgment of the righteous and Holy God. He Himself was the Holy One. 'That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,' the angel said to Mary (Luke 1:35). the very demons in Capernaum said to Him, 'I know Thee Who Thou art: the Holy One of God.' And what charge did Peter lay against the Jews after Pentecost? 'Ye denied the Holy One.' And when the apostle referred to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:27), quoting from Psalms 16:10, He said, 'Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.' But here Christ, the Holy One, acknowledges His God as the Holy One: 'O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not...but Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' What is the explanation? The Holy One was the sin-bearer. The Just One stood in the place of the unjust. 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.' Oh, deepest of all deepest depths! Oh, profoundest of all unravelled mysteries that this should be! the human heart stands still in silent awe before the impenetrable veil for ever screening from mortal gaze the Saviour in that dread hour. One only was there in the darkness and in the shadow of death. he alone can speak of it. He has spoken. His words are before us. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?'

We cannot understand this cry of anguish wrung from the heart of Christ, nor fathom its import. Apart from its interpretation, however, we possess the truth and blessedness of the fact through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Our faith lays hold of this poignant utterance of the suffering Christ. It tells us of the price paid for our redemption. It measures for us the value of the sacrifice made upon the cross for our sins and for the glory of God in respect of them. The Holy Christ was forsaken by the Holy God!

Hence, the more we meditate upon this great cry in the presence of the Lord from Whose lips it came, the more we learn of His atoning work. Then He was standing where He had never stood before-beneath the weight of our guilt and of God's wrath against it. During His life of ministry, He was not bearing our sins, as some wrongly imagine. It was upon the tree that He bore our sins in His own body, as Peter tells us. There He suffered for us, for our forgiveness, for our redemption, that we might be brought to God, that the blessings of God in all their fullness might flow unhinderedly into our souls. But there is another aspect of the work of atonement that we must never forget. Because of man's sin God's glory was at stake. God's eternal attribute of justice was in question. Was God the Holy One Who abhorred sin? or was He One Who would favour sin and overlook its due penalty? the Lord Jesus supplies the answer in His Person, and upon the cross He upheld the immutable holiness of God. There he declared in the ears of the universe, 'Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,' witnessing to that holiness by the confession of His own abandonment. The Holy Sufferer had been made sin and was deserted, left alone

because of it. In His agony Christ called aloud to His God. 'My God, My God,' He said. The repetition means much-deep emotion, pressing need. When Abraham stood at the altar on which Isaac lay bound, holding aloft the knife to slay his only son, the angel of Jehovah called, Abraham, Abraham. Twice the father's name called from heaven. There was urgent need for the patriarch to hearken. Not a moment must be lost. More urgent still was the cry of the blessed Lord. He was in the depths of His anguish, submerged beneath the waves of divine wrath against sin; and the cry rang out in the desolate waste, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

These are the words of the beloved Son of God, the Only-begotten of the Father, God manifest in flesh. Let us ponder over them and brood upon them, again and again. Let them penetrate our inmost souls. To do so purifies the spirit and enlightens the heart. We behold fresh visions of the grandeur of God's grace, and we glory more and more in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see more and more of the light and love of God in Him Who stood alone in that dread place of darkness and curse. And we adore more fervently Him Who loved and endured to the end, never even when abandoned by him losing touch with his God, calling Him 'MY God' in the confidence that He would be heard for His piety (Hebrews 5:7).

We learn from the Gospels of seven utterances made by our Lord during His crucifixion. Three of them were spoken during the earlier hours, and four during the later period. the only one of the seven found in more than one Gospel is the cry of Christ's abandonment by His God, recorded by both Matthew and Mark. It is evident from this double testimony of the Holy Spirit that this cry demands our reverent attention and prayerful meditation, especially.

First, the Lord, when they bound Him to the tree of cursing, prayed, 'Father, (He did not say 'My God'), forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 22:34). Again, while the sun still shone brightly in the heavens, Jesus saw Mary His mother and the beloved disciple. he said to her, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and to him, 'Behold thy mother' (John 19:26-27). His sympathies were not dulled by His sorrows and His sufferings. Further we can hear His gracious and assured promise to the believing robber sharing the horrors of crucifixion at His side, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise' (Luke 23:43). though poorer than the poorest of the poor, the Lord could still give. Cast out of His inheritance, stripped even of His garments, He seemed to possess nothing, yet He bestows upon this converted criminal the right of entrance to paradise itself. What joy there was in heaven over the one sinner who had repented! But then the noonday sun was super-naturally eclipsed. There was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour. The Holy Sufferer was hidden from the eyes of men. He was closeted with God; and in the 'night season' He was not silent. But out of the prevailing darkness came the cry, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' John also records (John 19:28-30) two other utterances, 'I thirst' and 'It is finished,' both spoken with the assuredness of omniscience. What had to be done had then been accomplished.

What then had been finished? What had been done? Who can describe it? Who can measure it? Was it not that stupendous work of propitiation which in respect of all His attributes satisfied God as to sin, enabling Him to be just and the justifier of the unjust who believe in Jesus? The Lord knew what He had accomplished. He knew what He had endured, and that in His suffering He was forsaken of God.

Moreover, the Son of God knew that the appointed offering for sin had been made and that the sacrifice was acceptable. He knew that the darkness had passed, and that He had emerged into the sunshine of God and the Father's delight and complacency. We have next the seventh utterance, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit' (Luke 23:46). And He passed into paradise, there to welcome the penitent robber who had believed on Him and for whose sins He had made Propitiation to God.

Propitiation and Praise In the third verse, Messiah provides the answer to His own inquiry, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?' The answer is, 'Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. 'the holiness of Jehovah required the judgment of sin before either His people or the praises of His people could be acceptable to Him. Propitiation for sins is the foundation of worship and praise, because the place where Jehovah dwells is holy.

Now the children of Israel were a people separated from all other nations of the earth of offer praises to Jehovah continually. The tabernacle was built in the wilderness and the temple on Mount Zion that He might dwell among them and receive their tribute to His name. Jehovah appointed that daily, morning and evening, the priests should burn 'the most holy incense' to Him in the holy place. Incense is a figure of the sweet-smelling praise that God seeks from the lips of man.

Israel was elected in order that in their daily service of praise they might illustrate what Jehovah required from all men. He brought them out of the house of bondage, showing them His mercy when the destroying angel passed by their dwellings, and His redemption when their enemies were drowned in the Red Sea. Immediately, the song of praise ascended to Jehovah from His redeemed people. Moses and the children of Israel celebrated His victory, ascribing their deliverance to the strength of His right arm (Exodus 15:1-27).

Moreover, in this national praise-song, Israel looked forward to the mountain of Jehovah's inheritance, His dwelling-place, the sanctuary established by His own hands in the land of promise. Then 'they believed His words; they sang His praise.' But soon they forgot Jehovah's mighty works, disobeyed His commandments, and worshipped the idols of the heathen that knew not God. They forsook the Holy One of Israel, and neglected their daily offering of praises before His dwelling-place. Israel sinned grievously, and provoked the righteous wrath of their God, the One Who inhabits the praises of Israel. To this great sin by that favoured nation especially the Holy Sufferer seems to make allusion in Psalms 22:3. Because of their sins, not His own, He was forsaken, and His cries were unheard. Jesus was standing in the breach. He had given Himself a sacrifice for sins. He was making propitiation for sin. By His suffering, He would bring holiness where there was now unholiness, righteousness where there was unrighteousness, and praise where there was now but 'cursing and bitterness.' By His atoning work, the Lord Jesus would satisfy every claim the Holy One inhabiting the praises of Israel made in respect of the sins of men; but in the meantime that Holy One was irresponsive to His cry. The close connection between propitiation and praise is plainly marked in the construction of the Psalm. The former part, to the middle of verse 21, depicts Christ upon the cross, while the rest of the Psalm foretells the results of Christ's atonement in imbuing Israel and all the nations to the ends of the earth with the spirit of praise to Jehovah. The fathers Delivered, but Christ Abandoned In Psalms 22:4 the Spirit of Christ still speaks. The Lord upon the cross contrasts Himself with pious men of olden days.

’Our fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others) trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.’ Was it not, therefore, contrary to God’s past dealings that the Lord Jesus should be forsaken by God in His sufferings, and His cries for deliverance disregarded? Abraham was not perfect in his piety, yet his prayers were heard. Job was noted for his patience in suffering, but showed much impatience with his ’friends,’ and confessed to Jehovah, ’Behold, I am vile.’ Job, too, was heard and delivered. But when the Messiah in His agony cried out to God, there was silence in the heavens. No arm of Jehovah was outstretched to save Him in that hour. What the will of God had given Him to do, He must do by Himself, enduring all alone, unaided. And in His soul was the bitter sense that in His extremity, God was not helping Him as He had helped the fathers in Israel. Why was this change? Because He, Son of man, Who knew no sin, had been ’made sin’ to make expiation for sin. Then and then only, for this and for this only, did God forsake His obedient Servant that the glory of ’the death of the cross’ might shine undimmed throughout the ages of eternity. But the patience and lowliness of our Lord comes into view in that dark hour. As the forsaken One, He says, ’But I am a worm and no man.’ He accepts a place of nothingness among the sons of men. He obliterates self entirely. Now as always, ’Christ pleased not Himself.’ As a ’worm and no man,’ He surrendered every claim upon divine deliverance. This is the crowning evidence of that Blessed One’s perfect humility and self-abnegation. The worm is the symbol of utter weakness, and the Lord Who was ’crucified in weakness’ applied the figure to Himself to justify the seeming neglect of His God. On the cross, the Lord is not oblivious to the thoughts and words of the bystanders. They add to His sorrows and sufferings. He is reproached and despised of the people. They taunt Him because no deliverance comes to Him from God in Whom it was well known that He trusted. But, unperceived by onlookers, Christ in the midst of His crucifixion maintains unbroken confidence in His God (Psalms 22:9-11). As in Bethlehem and Nazareth, in Capernaum and Chorazin, in Bethany and Jerusalem, so at Calvary, Jesus was ’ the leader and completer of faith’ (Hebrews 12:2). Despising the shame of the cross, He abode steadfastly in the will of God according to His own word, ’Not My will, But Thine be done.’ Man mocked, Christ suffered, God was glorified. At the commencement of His ministry when our Lord was tempted of Satan, He was in the wilderness with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13). When upon the cross, He sees men around Him behaving towards Him like the cruel and shameless beasts that perish. He is beset by ’strong bulls of Bashan’ and by the ’ravening and roaring lion.’ Unclean and destructive ’dogs’ have compassed Him about. Nailed to the tree in the midst of them, He is helpless. He is poured out like water. His strength is dried up like a potsherd. All His bones are out of joint.

Such is the confessed weakness of Christ crucified as the assembly of evil-doers surround Him and work their wicked will on Him Whose hands and feet they have pierced. They strip Him of His raiment and gamble for His vesture. they gloat upon His nakedness as a sight for their wicked hearts to enjoy amid the solemnities of the paschal feast! In these verses (Psalms 22:12-18), Christ by the prophetic Spirit is describing His sufferings from man as they were multiplied and concentrated at the cross. But throughout, Messiah expresses His unwavering dependence on Jehovah. He says, ’Thou art My God... Thou art He that took me out of the womb... Thou art My God... Be not far from Me’ (Psalms 22:9-11). Thus the Christ spreads out before His God the story of His sorrow and suffering form man led on by the prince of this world. All that the power of darkness brought Him in that hour He received as the will of God for Him. As the self-emptied Son of God, He was obedient even down to the death of the cross. And in this lowest depth of

humiliation to which He had come, He owns the supreme purpose of God that brought Him there: 'Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death' (Psalms 22:15). The Cry of Conquest, 'It is Finished' But the end comes. The intensity of prayer is replaced by the fervency of praise. The Lord pleads with Jehovah: 'O My strength, haste Thee to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling (only one) from the power of the dog; save Me from the lion's mouth' (Psalms 22:19-21). Then in the middle of Psalms 22:21, the Speaker suddenly changes His tone. Hitherto in the Psalm, unanswered supplication has been His theme. Now, the answer has been given; the reply is received. 'Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes (unicorns) hast Thou answered Me.' No statement is made in the Psalm concerning the immeasurable significance of the change from asking to receiving by the One Who at the outset confessed Himself forsaken of God. It is left to us to ponder upon the fact that the same Voice that said to God, 'Save me from the lion's mouth,' adds afterwards, 'Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.' The One Who previously said, 'O My God, I cry ... but Thou hearest not' (Psalms 22:2) now declares to Him, 'Thou hast heard Me.' With strong crying and tears, with prayers and supplications, He had called upon God in His suffering upon the cross as the sin-bearer. then the moment came when He knew that His work of propitiation for sins had been accomplished, and that because of His piety He had been heard by Him who was able to save Him out of death (Hebrews 5:7). His piety or holy fear had been tried to the uttermost; and in the very bottomless depths of suffering when abandoned by God on behalf of guilty man His unfaltering obedience shone untarnished and undiminished, approved of God though derided by man now deliverance had come even when He was transfixed 'by the horns of the unicorns' and under 'the power of the dog.' The throne of righteousness in heaven and the cross of Calvary on earth were united when Christ Jesus had offered His one sacrifice for sins. His atoning blood was upon the golden mercy-seat beneath the cherubim of glory. His eternally efficacious work of expiation for sin was completed 'in the body of His flesh' upon the cross. this fact, the Lord Himself in His omniscience announced to men, to angels, to demons. 'When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and having bowed His head, He delivered up His spirit' (John 19:30). The apostle John thus records the Son of God's verbal testimony to the conclusion of His own work. It was but one word as originally uttered upon the cross, but if fell from the lips of omniscient omnipotence, and will reverberate to the ends of the universe throughout the ages of the ages.

After hearing the Lord's own pronouncement upon the work He had by Himself undertaken in respect of sin that God might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus, can we entertain the notion that nevertheless something more remained to be done to establish fully the glory of God? Is it possible that when Christ gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God, and said, It is finished, there still remained something more to be done in order to make propitiation for sins? Unless supported by plain scripture, such a suggestion by its implications discredits Christ Himself and impoverishes both His word and His work.

Opening the gates of Praise The Forsaken One having been heard from the horns of the unicorns, propitiation having been made, the service of praise at once begins. The fragrant odours of the most holy incense mingle with eyes uplifted to heaven, the captain of salvation, now made 'perfect through sufferings,' says, 'I will declare Thy name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee' (ver. 22). Here is the prophetic promise of the results of an accomplished atonement. The name of God as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit should be thereupon

unfolded, and Christ Himself would be the Leader of worthy praise to God in the midst of His assembled worshippers.

Historically, it was in this strain that out Lord spoke of His God to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection. He said, 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God' (John 20:17), a declaration not made nor true before. But now atonement for sin had been made, the righteousness of God in respect of His grace had been established, and it was consistent with the glory of God that a new relationship of believers should be announced. Accordingly through the work finished upon the cross, our Lord associated His feeble and failing disciples with Himself as His brethren. Now they were entitled, not merely because they had been born afresh by water and by the Spirit, but because of Christ's offered and accepted sacrifice for sins, to stand before God as sons in an acceptance like that of Christ Himself-'My Father and your Father.' The Lord connects His own with Himself as His brethren. As He had said, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (John 12:24). 'My God' was the cry of the Lord when alone and forsaken, when bearing our sins in His body; none could then share that cry. But now He says to His brethren 'My God and your God.' This new link was the first-fruits of Christ's atoning sufferings and death. But the harvest follows the first-fruits. Throughout the remaining stanzas of this psalm, the unfolding of ever widening circles of praise to Jehovah continues. All the seed of Jacob and of Israel shall glorify and fear Him. All the ends of the earth and the families of the nations shall remember, shall turn unto Him, and shall worship before Him. And in the concluding verse, we read, 'They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this.' The final phrase, 'that He hath done this (it)' is suggestive. The words are general, and some might ask, Who has done it? and What has He done? But to every spiritual mind the reference is obvious. It is the unrivalled act of making propitiation performed by Christ on the cross, where He was set forth as a mercy-seat to declare the righteousness of God in respect of sins (Romans 3:23-26).

Christ Himself in His utterance, 'it is finished,' was the first witness to His own completed work. His followers, led by the Spirit of God, have continued that testimony on earth throughout succeeding generations. Expiation for sins is the foundation of all praise, worship, and service. And heaven and earth shall yet unite in ascribing all worthiness to the Lamb that was slain. Every heart and voice of the redeemed shall joyfully confess to the glory of God that 'He hath done this.'

Let this psalm, beloved friends speak continually to us of 'the affliction of the afflicted' One (Romans 3:24); and may it awaken our songs of praise, imparting to them a holy savour befitting the sanctuary of God and the presence of Christ. His sufferings and sacrificial death form the everlasting basis of acceptable worship. The Father seeks worship in spirit and truth. Who can render this save those who know Christ Jesus and who rest in faith upon His finished work! May we have the happy experience that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of His assembly as the Leader and Theme of its praises as often as we remember that 'He hath done this' and indeed whenever we gather unto His name.

W. J. Hocking

S. The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl.

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl.

Matthew 13:1-58.

1894 85 The fact that the series of parables in Matthew 13:1-58 : consists of seven in number is sufficiently obvious to arrest the attention of a very ordinary reader of the chapter. But it is further to be noted that Mark is commissioned to record an additional parable (that of the secret growth of the seed, Mark 4:26-29), spoken, (it should seem) on the same occasion but omitted by Matthew, while on the other hand, Mark does not give more than two out of the seven in the first evangelist, but adds that "with many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it" (Mark 5:33). This consideration justifies the thought, if indeed justification of such a thought be in any wise necessary, that the seven parables before us were selected by the Holy Ghost, and so arranged for some specific purpose.

Without illustrating by examples the remarkable prevalence of the number "seven" throughout the Holy Scriptures, it may be helpful to refer to a well-known series in the Old Testament and another in the New.

Under the law, the Israelites were commanded to observe seven feasts in the first seven months of the sacred year (Leviticus 23:1-44 :). Each of these was typical of succeeding events in the national history. The feast of the passover has a reference to the sacrifice of Christ as 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 conclusively proves. This was immediately followed by that of unleavened bread, typifying the holy state which is the sure result of the shed blood of God’s Lamb, true to faith now and universally in a future day. The sheaf of firstfruits undoubtedly points to the resurrection of Christ on the third day; even as the feast of wave loaves, baken with leaven, shadowed forth the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was outpoured from on high and the church was formed. This feast was in Sivan or the third month, and the fifth feast was not arranged till the seventh month. After this considerable interval the feast of trumpets came at the new moon, with its prophetic reference to that still future and effective summons God shall make to His ancient people. This was quickly succeeded by the day of atonement, in which they were to afflict their souls. It will be duly fulfilled when Israel is restored and shares the results of Christ’s death for them. Then shall ensue the millennial joy of which the final feast, that of tabernacles, was the appointed type. This rapid sketch will suffice to show that the series of feasts of Jehovah was meant to outline a complete cycle of events in the history of God’s people, part of which even now awaits fulfilment.

Somewhat analogous are the addresses to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2:1-29 :, Revelation 3:1-22 :). They present successive phases in the history of the professing church from the decline of heart at Ephesus, through stages of indifference to and abandonment of the truth, on to the lifeless profession at Laodicea. These epistles therefore span the period from the apostolic days until the removal of the true and the destruction of the false church. By these

instances the way is prepared to see in the seven parables of Matthew 13:1-58 : a representation of the rise, progress, and end of the kingdom. But while this is true, it must be remembered that the Lord delineates the kingdom in that peculiar form which it assumes in consequence of the rejection of Himself the King and during the time of His absence. And this fact is very clearly and definitely conveyed in the former chapters of the Gospel. There it is very carefully shown that Jesus of Nazareth was undoubtedly Israel's Messiah, perfectly fulfilling what God had spoken beforehand by the mouth of His holy prophets. It is likewise shown with equal distinctness that, though He was undoubtedly the Saviour Who was to come, and though He wrought many mighty works in proof of the same, the nation refused to own their King; so that the kingdom could not then be manifested in the glory of which the prophets had spoken. The implacable spirit of rejection was displayed by the Pharisees in a most unmistakable way when they ascribed the miraculous power He exhibited to a Satanic origin (Matthew 9:34; Matthew 12:24). No manner of sin or blasphemy could exceed this. It struck not only at the Son of man but against the Holy Ghost by Whom He was ever energized. It could not be passed over (Matthew 12:31). Accordingly in the succeeding chapter we find that the Lord commenced to teach by means of parables the new form that the kingdom would assume in consequence of this irreconcilable opposition of the Jews. The parables of Matthew 13:1-58 : are divisible into two groups, into one of which the first four fall as having been spoken to the multitudes, in contra-distinction to the last three which were spoken privately to the disciples in the house. In the former group the manward aspects of the kingdom are portrayed: and in the latter those divine characteristics discernible alone to faith. In the introductory parable of the sower and the soils, the Lord shows that all depended on the manner of the reception of the word of the kingdom. The sons of the kingdom would be not the natural seed of Abraham, but those who heard the word and understood it (ver. 23). In the other three parables of this group (the wheat and the tares, the mustard tree becoming a great tree, and the leavened meal) the Master unfolds the strange fact that, so far from evil being rooted out of the kingdom by the exercise of inflexible righteousness, it will spring up side by side with good, and eventually so permeate the kingdom as to impart its character to the whole. The fulfilment of this prophecy, after the Lord went away, may be gathered from the inspired history of apostolic times, and may be observed in the condition of things surrounding us at the present moment. An absolutely pure christian association is unknown. Evil men and evil principles creep in unawares, so that the Lord's servants are unable to distinguish between the wheat and the tares, and both are growing together until harvest. The poor and despised assembly of God left its first estate and became a prominent worldly power in the earth, thus affording a shelter for the very emissaries of evil that in its early stage were its sworn foes. And not only does this debased state of Christendom arise from an unholy alliance with worldly power, but evil originates from within, going on to leaven the whole lump. So the apostle warned the Ephesian elders, both of the grievous wolves that should enter in, not sparing the flock and also of men that should arise from themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30). Deterioration would originate from interior as well as exterior causes. This then would be the outward aspect of the kingdom as existing upon the earth, subsequent to the Lord's departure and prior to His return when His angels will gather out of His kingdom "all things that do offend and them which do iniquity" (Matthew 13:41). Herein it afforded a direct contrast to the prophetic descriptions of the Old Testament. They describe a state of righteousness and peace when the Lord Jesus sits upon the throne of David. Then evil will be subdued; and "truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven"

(Psalms 85:11). But until then, as these parables show, evil is seen in closest association with good, even in that which hears the Lord’s name.

However, in the succeeding parables spoken to the disciples only, that aspect of the kingdom is given which can be apprehended by faith alone. The natural eye would never discern the truth foreshadowed in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. What appears among men as an indiscriminate and heterogeneous mass is here shown to contain what is valuable and beautiful. At these two parables it is proposed to look more closely (D. V.), on a future occasion. In the last picture the final separation is presented as it affects the good rather than the evil.

1894 101 It has already been intimated that, in the two parables or similitudes given in Matthew 13:44-46, the intrinsic worth and spiritual beauty to be found in the kingdom of heaven are shown as existing, in spite of the intermixture of evil which is apparent to the cursory glance. The wheat mingled with darnel, the wide-spreading, umbrageous tree, the meal permeated with leaven were discernible to all, and must plainly set forth the general outward appearance. But the hidden treasure and the rare and costly pearl imply qualities that could only be appreciated by the finder. And so in the great mass of christian profession, the eyes of the world are able to very readily detect the iniquity that shelters itself under the guise of religion; but only the Eye of omniscient grace is able to mark the internal Worth and the indestructible unity existing beneath such an unpromising exterior. The former of the two parables likens the kingdom of heaven to "treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew 13:44). The two prominent features in this parable are, first, the treasure hidden in the field; and second, the purchase of the field for the sake of the treasure. In the first place then, what is signified by the figure of the hidden treasure? Some have hastily assumed from Proverbs 2:4 ("if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God") that the treasure is Christ; and that the parable has a figurative reference to the manner in which the blessings of the gospel are acquired. Without doubt, in Proverbs, the point is to inculcate a spirit of earnestness in pursuit of wisdom. As in seeking for silver and treasure, the energies are by that very fact stimulated, so it should be in the spiritual analogue. But in Matthew 13:1-58 : we have a similar figure used for a different purpose. Here it is not the diligence of the searcher, so much as the value of the treasure sought that is most prominent. Besides it is not the king but the kingdom that is likened to treasure hidden in a field.

If the general trend of the series of parables be borne in mind, the meaning of the figure before us appears on the surface. In the enunciation to the crowds of the similitudes of the outward form of the kingdom in mystery, the Lord used figures that spoke of good being largely alloyed with evil. Subsequently, to his own disciples, He gave the interpretation of the wheat and the tares which in general intention resembled the leavened meal and the wide-branched mustard tree. The Lord then likens the kingdom to hidden treasure, using a similitude that suggested a pure, unmixed character and not an amalgam as before. In point of fact, the terms in which this parable is expressed forbid us to think of anything but a view of the kingdom of heaven contrasted with those that precede. In the latter, elements (such as the tares, the leaven, the birds) are introduced which tend to diminish the value it possessed in its incipient stage: but here there is nothing of the kind, its value is given without a single mark of qualification. The first consideration of this truth leads to

the reflection that God's ways of sovereign grace must be marvellous indeed when He finds, in spite of man's irreparable sinfulness and his invariable abuse of everything entrusted to him, that which from His own point of view He represents by treasure. For whatever may be the slowness of man's heart to believe all that is written, the truth abides, here and in not a few other scriptures, that God in and by means of Christ has found His good pleasure in men. But though undoubtedly the New Testament gives us this blessed revelation in its fullest application, a similar expression is used in the Old Testament concerning God's chosen nation. From Mount Sinai, the word of Jehovah came unto the children of Israel: — "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians; and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples" (Exodus 19:4-5). On account however of the transgressions of the people under the first covenant, this purpose of God was never realised. Not that it was thereby abrogated, for it still holds good that Jehovah "hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Psalms 135:4). And in the millennial day this shall be owned by every nation, from the rising to the setting of the sun. For then Jehovah will save Israel, He will rejoice over her with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing (Zephaniah 3:17). But in the present interval, while Israel is in strange lands, the Lord finds in the midst of His nominal kingdom where evil lifts its head in unrebuked defiance of good, that which His own heart esteems a special treasure. This treasure is not the favoured nation of Palestine, which, as has been shown does not come within the scope of this series of parables, but it is the N.T. saints in that ideal character which they possess in the mind and eternal purpose of God.

Now in the epistles of Paul, especially in that to the Ephesians, we have this character presented in the form of doctrine. In Matthew the time had not come to give more than a figurative reference to what the great apostle of the Gentiles was subsequently commissioned to communicate in detail. In his writings therefore, we learn that the church is destined and designed to be the vehicle for the display of divine grace and wisdom.

Thus in Ephesians, we are not only introduced to the inexpressible fulness of our blessing in Christ, but also to the inconceivable fact that by means of us His holy name will be magnified and exalted. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:5-6), and again, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:11-12). Here then (it is submitted with all due deference to the judgment of others) we see that character of the church in which it corresponds with the figure of "treasure" in Matthew 13:44. Treasure is such because of the use that may be made of it. And the saints are of value simply because God has deigned to utilize them as the media whereby to display His manifold wisdom. So the scriptures declare the purpose of God to be that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). But this treasure is said to be "hidden in a field;" and the church, described in the Pauline epistles as a "mystery" (that is a secret, hitherto hidden but now made known), remarkably tallies with the figure. Compare Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 3:4-5; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26, Colossians 2:2-3. In this respect the church affords a contrast to the nation of Israel. For when the Israelites were called out of Egypt to be Jehovah's treasure

(Exodus 19:4-6), it was not said to be hid in a field. Because their deliverance from the oppressor and their introduction to Canaan was but the due accomplishment of promises made centuries previous to Abraham their forefather. But the calling and privileges of the church were never the subject of promise. From Genesis to Malachi no revelation from on high was given concerning the church of the heavenly calling. The mystery was hidden from the sons of men, hidden in God. The divine seeker alone was aware of its existence; He alone knew and appreciated its worth. Truly there is a day coming when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43). But Christ discerns beforehand and divests Himself of all to obtain the treasure, — a treasure whose value is the product of His own grace and which apart from Him is worthless and worse.

1894 118 The second striking feature in the similitude of the hidden treasure is that the field was purchased for the purpose of acquiring the treasure: "the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." In this particular, also, the analogy is in strict accordance with the doctrinal truth conveyed by inspiration to the apostolic churches, and through them to us and to all saints. For the Lord by means of His mighty work of redemption, purchased not believers only, but the world out of which they were taken. This is no matter of speculation but of revelation. Indeed the fact that in consequence of His death, the Lord bears a relation to all mankind and further to all creation, is repeated in scripture in various connections. He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). He has received power over all flesh as well as to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him (John 17:2). He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:6), as well as giving His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). He tasted death for every thing as well as for the many sons He is bringing to glory (Hebrews 2:9-10). He reconciles not only those who were sometime alienated in their minds by wicked works, but all things whether in heaven or in earth (Colossians 1:20-21). The saints of today are His purchase or peculium (Ephesians 1:14; 1 Peter 2:9); but also of false teachers it is said, "who privily bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord who bought them" (2 Peter 2:1).

There is therefore abundant witness that the Lord Jesus has obtained a right over the whole world including those who become heirs of salvation. So in the days of old it was under the title of the "Lord of all the earth" (Joshua 3:13), that Jehovah drove out the Canaanites and established His chosen people in the promised land. And in a coming day the Lord Jesus shall be manifested in the fulness of His acquired glory. Then shall He receive the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psalms 2:8). But this is not in the present day. For in John 17:9, the Son said to His Father, "I ask (eroto) for them (the treasure); I ask not for the world (the field) but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."

Along with this parabolic assertion of the universal Lordship of Christ, two attendant circumstances are given which call for remark: — (1) the joy of finding the treasure and anticipating its possession, and (2) the renunciation of all in order to acquire the treasure. The prophets had borne witness to the joy of Jehovah over His people Israel when they shall be restored. "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married...and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62: 45). Compare also Isaiah 65:19; Zephaniah 3:17. This however is during that blessed epoch, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"

(Isaiah 11:9). But the truth in the parable is that, even during the period when tares, and leaven and unclean birds defile the kingdom of heaven, the saints constitute such a treasure in the Lord's own estimation as to afford Dim abundant joy.

It is indeed marvellous and incomprehensible that grace should be delighted with objects such as we; nevertheless the fact remains. For Luke 15:1-32 : shows that even one repentant sinner causes joy in the presence of the angels of God. Who then shall conceive with what exceeding joy the whole company of redeemed saints shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory (Jude 1:24)?

Doubtless the supposition that it is impossible that Christ should find joy in the acquisition of His own, or that they should be of value to Him, has led to the popular interpretation of the actor of the parable being not Christ but the sinner. A well-known writer declares that to see Christ in the passage "strangely reverses the whole matter" and he characterises the view at its best to be no more than "ingenious." But to any who are bound by the scripture the phrase, "for joy thereof," should offer an insurmountable difficulty to making the interpretation of the parable descriptive of man's entrance into the kingdom. For it is to be observed that the word nowhere teaches that the sinner receives the gospel with joyfulness, whatever joy may and does follow in due course (Romans 5:2-3; Romans 5:11). In fact the same may be gathered from the parable of the sower in this very chapter. There we find that the one who received the word "with joy," was he who had no root in himself, and who, as soon as tribulation and persecution arose because of the word was immediately stumbled. And not a word is mentioned as to joy in connection with the "good ground" hearers. And no support can be obtained from Acts 2:41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized"; for scholars are agreed that the word "gladly" is an unwarranted interpolation. It is true the truth heals, but it does so because it first wounds. It leads to the Saviour which is joy indeed, but it previously convicts of sin which is never a pleasant process. The view in question therefore does not correspond with the plain statements of scripture. But passages have already been pointed out which show that the Lord finds joy in the redemption of His saints. In Hebrews 12:2, it says of Jesus, "Who for the joy set before him, endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God."

We may therefore conclude that it is Christ who "for joy thereof" sold all He had and bought the field. For the sinner is never told to sell all that he has to purchase the gospel which is without money and without price. And the reference to the word to the ruler — "Go and sell that thou hast" (Matthew 19:21), is of no avail whatever. For this was a test whether so rigid an observer of the law was able to take the path and position of a disciple of the rejected Messiah. He failed as all must, and thus really condemns the theory of those who rob the parable of its force. The allusion to Paul's renunciation of all things for Christ's sake, detailed in Php 3:4-9, is also without point; for this was the experience of one who knew Christ. It is quite a different thing, having found Christ to yield up all for His sake, from surrendering all things as the condition of finding Him. The latter exists in the imaginations of men but not in the gospel. But this leads to the second point: that the finder sells all that he has and buys the field. In what way was this fulfilled in Christ?

Surely in this that, though He came to the house of Israel as the promised seed of Abraham and of David to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, He renounced that earthly glory, which was and is His by oath and promise, in order that He might have the saints of the heavenly calling which

manifestly could not be, had the kingdom then been set up in power. Thus in Matthew 16:20, directly He speaks of the assembly which will be composed of those who confess His name in the hour of His rejection, He charges His disciples to tell no man He is Christ. He puts aside His Jewish title, comes before them as the Son of the living God He is however rejected and crucified (Matthew 16:16; John 19:7). But in resurrection He is offered to all, not to Jews alone; for the gospel delivers those who believe from all earthly distinctions and associates them with Christ on high. And this gees on even now, when the Lord waives His Jewish rights that He may gather His treasure out of the field.

1894 133 In considering these two parables, one can scarcely fail to be struck by their general resemblance. In both, the finder esteems his prize so highly that he is thereby constrained to part with all for the purpose of acquiring the same. This points to the conclusion that the main subjects of the parables are intimately connected, if not identical. So that as the treasure has already been shown to indicate that nucleus of truth and faithfulness existing in the midst of a heterogeneous mass of profession, so does the pearl of great price figure that same nucleus, though of course in a different aspect. For the two parables before us give a double view of the "good" in the kingdom of heaven, just as the third and fourth of the series give the two characters of "evil," viz., the mustard tree, showing the outward conformation to the world and its ways, and the leaven, marking the corruption that permeates to the very core. The difference between the parables of the treasure and the pearl seems to be that the first views the saints of God in their individual capacity as precious in the sight of the Lord, while the second discloses that remarkable unity which is a distinct characteristic of the children of God during the present interval. The term "treasure" might include gold, silver or any articles of value, and thus be of a very composite nature; but the beauty and value of the pearl depends entirely upon its homogeneity. So we find that in the latter parable the merchant is especially declared to have found "one pearl of great price."

It is of no small importance that the distinction thus laid down by these two parables at the very inception, so to speak, of the present order of divine things should be borne in mind. Dilating upon the privileges and responsibilities of the church to the obliteration of those of the individual is as far from the truth as exalting the individual at the expense of the church. To ignore, or even weaken either, must result in confusion of mind and failure of testimony. And it was undoubtedly seen needful to unfold this dual relationship of the saints of God, at this juncture, lest it might be supposed that, in their remarkable unification, their recognition as individuals was thereby destroyed. We have therefore the parable of the treasure preceding that of the pearl. The interest of Christ in His own is shown to be towards them personally before it is collectively. They are said to be His, first severally, and then jointly.

We have this order in the presentation of these truths in the Epistle to the Ephesians even as here. The apostle there writes to the saints and faithful, and unfolds God’s eternal purpose concerning them. He first enumerates the blessings they possess as individuals rather than as a corporate body. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). They were elected in Him before the foundation of the world (ver. 4). They were predestinated to the adoption of sons (Ephesians 1:5). They had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7). In Him they had obtained an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11). In Him also, after they had believed, they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13). These all are the sure portion of every soul saved in this day of grace, both at Ephesus and everywhere else, Gentile or Jew. The

blessings are common, as is the mighty power of God which quickens and raises them though previously dead in trespasses and sins. But more than this. It is then particularly dwelt upon that Jew and Gentile, so long and so widely separated, are now seen alike children of wrath, once alike dead in sins; yea, also quickened together, raised together, and even seated together in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-22 :) To faith it is now displayed in the very heavenlies that the ancient distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished. Indeed it could not be expected that any mere earthly privilege should hold good in the heavenlies, much less when all are viewed in Christ Jesus. Nothing could be a stronger affirmation of the establishment of an entirely new order of things than is here given. Far-off ones are made nigh in Christ Jesus. Both are made one by Him. He has made in Himself of twain one new* man. Both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. He preached peace to the distant and to the nigh. Through Him both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Thus the Gentiles who were strangers and foreigners share, not only the personal blessings ("fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God"), but also the corporate ("are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit"), Ephesians 2:1-22.

{* kainos — "new" in point of character, not of time only.}

Clearly this was a revelation not heard of not even hinted at before. Neither Old Testament history nor prophecy spoke of Jew and Gentile on one common platform. The mystery of Christ "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:5-6). Here again it is declared that the Gentiles, beside being "fellow-heirs" which might not exclude class distinctions, were of the "same body." So that the "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4) is of an altogether unique character, and neither known nor prophesied of before. In the millennium, Israel most certainly will not be merged in the other nations, nor on the other hand will the Gentiles be advanced to the same level as the Jew. In that day God’s ancient people shall be the "head" and not the "tail." The seed of Israel "shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Isaiah 54:3). The supremacy of the people shall be owned; for "many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with yes" (Zechariah 8:22-23). Again, "Many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off" (Micah 4:2-3). These scriptures are surely sufficiently explicit to decide that the pearl would be no suitable figure for the kingdom set up in power, when the Gentiles will be subordinate to the Jews, in no way brought into such an intimate unity with them as is described in the Epistle to the Ephesians as existing at the present moment. In the Epistles the figure to which this unity is referred is that of the human body. "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" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Compare also Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 1:18. This figure is beautifully adapted to illustrate the unity resulting from the co-ordination of the various component parts. The members however diverse in themselves are harmonized by the Spirit of God and brought into a state of mutually inter-dependent relationship, so that each member is essential to the perfect unity of the body and also to the due performance of its functions.* And herein lies the difference between the two figures — the "pearl" sets forth unity joined with beauty and value, while the "body" indicates unity along with activity and mutual co-operation. In the parable the church is viewed as in the Divine mind and purpose, but in the Epistles as in actual life and practice upon the earth; hence the variation in the emblem.

{*It may be added that the "body" also is used to express the intimate relation between the living Head and its members, as well as between the members themselves.} The beauty and consequent value of the pearl in question transcended that of all other pearls. Here we are brought in presence of the inconceivable fact that the Lord Jesus saw that in the assembly which called out the ineffable delight of His heart. It is not ours to question here whether that quality be inherent or derived, though we may well be certain we shall never discover in ourselves any adequate cause. It befits us rather to ponder, wonderingly and adoringly, the words of Holy Scripture, "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present to himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:24-27). He then is the Lover of the assembly in its entirety; He gives nothing short of Himself for it. His object is to present to Himself the church perfected and unblemished in glory. And He lays claim to it because of His sacrifice. When He came to Israel, He came to "His own." But He "gave Himself for us" (Titus 2:14). So that the Lord takes the church on the ground of His work on the cross, and not on that of promise or prophecy. In the expressive words of this parable, He "went and sold all that He had and bought it."

We have seen therefore that, in this comprehensive survey of the kingdom of heaven in its corrupted form, two parables are given to assure the hearts of the Lord’s people, that however extended may be the influence of evil principles and persons upon that which professes His name, they themselves are too much upon His heart, to allow His purpose regarding them to be thwarted. The Lord knows, loves, and rejoices over them that are His. W. J. Hocking.

Chapter 119

S. The Institution of the Lord's Supper as Recorded in the Gospels

The Institution of the Lord’s Supper as Recorded in the Gospels Notes of an address on Matthew 26:26-28 Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20.

W. J. Hocking.

It is a striking circumstance that in the New Testament we have very few ordinances of any sort prescribed for the believer. We have baptism, and we have the Lord’s Supper, but nothing besides. This absence of ritual is in great contrast with the religion of the Jews. Under the Mosaic Law, there were many sacrifices to be offered daily, and throughout each day, and these sacrifices were of many kinds. There was a gorgeous and ornate building in which men were to worship. There were priests specially delegated for the purpose of ministering in the holy things and in the holy place and in the various holy services. There were also the Levites with definite duties in the ’Temple precincts; there was in short a great host of rites and ceremonies to be performed. But when we come to the New Testament, we find that this order of things disappears, and that worship in spirit and in truth takes the place of worship by rote. The Lord’s Supper is mentioned definitely in a few places only, but always in the simplest language, while the service itself is distinguished by its simplicity. There is nothing difficult in its observance, There is nothing costly in the bread and the wine which constitute the Supper. They are just inexpensive articles within the reach of all. There is no priesthood, as distinct from assembly, authorised for its administration; and the prescribed ritual, if we may call it so, is very simple indeed.

Christ Himself — Not Shadows of Him

Why is there this striking contrast? There may be many reasons, but I would like this evening to mention only one, which I think may be sufficient for the occasion. Under the law, the sacrifices and the services of the priesthood all pointed down the Old Testament ages to One who was coming, and who was to do the great and sufficient work of making an end of sins and of introducing righteousness. But in the New Testament, we find that Person has made His advent into the world, and has accomplished the work of redemption. Moreover, He makes His presence known and felt in connection with this simple service. And when you have the substance, will you care for the shadow? When you have the antitype, where is the need for the type? The Lord’s Supper brings the hearts of the children of God into close and living association with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and having Him, all legal symbolism is superseded, as the Epistle to the Hebrews shows in great detail. It is the Lord, then, who gives the Supper its essential character, and therefore He is able to make His own people recognise His presence under the most adverse and difficult circumstances. They may be scattered and separated, they may be persecuted, but wheresoever they may be in the wide world, let them only be gathered to His name, let them but be desirous to "do this in remembrance" of Him, and He is there in the midst; and His presence amply compensate for every other disability. The presence of Christ Himself enables the believer to rise superior over all outward circumstances, whatever they may be.

I know that eating the Supper is not individual communion, and we will, perhaps, touch upon that part of the subject later. But it should be clearly understood by all that no person can properly enter into the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, and that no Christian can experience the blessed fulness and joy of its observance apart from the recognition of the presence of Christ Himself, verily in the midst according to His word, not cognisant to the senses, it is true, but cognisant in spite of the senses. Oftentimes there are matters arising in connection with the observance of the Lord’s Supper which may tend to distract or turn away the heart and the thought from the subject of the moment, but when Christ’s presence is realised all these things lose their influence, and dwarf into their proper insignificance. The Circumstances of the Institution

It is interesting to look at the institution of this Supper with particular reference to the circumstances under which it was inaugurated. This will help us, I think to gain a view, a right view, of this memorial and of its spiritual import. It was upon the eve of the great climax (shall I say?) in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ that this Supper was instituted. He had been in this world, the Son incarnate, passing through its varied scenes, the wonder of the angels, and the scorn of men. What that passage through this world meant to Him we shall never know. But there was always before Him during His ministry that crisis to which He alludes as His "hour." There was an hour, a fixed moment, to which He was advancing. Everything concerning Him had been pre-arranged; all the events were determined beforehand, and He knew the future. He was never taken by surprise, as we are, but consciously facing the difficulties, the sorrows, the agonies of Calvary, He went forward, unchanged in heart and purpose and action by what He knew was coming. His love never diminished in the slightest; His works of mercy were never left undone because of the greater work of atonement before Him, but with imperturbable grace He proceeded continuously day. after day, night after night, in pursuance of His lowly service. His days were filled with beautiful expressions of heavenly love in this dark and evil world, set forth for man’s faith and knowledge. But when He drew near to Calvary, He was in the very shadows of that oppressive darkness which enveloped Him on the cross. And it was on the eve of His departure from this world that He instituted this Supper. On the passover night itself, on that night so full, too, of events of universal importance, He instituted this Supper. You will remember that He was together with His disciples in the upper room expressly to keep the passover supper. The company was Jesus and the twelve. They were twelve distinguished men, but distinguished in a special manner. They had been called out to be His apostles, His beloved followers and His witnesses. They were selected to see more of His face than any in the world besides, to hear more of His words than others, and to be admitted by Him into scenes of closest intimacy.

Disciples Contending for Precedence The disciples were around the table, and Jesus at the head, looking upon them, as, indeed, He is looking now upon us, He saw all that was within them, and Scripture records that during that memorable night they showed that they were men of like passions with ourselves — changeable, unreliable, sometimes impulsive in love and earnest zeal, and at other times carried away by foolish and wicked thoughts. The disciples should have known what was before their Master. Only a few days previous Jesus had said to the twelve, "We go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify" (Matthew 20:17-19). That the Jews and Gentiles would unite in His crucifixion and death, He told them on three occasions. You would have thought that their interest and expectation of these

events would have been quickened on that night — the passover night. What did the blood of the lamb signify? Did it not recall the hour of judgment and death passed long ago in Egypt? Had they considered the Lord's words seriously, would they not have entered that room with solemn hearts and chastened spirits? Would they not have been filled with a foreboding sense of sorrow and pain before their beloved Master? We find, however, that they were engaged in petty quarrels, struggling among themselves as to who should be greatest amongst them. Observing, I suppose, the disciple whom Jesus loved taking the place nearest to Him, their jealousy was aroused. Why should he be there? Why not they?

What was this painful altercation to our Lord? He was contemplating the morrow when He would bear their sins in His own body on the tree just such sins as these. They could not understand His loving purpose. They were unable to enter into the grief before Him. Such lack of spiritual feeling was the sorrowful result after three years' service with them. There was for Him no comforter, no sympathiser, none that cared. Do not let us judge them too harshly; let us rather judge ourselves. Are we never guilty of the indulgence of unworthy thoughts at the table of the Lord? In the most solemn moments, when the Spirit of God is making to live again before us the hour of suffering at Calvary, thoughts may even then arise in our hearts, altogether out of harmony with the subject of the Spirit of God. We must know that we ought to bow our heads in shame when our Lord looks round upon us as we are eating His Supper, because things are sometimes in our hearts which ought never to be there at such a holy season. The Service of Jesus at the Supper

Jesus rose from the table, He laid aside His garments, He girded Himself with a towel, knowing, as the beloved apostle said, that the Father had given all things into His hands, that He had come from God, and was going to God. He then went round as the servant of them all to wash their feet. Was not this a sight to move their hearts? The Lord of glory, whom angels delighted to serve, was there meekly serving twelve men of humble birth — Peter, James, John, and Judas too. The Son of God had come down to serve them all "I am among you as He that serveth." The word, the act, form a rebuke for us all. Let us remember that On no occasion in our spiritual experience do we see the glory of humility exhibited more than at the Lord's Supper. That loaf, that wine — what do they tell us? Of the One who came down from above to serve, of the One who did serve in life and death; of the One who went under the cloud of wrath to serve, and to the death of the cross and into the grave to serve. Let us, then, never be ashamed to serve this Christ, for has He not served us, even to the death of shame?

Jesus and Judas

All these circumstances are associated with the institution of the Supper, which forms a contrast in its calm beauty with what was around Him in Jerusalem, and what was before Him on the morrow. In the little company itself there was wilfulness as well as weakness. One was altogether divided in interests from the Lord. For Judas was there. "Ye are clean," says the Lord, "but not all." In the little circle, there was this spectacle of direct apostasy before the eyes of our Lord. This man had been able to withstand the benign rays of heavenly glory shed directly upon him for three years. His heart was not softened by the ministry of grace, but hardened. The love of Jesus had never penetrated his soul. It had, on the contrary, become a stronghold of sin, of shameful deeds, of Satan himself. The betrayal was an exhibition of the power of Satan, over-coming one in that small apostolic band. The Lord appealed to the traitor. He gave him the sop, and Judas took it, but

withstood the overture. All the love of Christ was thrown away upon him; his soul was completely devastated and ruined. "That thou doest," the Lord said, "do quickly." Then he arose from the table and went out, and Scripture adds, "it was night." He went out into the blackness of night's darkness to do a deed of blacker darkness. Judas was at the table, but went out from the presence of the Lord, to go to his own place. He was not "clean," as the Lord had said. But he having gone, the Lord, as they were eating, took bread and the wine, and instituted the Supper. This done, He went on to speak those valedictory words we have, and which we love so much, in the Gospel of John. These discourses speak, not of the forgetfulness on the part of the disciples, not of the evil within them, but to their hearts which were full of love for Him, and of sorrow, because He was about to leave them. He knew that they truly loved Him; He knew that in spirit they were prepared to renounce everything for Him. He knew that they were exposed to danger, and that they were feeble in action but fearless in spirit. He said 'I am going away. You are filled with sorrow. I know that you love Me. I know that you will lament when I am gone from you, but I will come to you again.' So He brightened the future for them by the promise of His return, and thus buoyed them up with the glorious hope of His returning, having first taught them the remembrance of Himself in the Supper.

All these circumstances tend to give a special character to the Supper of the Lord. They all combine in an appeal to our affections that we should value its observance. There is no engagement more solemn or serious, and nothing more blessed as a spiritual occupation. I do not know what we can do or say that calls for more earnest examination of our own hearts than the participation in this feast. Yet the service is simple and accessible, and, while we are assured of the Lord's presence, there are no terrors set before us as there were at Sinai — no clouds of darkness, no thunderings or lightnings. On the contrary, we have the sweet and loving invitation of the Lord Himself, "This do in remembrance of me." The Lord took Bread and Blessed

Now let us notice for a little the actual institution of the Supper by our Lord. The details are all familiar to us who are present, no doubt. While the disciples were eating, the Lord took bread. This act was not associated with the ritual of the passover supper; it was an act quite separate, of course, and quite distinct from it. The passover supper was kept, the ceremony was maintained in the prescribed form, and then the Lord instituted a new Supper, and one that would supersede it, because the passover was about to be fulfilled by the sacrifice of our Lord Himself, and having been fulfilled, it disappears, as it were, from the round of appointed feasts. The Lord took of the bread that was before Him, and He blessed. We do not read that He blessed it. You will observe that the word "it" is in italics in our version, and therefore the significance is not that He took a piece of bread, and made it something else. He did not transform it. He blessed. He blessed God. He recognised the Giver. His heart went up, as He loved it should, in thanksgiving to Him that was above. No occasion too great, none too small, for each and all things He would bless, and would give thanks. If you compare the account in Luke with those in Mark and Matthew, you will find that in Luke the parallel words are, "When He had given thanks." Blessing, therefore, is equivalent to giving thanks. There is no support at all in Scripture for the notion that the bread mysteriously and wonderfully became something different from what it was before. The Lord blessed, as we find He did on other occasions. It was a relief to Him to look upwards. He could find nothing of joy in what was around Him, but He could turn to God, and to the joy set before Him. His link with the Father was close, His fellowship was intimate and precious. It was His habit to look up and give thanks.

There is no doubt that there is more involved in the act than the mere giving of thanks for the reception of the bread. There was about to be sacrifice and blood-shedding, and both were before the holy soul of our Lord. This bread was to be His body. It had long been before Him to do this deed of redeeming love.

1917 213 He had come into the world to inhabit the body prepared for Him and to taste the vicissitudes of life among men, and now He had come near to the accomplishment of the work given Him to do. He could bless God that it was so. Presently He would wrestle in agony in the garden of Gethsemane with the power of darkness in full view. Wrath was before Him in vision, and then He would struggle, as it were, at the prospect which was so abhorrent to His holiness. Here at the table, He was about to say, "This is my body." The joy that was before Him of having accomplished the Father’s will, and of having rescued from terrible destruction myriads of the souls of men, filled Him with delight, and He looked up and blessed, and He broke the bread and passed it to them. Not that He partook of it Himself. He desired to eat the Passover with them before He suffered, but this Supper was something new and different. This was something for them to do for His sake. This was to be a memorial for them. Did He Himself require a memorial? Does He need some tangible token to keep us before His heart? some memorial to bring us to His remembrance? Never; our names are engraved upon the palms of His hands, but do we not forget? Do we not often need reminding? He knew our weakness, and He took the bread, and said, "Take eat, this is my body." And by these simple words He joined us up, so to speak, with Himself in His great work at Calvary, and in its results. It is as if He said, ’Make this your own, let this truth be yours, let it be within you, let it be assimilated in your very being; take, eat.’

Hence it is, beloved friends, that we come so close to the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Supper. "This is my body," are the Lord’s words. There is no need, however, for fanciful notions with regard to the bread. Let us be clear that the material is bread, and that it remains bread. He said, "This is my body," using, of course, a figure of speech, such as was often upon His lips. He spake in the manner of that nation to whom He came. When He said "This is my body," He thereby attached a special significance to the loaf. This, and nothing else, was to be the emblem which should set forth His body, and should for this reason recall to their minds His body. The Bread a Memorial

Let us be clear with regard to another point. When the Lord said, "This is my body," He held the bread in His hands, and handed it to them. He handed it to them to eat. But He was still there before their eyes. He administered, if we may use that technical term, the bread before them. But He was distinct from it Himself. The bread was a memorial for them, and given to them by the Lord, He being separate from the bread which was and is emblematical of the body in which He suffered and completed the work of atonement. This feature of the Supper is ever true, and is an important one for faith to realise. He Himself, the living glorious Lord, the One into whose hands all things are now given, is present to preside at the feast, to superintend, if He will be allowed to do so, on the occasion. But He is separate from that which is His memorial. The living Lord conducts us in our remembrance of the Christ who died.

There is a reason I have for referring to this distinction now. I have found that some persons regard the Lord’s Supper as if it were a means of causing them to remember someone they have in some measure forgotten during the previous week. For six days, or some part of the six days,

they have been so busy with other things that the Lord has been out of their thoughts. The memorial is valued because it brings Him back to mind. This is a false view of the Lord's Supper. The Supper is to remember the Lord as He was, in His sufferings and in His death. It is a shame that any Christian should require something to cause him to remember the Lord as He is, in the glory. Can it be that we are so far removed from the sense of the living joy of knowing Christ Himself that He passes out of our hearts, and we need something visible, like the breaking of bread, to bring Him to our minds? We do not assemble to remember Christ the glorified Christ, we come to remember the One who died. There is but One adorable Person, of course. Jesus Christ, who is on high is the same Jesus who was crucified, but we meet to go back to the past. And the Spirit uses that marvellous faculty of memory which we possess, the power we have of making yesterday live again, so that the events of long ago become as fresh as ever in our hearts. We know we all have that power in some degree. and this power of remembrance is turned to account by the Spirit of God in connection with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is something further stated about the bread, which is His body, — which, as Luke says, "is given for you." If you compare the accounts carefully in the three Gospels (which it is always profitable to do), you will find that there are some words in Luke which are not in Matthew or Mark. Luke adds just those words which lay hold of our hearts, and draw us into close communion with the Master Himself. "This is my body, which is given for you," and as He said this He could apply the words personally to any one of them that sat at the table. "It is given for you." 'For me,' says Peter, 'For me,' says James. They could each and all respond thus and say, 'It is given for me.' The Lord meant to 'quicken the pulsation of their hearts towards Himself. He wanted to draw to Him the devotion of their souls, as they should realise that the sufferings through which His holy body would pass would be on their account. The great work would be for their benefit and blessing. I know therein was the accomplishment of the will of God; I know the death of Christ has very wide-reaching results. We shall never measure it properly, nor understand it fully. But at the Lord's table, while there may be loftier thoughts, is there:anything which can touch our hearts more deeply than the remembrance that He suffered for me? He died for me. "My body is given for you," He says. The whole man was given. The blessed Person who surrendered Himself as an offering, a sacrifice, held nothing back. Such is the sacrifice the Lord loves — the whole burnt-offering, everything completely rendered to God. "This is my body, which is given for you." The Cup after Supper But the Supper was not confined to the loaf only. Subsequently the cup was. given also. He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament" In these words the Lord shows us unmistakably that the particular event in His history to be remembered on these occasions is His death, because there were the two elements. There was the bread, and there was the wine. The bread was the body, and the wine the blood. Separate as they were in that emblematical form, they truly set forth thereby the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the body, as we know, the blood is the life. So it is expressed throughout the Old Testament. But when blood is seen distinct, it is the witness of death. So it came about with our Lord historically, for we read, the soldier came with a spear, and pierced His side, after He had delivered up His spirit. Forthwith there came out blood and water. This token of death was registered upon earth as evidence that the great work of life-giving had been accomplished. The supper reminds us that there was veritable death in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we think that Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, did indeed taste death, bowing to the king of terrors, who brings paleness to the cheeks and tremors to the hearts of multitudes of

men, we are filled again and again with amazement. The Lord tasted death, and yet He had displayed such power over death, making the grave yield up its victims, young and old. He could speak, and the dead lived again. Yet now He says to the apostles, "This is my body; this is my blood."

How full of wonder must have been the hearts of those men as they pondered over these words. What did the Master mean? It was not the first time He had spoken of giving them His flesh to eat. He had often spoken of His death. It was now come very near at hand. "This is my body which is given for you." 'There is no other way of life for you; it must be this way of death for me. In my life, in my incarnation, I am altogether separate from you. It is only through my death that you can participate. Only thus can you be blessed; hence I give my body and shed my blood for you.' The Incarnate Son was here in this world, but His death was necessary for man's salvation. God had said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Here then was pictured the sinless One giving His life and going down into death for the blessing of those who were around Him, and of those who should believe on Him through them. He took the cup, and gave thanks, and they might all drink of it. Judas was not there. Jesus had washed Judas' feet with water, but his heart was left unclean. What would be the use of his eating and drinking with an unclean heart? It is worse than useless to drink the cup if the heart is estranged from the Lord. The hearts of the eleven were true to Him, and He invited them to take and drink. 'You can share, you can participate. Drink ye all of it.' Moreover, the Lord added, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," speaking of that new covenant of which the prophets had foretold, of the covenant which would be yet made with the house of Israel and Judah and which will be seen in all its glory in days yet to come. But the blood, as the basis of that covenant, was about to be shed, and the cup is the memorial of it.

Sins Forgiven. Christ Remembered

"This is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins." You observe the Lord's Supper is not a place where the children of God come together to remember their sins. Their sins are remitted. The institutions of the law differed in this respect. When the sacrifices were offered of old, there was a remembrance made of sins every year on the day of atonement. But believers are not invited to the Lord's Supper to remember their sins. They come to remember Him who died, having borne their sins in His own body. It is not that we are not conscious of having sinned for such a person there could be no supper in its true sense. The supper is for those for whom Christ shed His blood that their sins might be forgiven. Jesus, looking upon the company in the upper room, saw the indelible marks of disfigurement that sin had wrought in their moral characters. They were clean by His word, but He came not by water only, but by water and blood, and He was about to shed His blood for the remission of their sins. So when we drink the cup, we are reminded of His blood shed, and we are then indeed on holy ground. We are together in close fellowship with our Lord and Saviour. Hence we cannot but think what it is that has brought us there so near to Him. The disciples did not enter into the true character of the cup. They could not anticipate the value of the blood of Christ to them. But we know it. Why is it we come together? To remember the Lord in His death. Being there, the cup brings before us that precious blood which has cleansed us from all sin, and made us suitable to sit in the presence of the Lord. Judas had gone out, but Peter and James and John and others remained, and they were made the recipients, of this communication from the Lord, in spite of the activities of Satan, and the weakness of the flesh. And why is it they were there? Why is it they were maintained in such hallowed society at such a

time? Because of the precious blood of Christ about to be shed that their sins might be removed.

Oh, beloved friends, how wonderful, this theme is for our meditation when we are together to remember the Lord Jesus Christ! Can it be possible that we appear on such occasions to lack subjects for thought and worship? Can it be that the trivial happenings of the past week occupy our hearts, and obliterate every holy memory of Christ and His passion and death? Is there not enough in the death of Christ to engage our hearts for one brief hour? Do we chafe because there is a long protracted silence? there not sufficient love and interest in our individual hearts to cause us to be absorbed with the Lord Jesus and what He suffered for us? Do we find it irksome because there is no audible voice? It is a happy thing when a man breaks the silence by the Spirit of God, expressing what is on the hearts of all, but it is happy also, when there is no voice, to recognise the supremacy and sufficiency of the Lord Himself.

Beloved friends, let us think again of the night of the institution. Here is the Lord of glory, here in this world, where for three years He laboured in active ministry. He is about to die. He gathers around Him just before He leaves the world eleven men out of the millions of the world's inhabitants — eleven men who, because of previous, training, might at least have been expected to enter into what was before Him. But there was not one who rose to the real facts of what was before the Lord. They were all very far away in spirit from the burden of His heart at that time. Is there not still an astonishing lack of interest, in the death of Christ? Out of all the millions upon the face of the globe at the present time, how many are there who meet together habitually for the sole purpose of fulfilling the Lord's word: "This do in remembrance of me"? They are very few, comparatively, who show any regard for His will in this respect. Do we not care for His death? Did He anywhere prove His love for us as He did upon the cross? Shall we tire of this holy theme? Is once a week too often to remember Him? Oh, beloved friends, what must the indifference of His own have been to the Lord on the night when He was betrayed? What, then, is it now that so many can be indifferent, careless, regardless of the memorial of that infinite work which cost Him so much to accomplish?

We can, of course, think of the Lord at any time, and in any place, but we ought to have the Lord's words written upon our hearts, "This do in remembrance of me." The remembrance is a question of doing. It is not a sacrifice to be offered, but it is an act to be performed. He has definitely said this, and it is not for us to take away from what He has said. "This do in remembrance of me." 'I shall leave this world that does not want Me. I shall return to the place I had with the Father before the worlds were. I want you to raise a memorial to My death here in this world, not in marble, not in costly architecture, not in anything which can be measured by the riches of this world, but by a simple act, of no external value in itself, by nothing impressive in the nature of its ceremony. Do this in remembrance of Me. I call for this act of obedience on your part.'

Beloved friends, unless we eat the bread and drink the cup, we cannot "do this" in remem brance of Him. You may make excuses, you may raise objections and difficulties, but you cannot carry out the word unless you eat the Supper. His words are simple and easy of understanding, as we have reiterated this evening, and because they are simple, their claim is irresistible. The Lord does not ask us to make a great sacrifice, but He does ask us to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. Let your whole heart and soul ever be in the observance of His will. Let all that is true and spiritual and begotten of God within you be concentrated upon the performance of this act. If we

honour Him, He will honour us. If we are true to Him, He will be — I was about to say, true to us, but He is always true to us whatever we maybe. If we deny Him, He is still faithful which is all the greater reason why we should, so far as in us lies, carry out this word of our Lord, laid by Him upon the loyal hearts of those who love Him, and who follow His footsteps through this world. The Observance of the Lord’s Supper as Recorded in the Acts and the Epistles Notes of an address on Acts 2:41-47; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29.

1917 232 Last week we read the passages from the Gospels, which record the institution of the Lord’s Supper. There we had the account of the actual circumstances under which the Lord spoke to His disciples on that evening, and set apart the bread and the wine as emblems of His body and His blood, desiring them to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Himself. It is of interest and help to find that we have also in Scripture instances of the actual observance of the Lord’s Supper, showing that the early disciples understood what the Lord wished them do, and that they very rightly and naturally and spontaneously responded to His desire, and habitually commemorated the Lord’s death in the appointed way. And these records shed their light upon the practice that we ourselves should adopt today in observing the words of our Lord.

Breaking Bread in Jerusalem

We find from the first Scripture that I read in the Acts that the disciples in Jerusalem immediately after Pentecost were in the habit of breaking bread together. It was a practice that they all speedily adopted as a company. There were the apostles who preached, there were disciples who had known the Lord in the days of His flesh, there were others who had believed the preaching of the apostles by the Spirit of God, and these were all banded together by the same Spirit who came down on the day of Pentecost, and were given by Him a unity of mind and a unity of purpose. All their hearts and affections were concentrated upon the Person of Jesus who had risen and who had ascended out of their sight. He was out of sight, but not out of mind, nor were His words out of mind. And they were together, being all of this common persuasion, that there was none upon earth and none in heaven comparable to the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and whatever had been said of old through Moses or through Isaiah had no greater claim upon them than the ’words of the Lord Jesus. There was something in the heart of each one of them that desired to carry out the express wish of the Lord. They had His word handed to them, and they felt that that word had authority over them, and that it was therefore incumbent upon them to answer to His word. He said, "This do in remembrance of me," and they therefore continued in the breaking of bread. ’There were other things of the apostles mentioned which they were careful to maintain — doctrine, fellowship, as well as prayers, but bound up with these church observances and of equal importance, there was the breaking of bread.

I think, beloved friends, that we ought to note well with regard to the breaking of bread that it demands the personal love and devotion of a heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. The ceremony is nothing, the actual act of eating and drinking is nothing in itself, and as we find from some of the Scriptures that I have just read, the mere form may even mislead, and bring a person into a position full of danger and peril to himself. But if the Supper is observed in its simple character, there is nothing sweeter, while there is nothing more powerful on this earth as a spiritual service than the breaking of bread. The observance does not require spiritual advancement and growth, but it does require that the heart of the individual participant shall ring true to the Lord Himself. The

Lord’s word must be recognised behind the bread and the wine. The Lord Himself must be present to our faith, giving us to realise His approval of our presence and of our actions as well as His acceptance of the love and devotion of our hearts. It is a worship-service designed by our Lord to knit up our hearts to Himself. In our general walk the Lord comes before our hearts in His glory, as the One who is on high, as our Captain, our Lord, as the One whom we shall be like eventually, and He directs to Himself, as the ascended Christ, all our energies and all our services. But at the Lord’s Supper our position is different. We are not then looking at Christ in glory, as the One whom we are serving, and the One to whom we shall go, but at the same Lord conducting us to the foot of the cross, Himself there as the victim, as the Saviour, as the One who suffered there with our sins upon Him. Then He, as it were, crushes within us by this remembrance all movements of sin and selfishness, and draws out to Himself those new affections, those new movements of our hearts begotten in us by the Holy Ghost. For this reason, the Lord’s Supper is of the greatest value to young Christians, as to old. Could you have younger Christians than these of whom we read in the Acts? Just born again by the Spirit of God, but they nevertheless continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Their hearts were brought to realize in these occupations the living presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will repeat that this realization is of essential importance in the spiritual life of every believer. It may be said that there is no occupation on earth of collective character in which the spiritual life is brought into closer touch with Christ than at the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper.

I only allude to these verses in Acts 2:1-47 ; they can be studied at your leisure, but we do find from them that the disciples, being all together in Jerusalem, were enabled day by day to break bread. They broke bread from house to house, or rather, at home. They met together in the Temple; they broke bread at home. They assembled in many places, but at home in their upper rooms they broke bread, and day by day was not considered too frequent to remember the Lord Jesus in breaking bread. The Lord had said, "This do in remembrance of me." These words are a deathblow to the notion of those persons who sometimes assume an air of superiority and say, "I can remember the Lord anywhere. I can sit in the privacy of my chamber and remember Him. I can walk along the street and remember Him." This may be so, but this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. "Do this for a memorial of me" It is therefore only in the doing that the obedience is rendered. The Lord has not given us a thousand acts to do in His name. He has not surrounded us with manifold rites and ceremonies, but there is this one thing specially specified for us to do in remembrance of Him.

Breaking Bread at Troas In the second passage that I read from the Acts, we have a very interesting record. There we find the apostle Paul at Troas, and evidently Luke, the writer of the book of the Acts, was also of the company, for he speaks, as you notice, in the first person. They came together on the first day of the week to break bread. It was not possible for the disciples to be together for this purpose every day as they did in Jerusalem. There were many who had come to Jerusalem to keep the feast of the passover and the feast of weeks and were free from secular occupations and duties, and they had special opportunities to meet together every day, but it was not so at Troas. We find that the apostle had to wait there until the first day of the week in order to break bread. It was striking that the apostle did so, because he was in a great hurry. He was bound for Jerusalem, and his time was precious. His time was so pressing that he could not visit the important assembly at Ephesus, but sent for the elders to meet him at Miletus. But Paul abode

in Troas seven days for the breaking of bread. The great apostle waited seven days so that he might enjoy the incomparable privilege of breaking bread with the disciples.

We find from the narrative that the definite purpose for which they came together was to break bread. The Revised Version reads, "When we came together to break bread," expressing the unity between the visitors and the local believers. Yet the occasion of the gathering was quite unique. The great apostle to the Gentiles would be there. The disciples would hear something valuable from his lips. Paul was a man worth listening to. We might have supposed, therefore, that they would have come together specially to listen to those precious exhortations and instructions that would be sure to fall from the lips of the apostle. But they came together to break bread. They came together to meet the Lord of the apostles. They realised that there was an order in divine things, and first and foremost in divine things is the Lord Himself. Happy the man who always keeps first things first. Christ is first; the Lord is first. His claims must be supreme. Let us everyone here tonight make this our life's motto. Let the Master be first. And so, when they came together on that first of the week, the one object before them all was to carry out the Lord's word. It was as if they said "We shall get a word from the apostle, but let us fulfil our responsibility to the Lord first of all." Beloved friends, let us all strive to have within our habits and dispositions continually the consciousness that the breaking of bread must stand first and foremost in the claims upon us. Let us feel that the Supper is the Lord's wish, it is His word. It is His claim that is laid upon us, and we must not deny Him the worship of our hearts. Let us agree that we will put ourselves to all kinds of discomfort, but we will not miss the breaking of bread, and when we come together, we will come together with this object before our minds. Do not wait until we enter the door and our eyes fall upon the bread and the wine that then for the first time we think of the breaking of bread. When we come together, this should be the object filling our hearts; we should all come to break bread. Let there be ten, twenty, or an hundred or more, and if we all come to break bread, what a meeting there will be! What power there will be, because all hearts will be united with the common purpose and aim of breaking bread. All will be desirous of fulfilling the word of the Lord. Will any then miss a sense of that joy and peace whose source is in heaven? Not one. The First of the Week This example at Troas is of special interest because of the association of the breaking of bread with the first of the week. There is a beautiful bond, as it were, existing between the first of the week and the breaking of bread. The first of the week — was it not then that our Lord rose victorious from the grave? Did He not come forth and make Himself known to His disciples on that memorable first of the week? And He also made Himself known, we are sure, there at Troas on that first of the week. It is the day when He loves to display Himself to the faithful hearts of His disciples. It is a day that stands out notably in the Christian's history, because of its hallowed association with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord in His rising power and glory makes Himself known on the first day of the week. And so at Troas they came together on that day for the breaking of bread, and afterwards the apostle delivered a discourse to them, it being the eve of his departure on the morrow, and he continued his speech until midnight. The Lord's Supper at Corinth

Let us now come to the Epistle to the Corinthians. There we have very full instructions with regard to the breaking of bread. In the 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, you have them set out in detail, and they repay close attention. You find that the breaking of bread is here called the Lord's Supper. They had been coming together, but they had not been eating the Lord's Supper in a true sense. I wish you to notice in this chapter the recurrence of the title of the Master as Lord — the Lord's Supper,

the Lord Jesus, the Lord's death, the Lord's body. And the reason for this repetition is easy to find. Because they had forgotten — perhaps — nay, they must have forgotten, that He was the Lord. The Lord Jesus conveys to us as an expression His power and authority which are not absent when we remember Him as the crucified One. Jesus was there at Calvary. He went into that place of seeming weakness, "crucified in weakness," uplifted between the two malefactors. But God raised Him from the dead and made Him Lord and Christ. He is Lord of all, Lord of every one of us, and has the right of perfect control and command over everything that we have and are. There is not a pulse of our beings but is under the strict supervision of our Lord. And we are always responsible to Him for what we do, what we say; and what we think. Much more then when we "do this" are we responsible to our Lord. The Corinthians had forgotten Him in this respect, and they had made the Supper their own supper. They had looked upon their own things and had lost sight of the things of the Lord. It is easy to forget the Lord's presence, and then it is that the true value of the Lord's Supper is lost.

It is natural for persons to be attracted most by extraordinary acts and uncommon scenes which appeal to the senses. In the absence of such it is difficult for many to concentrate their hearts and thoughts in remembrance and worship. There is one obj ect, however, that will command the; attention of the most careless and fitful persons, and that is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He collects wandering thoughts; He subdues the restless spirit. He speaks, as it were, within the tumultuous heart, and says, "Peace, be still." And so, when we are together, on the occasion of the Supper, the Lord Himself comes into vision. I am speaking, of course, of the faith of the heart. Observing the Supper develops this faculty of our faith. Since we come together to think of Him, to remember Him, it develops our hearts and minds in the memory of Himself and in the sense of His presence. The oftener we do this, the better we should do it.

I do not know what words I can use to impress the importance of this feature of the observance of the Lord's Supper upon all who are here tonight — the great importance of being able to realize on such occasions the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know that a person can go away into his own room and shut the door, and know the secret presence of Christ with him. That must surely be in accordance with the experience of us all. But that experience should also be true collectively when we come together, and it can only be so when our hearts and minds are set on the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not on our own things and the things around us. There is, as we know, a continual effort to draw away our thoughts from the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is always something apt to arise between our souls and Him, to fill our minds with matters not proper to the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table, and therefore continual effort and watchfulness are needed and prayer to the Lord Himself, who will never fail us. The Corinthians had absolutely broken down and failed in this particular. They had fallen so far as to desecrate the Lord's Supper, reducing it to a common meal. Oh, how the heart of the apostle was horrified by what they were doing. He writes to them urgently, impressively, to win their hearts back to an apprehension of the real character of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day

We find this phrase, the "Lord's Supper," is a peculiar one in Scripture usage. It is a term which in the original text is not applied to anything else except to the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper are therefore two opportunities which are sacred to the Lord Himself. It is the Lord's day, it is no one else's. The day is hallowed because it belongs to Him, and wherever you are you

can never destroy that bond between the Lord and His own day. This term is full of meaning to a Christian. It is the day of resurrection. If Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins; but He was raised, on the Lord's day. Everything belongs to the Risen One, and that day, the first of the week, is His day, the first of a new order of things, the beginning of the new creation of God. But there is the Lord's Supper too. That simple homely meal is His. He is there. It is His feast, He presides, He makes the Supper what it is ideally. Take the Lord away, and what is it? Well, for Corinth it was an occasion for gluttony amongst the rich, and for envy and dissatisfaction amongst the poor. Instead of holy thoughts, instead of worship and prayers and thanksgiving, instead of bowing at the throne of glory and grace, they were carried away by earthbom feelings, and so it became to them an unholy occupation. But the Lord by His apostle recalls their hearts to Himself in words which are familiar to us.

We gather from these verses what is really important instruction. The apostle Paul received special revelation with regard to the Lord's Supper. He says, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." You know that the apostle Paul was not one of those who saw Christ in the flesh, but he saw Him in the glory. The Lord communicated direct with the apostle of the uncircumcision. He had special work for him to do, and He gave him special instructions. The Lord could have made this memorial service known to him through the twelve, of course, but it was so ordered that the instructions with regard to the Lord's Supper should be communicated personally to the apostle Paul by the Lord Himself. Does not this fact strike you as strongly emphasizing the importance of the Lord's Supper as a Christian institution? We saw last week the beautiful and affecting picture of the Lord Jesus in the upper room, dispensing the bread and the wine to His disciples, and giving to them a significance they never had before. We also recalled the solemn associations of the institution of that Supper, what was proceeding at the table itself, and what was immediately before the Lord, and so our hearts were directed by these circumstances to its beauty and value. We now learn something fresh. Not the Lord at the table, but the Lord on the throne communicated with the apostle the details with regard to the breaking of bread. The Lord in His glory thought it needful to speak directly to Paul and to tell him His mind with reference to the Supper. Was it not of the highest importance, therefore, since the Lord made it the subject of special revelation? It is indeed of importance. The Lord is continually teaching our hearts to feel its value and importance in an increasing degree. The apostle said, in effect, to those men at Corinth, "What are you doing? I cannot praise you in this. You have altogether strayed from the real meaning of the Lord's Supper. Do you know that I received it from the Lord? It was not my own ordinance. I did not receive it from Peter, James and John. I received it direct from the Lord. It has therefore the utmost claim upon you. Do not think it is anything which can be undertaken lightly. It is solemn, it is holy, and the Lord Himself has desired that your whole hearts should be in it." The apostle spoke by the Holy Ghost, of course, but here he says, "I am speaking to you not merely as an apostle. I am communicating to you that which I received from the Lord Himself." Always remember that this Epistle to the Corinthians was not only to the saints at,Corinth, but to all calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus everywhere (1 Corinthians 1:2). As Gentiles we come within the scope of this communication made to the apostle of the Gentiles. The Lord's Supper comes to us, therefore, from the Lord Himself through the apostle Paul. The Night of the Betrayal

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed." Have you ever at the Lord's Table pondered upon this expression? — "the same night in which He was betrayed." Why is it brought

into this passage? The betrayal is mentioned, I think, so that they might recollect that the Lord's Supper is to be observed, not in heaven, but on earth. The betrayal was a fruit of sin. In heaven there will be nothing of sin, nothing of self; hence nothing will be necessary to recall wandering hearts there. But here upon the earth, even at the Lord's Supper, there is a possibility of the presence of that which is not of God, that which is of self, that which is sinful making its appearance. It is painfully true that you may go where you will, but you can never escape from the danger of your own natural heart and the natural hearts of others.

"On that night in which He was betrayed, He took bread." These people at Corinth were exposed to the danger of doing, not to the same degree, but the same kind of thing that, in its full development, led Judas to betray his Master. We must not execrate Judas and forget ourselves. The Lord did not speak harshly to him. His deed of shame is recorded in holy writ for our warning, not, however, that we should gaze upon Judas, but rather upon the Lord, and think what sorrow it was to Him to say, "One of you shall betray me." He cared for Judas, and yet Judas betrayed. Him. Recall what He" has done for you, for me. Is it possible that I can forget Him even in the solemn moment appointed for remembrance? that I may be engaged unworthily even at such a time as that? that my eyes may be drawn away from Him to consider others, and that I might even think evil thoughts at such an occasion as His Supper? What would it be to the Lord's heart if I should forget Him when I am together with others to remember Him in the breaking of bread?

Beloved friends, it magnifies in our eyes the Christ we adore and serve that in the night in which He was betrayed He took means to awaken the weak and forgetful hearts of His own lest they should wander farther and farther from Himself, and from the remembrance of His coming cross and passion, and so He established this feast of bread and wine. Not that Judas was present at the Lord's Supper, because we find from these verses that the Supper, the Lord's Supper, was instituted after the passover. It was "when He had supped" (verse 25), and Judas went out directly he received the sop from the Lord. The Lord gave him the sop, and said, "That thou doest, do quickly," and after the exit of the traitor this ordinance was founded. Can you think of the Lord requiring Judas to do this, "in remembrance of me"? No, it is true hearts He wants. He wants your worship, your fellowship in His sufferings. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" the Lord said to Peter in Gethsemane. Shall it be that we become tired of being together to think of Him, and when there is silence and opportunity for deep meditation upon the holy theme of the Lord's Supper, we fretfully wish someone would speak, or sing, or pray? Let the Lord's word come home again to you: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

"This is my body"

1917 250 "The same night in which He was betrayed, He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me."

I love that sentence, "This is my body." I know that the verse has been misinterpreted and abused to induce men and women to indulge in idolatrous practices. It is not implied that the bread becomes the body of Christ. The bread is bread continually. The Lord said, "This is my body." What did He mean? He was referring to Himself, and referring to Himself, as it seems to me, in all His absolute perfection and completeness. "This is my body," wholly, completely, and unreservedly given up in sacrifice to God for them and us. "This is my body"; think of Him, the

blessed Lord, the Holy Christ that He was here in the days of His flesh, perfect man and perfect God, walking through this world filled with all the perfection it was possible for man to have and to exhibit. He came at last to the Cross, to the altar, and laid Himself completely upon the altar, and His body, soul and spirit was offered up in sacrifice. He held nothing back. He was the complete burnt offering, ever acceptable and fragrant to Jehovah.

We know that it is our natural tendency to hold something back from the Master. It is a great day when through the grace of God a man comes to the point that he is able and is willing with his whole soul to give himself up to the Lord, as we are all enjoined to do in Romans 12:1-21, rendering spirit, soul and body to the Lord for His service and praise. People talk about consecration as a great event, and so it is, but in point of fact we are consecrated from the beginning of our spiritual history. We are the Lord’s by purchase and by sanctification. We belong to Him entirely every part of us. But often there is the disposition to keep something in reserve for ourselves, to do something or other just in our own way. For instance, to give the Lord one day in the week, and perhaps use the other six for our own pleasure and purposes.

"This is my body. It is for you." The Lord has in this great renunciation set us an example. He has given everything for us. What have we given for Him? What have we done in return? When you look upon the cross, His body was there offered as a sacrifice for sins, for my sins, for your sins, for you. This is a wonderful word, of our Lord, beloved friends: "This is my body," and this body is for you! God had prepared that body for Him. It was a holy thing born into this world, never tainted with sin; and the Lord from first to last kept it in this world pure and unspotted, and when He came to the end of His ministry, He said, "This is my body. I have kept it so that it might be sacrificed for you. I am about to lay down my life. No man can take my life from me. I give it up for you." If such self-abnegation does not speak to a man’s heart, what will? If this perfect sacrifice does not call out praise and worship, what will? We shall not learn any greater wonder than this in heaven. More fully, no doubt, we shall know it, but we begin to learn the great lesson of it here. We do so especially at the Lord’s table. We come there, and the Lord tells us what He did for us at the cross. There are some present, perhaps, who have been several hundreds of times to the Lord’s table, but if I were to appeal to any of them for their experience, I think they would say that they have every time learned something fresh, something they had not known quite in the same way’before. Something has come with greater vividness than before. The Lord’s Supper is always fresh and new and beautiful and joyous to those who realize the Lord’s own words addressed to them, "This is my body, it is for you. This do in remembrance of me." The Cup and the Covenant

"After the same manner, also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood." Thereby He brings before us the important truth that He offered Himself, and made an atonement for our sins. The cup is the new covenant in His blood. It is a frequent scriptural expression, the cup referring to what is in the cup. "This cup," that is, the wine, "is the new covenant in my blood." The special reference is to the covenant promised of old through Jeremiah which God will make with His repentant people, when their sins will be done away, and Jehovah will write His laws in their hearts.

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood," and when we come to these words we learn the ground upon which we can be at the Lord’s table at all. The Lord in the midst is speaking to us, and we are enjoying His presence. He is telling us secret things about Himself and His sufferings,

which are hidden from the world. Why is it that we are in such sacred nearness without fear and dread? Why is it we are not ashamed, and our eyes filled with tears because of our sins? The answer lies in the words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the remission of your sins, that your sins might be removed, that you might be here with me, a blood-washed company, a part of that ransomed throng that will sound my praise through all eternity." Thus the deepest realities in the foundation of our spiritual lives are brought before us in this wonderful Supper. For a Remembrance

"This cup is the new testament in my blood. This do in remembrance of me." The apostle reproaches them afresh by this repeated phrase. They had forgotten Him. There was the bread and the wine in which they shared, but they did not remember Him. The Lord was not before them. They thought of themselves, and of their own supper, and consequently, they did not eat the Lord’s Supper. This is a fault to which we also are liable, beloved friends. You may think I am reiterating this warning unnecessarily about our danger, but if you will confer honestly with your own experience, you must admit the necessity for yourself, if not for others. We do require to be reminded of our weakness. Besides, let us remember also that there is a personage who tempts us to ignore this danger. Remember that Satan was at the passover supper, and that there he entered into the heart of Judas. And in our own case Satan would always distract our hearts and take away our thoughts if possible from the real obj ect of our assembling, that is, the remembrance of the Lord in His death. The death of Christ was the defeat, as it will be the ultimate destruction, of Satan. At Calvary he made his most stupendous effort against the One who came to destroy his works. He failed. But now he seeks to draw the hearts of the faithful away from the Lord Jesus, particularly those of the unwary on the occasion of the Lord’s Supper. Oh, beloved friends, I think we shall do well to admit this weakness, and to remember that we may easily be tripped up if we are not watching, as our Lord enjoined us to do.

Eating Unworthily And now, we come to the latter part of this Scripture. We eat this bread and drink this cup to "show the Lord’s death till He come." From the time of His betrayal until the time of His coming again, the observance of the Lord’s Supper is to be maintained.

Then the apostle proceeded to speak a special word of reproof to the Corinthians who had so misbehaved themselves at the Lord’s Supper. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Now we ought to recollect that in these words, the apostle wrote directly with reference to the manner in which the Corinthians had been eating the Lord’s Supper. I say this because it is quite a common mistake to suppose that the apostle is speaking of the worthiness or otherwise of the persons at Corinth. But it is not so. If eating depended upon personal worthiness, where would worthy ones be found? Not on this globe surely. There are none worthy no, not one. The very fact of the Lord by this memorial directing our attention to His body and His blood shows that we are not worthy. We are only worthy in the sense that He has taken us in our degraded condition, and that He has cleansed us by His precious blood, and thereby He has fitted us to be a kingdom of priests to God and His Father (Revelation 1:5-6). In this manner He has given us peace of conscience, and the right to partake of the supper. But the right is the result of what He has done. It is what His work has procured for us, not our own personal fitness. The apostle was not speaking of individual worthiness at all here. He was speaking of the manner in which these saints conducted themselves when they were

together. How did they conduct themselves? They acted with reprehensible carelessness. They ignored what the bread meant and what the wine meant. They forgot the solemn realities that were expressed by the emblems, and they partook of them as common, meaningless things. They missed, therefore, the whole purport of the Lord's Supper, and that was a serious lapse, as you will see, if you think of their conduct in the light of the solemn verses which precede.

Take yourself to task in this respect. Ask yourself in the day you come to the Lord's Supper, "What am I here for?" Because someone else comes? Because it is customary to attend? Is this, or something like it, your reason? Such are all very poor and insufficient reasons. The real cause of assembling is that the Lord has invited us to do so, and that He is present, and that in the bread and the wine He by the Spirit brings to our view His body which was given for us, and His blood which was shed for us. Having that purpose before us, we discern the Lord's body. It is not that we believe that the bread becomes the body of the Lord, or the wine His blood; such is the wicked opinion of some in Christendom. Nevertheless, it is the Lord's word that comes to us as we are participating. We hear Him speak, and the eyes of faith behold Him, and we are occupied with Him and He is talking to us of His decease, which He accomplished in His body at Jerusalem.

Preparation for the Lord's Supper Do not let these words of the apostle keep anyone away from the Lord's Supper. It is an occasion for you to fulfil His desire, but also to think of what you are doing. Do not be light about it. Let it be a serious matter. Let a man examine himself. Let him be careful of his thoughts and acts. Do you not think there is great need on the Lord's day to be thinking beforehand of the Lord's Supper? I am not speaking of that very unwise and improper practice of looking out some scripture to read aloud on the occasion. This is feeble and wrong. What is the proper way to prepare for the Lord's Supper? What is the theme that will then be specially before us? The Lord's death. Who is there that fully understands what the Lord's death signifies? No person knows anything apart from the revelation of Scripture. The proper preparation for the Lord's Supper is to have before our minds some of those numerous passages of Holy Writ which are inspired by the Holy Ghost so that we might have right and holy thoughts about the sacrifice and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saturate your mind with the words of the Holy Ghost in reference to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never give yourself up to your own thOughts on that sacred subject. The person who thinks his own thoughts about the death of Christ is sure to end in error and delusion. The one who most rightly appreciates the death of Christ is the one most subject to the word of God, and who will not trust himself to express views about that death in terms other than scriptural.

Throughout the Scripture, in both the Old Testament and the New, we find the great theme of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ recurring, and we have it presented in divers ways. The prayerful study of such passages prepares our hearts so that when we are together we are kept in accord with God's revealed truth about His beloved Son. Let us therefore examine ourselves with regard to this practice, and so let us eat the bread and drink the cup. We are kept by the word of truth, and we may know that the Spirit of God is assuredly directing our thoughts when He brings before us His own words about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One Loaf, One Cup

We also read one or two verses in the tenth chapter, but they refer to the bread and the wine in their symbolism of unity. We see that the loaf sets forth not only the body of Christ that was given

for us, but also that it is a figure of that spiritual body which has been framed by the Spirit in this world. All believers are by Him baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). This truth is set before us in the loaf. We, being many members, are one body in Christ. This aspect is subsidiary to the central feature of remembrance. It is just touched upon in this chapter, but we ought not to overlook it, because in partaking of the bread and the wine, we share the one observance in which all believers everywhere are entitled to unite. It is there they meet. It is there that the most spiritually minded of the members Of the body of Christ are to be found. What is the state of the believer who does not rejoice in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? It sets forth the fountain of every blessing for us. The one loaf speaks of the invisible unity of the mystical body of Christ, and it is an important thing to remember that there is no thought of division expressed in the appointed emblems. There is one cup and one loaf, both showing that imperishable unity which remains true in spite of the undeniable disunion existing in the professing church. These are silent witnesses to the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. But do not let us forget the main object of these Scriptures we have been considering, beloved friends. Do not let us forget the teaching of the Holy Ghost as to the Lord's Supper. The Spirit is present on that occasion to weld our hearts together into holy unity in spiritual worship and joy, and in power of holy recollection with reference to the death — the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord and Master. We need to have this theme brought over and over again before our spirits to fill our souls again and again with devotion and with praise. Why is it we are slow to praise? Because we are slow to realize the value of His death. It is the sense of what He has done that centres our affections upon Himself; and depend upon it, it is worth our while to be together in this prescribed manner to praise our Lord Jesus Christ. One has sometimes heard the painful remark by believers that it seems a waste of time to come together only for the Supper, the time could be made so profitable, there could be such exhortation, but the hour passes, and nothing seems to be done, and there is nothing forthcoming to feed the new man! Oh, what a low view to take, what an altogether misshapen thought of the Supper of our blessed Lord! What can be better than to listen to Him and to hear the whisperings of His love in our hearts? Do we not on such occasions give our hearts over to Him? If so, a human voice, so far from being essential, may obliterate the heavenly voice of our Master. The voice of the Lord's apostle himself could be quiet until the bread was broken at Troas in remembrance of Him. Therefore, let us strive to see more and more in the simple observance of the Lord's Supper, and to maintain a sense of His presence with us in it and of His voice speaking to us concerning His sufferings on our account. W. J. H.

S. The Latter-Day Kings of the Book of Daniel.

The Latter-Day Kings of the Book of Daniel.

There are four rulers brought into special prominence in the latter part of Daniel's prophecy. Each of these will take a more or less active share in the great drama, about to be enacted here below, immediately preceding, at, and just after, the Lord's coming in judgment of the habitual earth. They are designated respectively by the prophet: The little horn of the fourth empire (Daniel 7:8); The little horn out of the third empire (Daniel 8:23);

"The king who shall do according to his will in the land" (Daniel 11:36); and The king of the south (Daniel 11:40). The first three are more fully noticed in the word, whence it appears that they will take each his allotted part in the coming struggles of the nations for supremacy. These kings have many things in common apparently. They are, therefore, often mistaken the one for the other by prophetic students. Yet there are differences in their rise, political aspect, and religion, by which each may be clearly distinguished from the others, without doubt or confusion. In the interpretation given to Daniel by the holy one (Daniel 7:17-26), the fourth beast is said to be the fourth kingdom upon the earth, the Roman. When the political power was taken from the Jews because of their unfaithfulness, it was handed over to the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37-38). Thus his kingdom was the first of the world-wide order. After it came the MedoPersian; then the Grecian; after that the Roman. Here, however (Daniel 7:7 and onward), the Spirit of God views the Roman Empire in its last aspect. It had seven successive heads, and ten horns, which are ten contemporary kings.

Formerly it was a consolidated Empire with but one leader, and at length two or more. But about the fifth century the Goths, Vandals, etc., broke it up; and it ceased to be an empire, being divided into separate kingdoms. In its resuscitated form, however, there will be imperial unity through one chief of the Beast or Empire. At the same time there will be ten separate kings (Revelation 17:12-13). From the midst of the ten horns (or kings) rises a little horn. At first he is insignificant politically, but intelligent and arrogant. By his conquests three of the ten horns are brought under his dominion; and, through power or policy, the remaining seven give him their allegiance. He thus secures the mastery of the ten, and becomes the most powerful potentate of the west. In Daniel 8:1-27. we are introduced to another vision and its interpretation also. In a few words the rise of the Greek or Macedonian Empire is given, and Alexander's rapid conquests are depicted in a most graphic manner. Then follows on his death, soon after, the division of his vast Empire between four of his generals (ver. 8). Out of one of these divisions comes a little horn (or king), which increases in power and becomes great through craft and force of arms (vers. 9, 10). This was undoubtedly Antiochus Epiphanes, the bitter enemy of the Jews and of their religion, who indeed. used every means in his power to heathenise or crush them out of existence.

"In the last of the indignation the king of fierce countenance (ver. 23), whom Antiochus typified, will have his seat of government in the very quarter where Antiochus had his power, 1:e. Turkey in Asia. Elsewhere (Daniel 11:40-45) he is called "the king of the north" to distinguish from Egypt's

then king; and also in Isaiah and Micah "the Assyrian," because he will be the representative of Israel's old oppressor. It is well to notice, in passing, that the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28 rises out of the Roman Empire when it is finally divided into ten kingdoms, whilst the "King of fierce countenance" comes out of the Syro-Greek kingdom. They are not only not the same person, but persons wholly opposed. In Daniel 11:36 another important personage comes into prominence in a most abrupt manner. He is called "the king" distinctly and solely, characterised by self-will and extreme self-exaltation. That he is a Jew seems clear from the fact that he is said not to regard "the God of his fathers" (which is not at all a Gentile designation), nor "the desire of women," alluding to the honour sought by Jewish maidens to bear the Messiah. But unlike Him this king will not own the God of Israel as Lord; but while setting up himself will honour a god whom his fathers knew not. From the expressions "glorious land" and "glorious and holy mountain" (vers. 41-45) we may not doubt that the sphere of his government is Emmanuel's land. In Isaiah 30:33 (as well as Isaiah 57:9) this personage is also spoken of as "the king." "Also for the king it is prepared." Thus "the king" and the Assyrian of the same chapter are really two instead of one. Notwithstanding they are too often confused. The Spirit of God gives a short notice of the "king of the south," in contrast with him "of the north." The seat of his rule is Egypt, "south" of Palestine, as Turkey in Asia is "north" of it. Further details come under his political aspect.

Thus then we are introduced to four distinct rulers: (1) "the little horn" of Daniel 7:1-28; (2) the king of "fierce countenance" or little horn of Daniel 8:1-27; (3) "the king" in the Holy Land of Daniel 11:36; (4) "the king of the south" or Egypt. Such are these kings, looking at their political aspect. Nevertheless 1 and 3 act together in the future; because they will make a close compact the one with the other, though their respective seats of government are widely apart. After the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, have returned to Palestine, and "the king" (3) is reigning over them there, another great power north of the land threatens them with invasion. The head of this power is "the king of fierce countenance" of chap 8, called also in chap. 11. "king of the north." In Isaiah 14:24-27 he is designated "the Assyrian," and is the bitter enemy of the Jews. To counteract this threatened invasion, "the king" (3) in league with the then great power of the west, the future Roman Emperor (1), calls his ally into the crisis. This agreement is mentioned in Isaiah 28:15-16, where it is called a covenant with death and hell — instruments of Satan. In Daniel 9:1-27 further details as to time, etc. are given. The Roman Emperor (1) shall confirm "a" (not "the") covenant with "the many," 1:e. the mass of unbelieving Jews, "for one week" or seven years. His armies are afterwards sent to Palestine to oppose the (2) invader's hosts. But the covenant with death will not stand; for the overflowing scourge, or the invading army, will pass through; and the Jews will be trodden down by it, as we read in Isaiah 28:1-29, Zechariah 14:1-2. These scriptures inform us that this same leader (2) extends his conquests even to Jerusalem, and beseiges the city with a measure of success. Half the city is taken, and its inhabitants led into captivity. But not as of old: the other part holds out against the foe; and, then far more, Jehovah Himself intervenes. The king of the south (4) comes up, but is opposed by the king of the north; since we find that the king of the north (2) turns away from Jerusalem, and overruns the countries where the king of the south (4) rules or has influence (Daniel 11:41-43). Of "the king" (3) nothing further is said here, as his exceptional end was given elsewhere.

1905 212 Next we may look at the religious character or aspect of these kings. In Revelation 13:1-18 the prophet sees a Beast rise out of the sea. A "Beast" in prophetic symbol means an

Empire, and "the sea" represents people in a state of anarchy and confusion. Here then is seen its human origin, as Revelation 12:1-17 had shown its place in Satanic design. In Revelation 17:1-18 too the same Beast is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit: there we have its Satanic revival. Hence morally it is under the power of Satan. True it is that in Revelation 13:1-18 the future Roman Empire is meant, and in Daniel 7:1-28 how its chief comes to the point, and the two seem to merge, so that what is said of one is true also of the other. He blasphemes God, and sets himself up as equal with Him. "I will be equal to the most High" (Isaiah 14:14) says the last wielder of the power that began with Nebuchadnezzar. In his covenant with the Jews he promises them religious liberty for seven years; but at the end of three and a half years "he causeth sacrifice and oblation to cease." Nor does he only stop the performance of Jewish rites, but he seeks to force idolatry upon them. Of the faithful among the Jews who will not bow to the image set up in the temple, some will be persecuted to the death, others will flee into the wilderness to escape. Compare Psalms 42:1-11, Matthew 24:1-51. A remnant will be spared, and delivered when the Lord appears in glory, to become a strong nation.

Next the prophet sees a Beast rise out of the earth, that is, a political power rising out of a more settled state of affairs. But, as with the former Beast, the power is wielded by a man, and this one lamb-like in appearance with a voice that is Satanic. (3) He is the man of sin and the Antichrist, "the King" of Daniel 11:36, the idol shepherd of Zechariah 11:1-17. "The wicked one" of Isaiah 11:4, or rather "lawless one" of 2 Thessalonians 2:8. In Revelation 13:1-18 he is the wonder-working one who exercises the power of the first Beast (1) before it, and causes his image to be worshipped by all in his domain. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 describes him as sitting in the temple of God and claiming to be God.

Herein then lies the difference between the two (1 and 3). The first seeks to be equal to the Most High, the other shows himself that he is God. Thus both are blasphemers of God; but the bolder pretends to displace Him in His temple by claiming to be himself God.

Next the "king of fierce countenance" (2) will be, not only a great king but a sort of Rabbi in a philosophic way. He will have not only force of arms but also a spirit of crafty wisdom, so as to be able to explain enigmas; a sort of prophet like the second Beast in Palestine, who expounds profound and mysterious things. Thus by a deceitful and penetrating spirit he will gain great influence over the intellectual part of the Jewish nation, and persuade them into a false and irreligious security in which they forget and forsake Jehovah.

He will also be powerful but not by his own power, that is, another is to support him in his ambitious pretensions; which seem to be the "total destruction of Israel and the complete blotting out the very name from the earth" (cf. Psalms 83:4). Further, this king will neither own the supremacy of God, nor the right of His Son to earthly dominion. Obviously like the others (1 and 3), this personage is a blasphemous adversary. Who can doubt that "the King of the North" is supported by Gog the Czar of all the Russias? He is his Suzerain, and farther north still.

We have lastly to consider the end of these kings.

What leads up to all is their opposition to the authority of the Lord Jesus. God’s decree is that His Son shall be declared King over all the earth; and He invites the kings of the earth to submit to His rule (Psalms 2:9-12). But they follow their own way and are guided in their policy by the

overpowering object of self-aggrandizement. Nevertheless God’s decree is sure and irrevocable, and He will carry out His purpose in spite of earthly kings and their intentions. Hence Daniel 7:1-28 speaks of one like a son of man coming to the Ancient of days, and receiving from Him an everlasting dominion and a universal kingdom, that all nations should serve Him (vers. 13, 14). The nations will not submit to His rule, however, but will rise up in proud rebellion against Him, and must be dealt with in judgment by the Lord in person. The first gathering of nations against the Lord will be the western or European ten kings under the revived Beast’s chief, or Emperor (1), with the third King (3), the religious chief of the future, but Lieutenant politically as King of Palestine; in Revelation 19:1-21. he is designated "the false prophet" simply (ver. 20). Whatever dominion he had, he is seen in his ecclesiastical character, as a teacher of lies; in which capacity he denies not only Jesus as the Christ, but also the Father and the Son. When Babylon is judged and gone, there remains still this lawless ecclesiastical power which had wrought with the Beast (Revelation 13:12-18). Compare also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9. Both meet with the same tremendous judgment at the hand of God. "These both were cast alive into the lake of fire." See also 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Thus summarily will end the earthly career of these two atrocious enemies in chief.

After this "the King of the north" (2), having heard (it would seem) of the destruction of the Beast and the False Prophet with their armies at Jerusalem, comes up a second time to complete his conquest of that city (cf. Zechariah 14:3). His thought may be that, as its Western allies are destroyed, he will be able to make him an easy prey (Daniel 11:44-45). But his intentions are vain. For when he returns before Jerusalem, with all the confederate Eastern nations under his leadership, Jehovah shall go forth and fight against them; and the doom of the Assyrian (2) will be substantially similar to that of the Beast and of the False Prophet. If the Beast and the False Prophet were thrown alive into the lake of fire when the Lord shone out from heaven, the Assyrian must follow a little later (Isaiah 30:33). The Lord Jesus will assign the doom on both these occasions; and it will be executed. First of all, from heaven, He deals with the Beast and the False Prophet; then on the earth He will go forth as King of Israel but in an incomparably glorious way, and thus dispose of the Assyrian at the head of all the combined nations of the East, as the Western powers had been destroyed with the "Beast." Here, too, the Lamb shall overcome: for "He is King of kings, and Lord of lords."

We see, then, from what we have gathered in the word of truth, that each of these latter-day kings, though in some respects similar to the others, yet has certain features in connection with his career which necessarily and obviously distinguish him from the rest. At the same time there must be the simple dependence upon the Spirit of God and the diligent study of His word, if one would clearly understand the various truths taught therein. Thus does the hand of the diligent make rich, and such riches bring no sorrow with them. The fifth personage, one might add, the Emperor of the Russias, in that day goes forth as in Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29. But this may await another paper, as it is somewhat later than even the destruction of the Assyrian. W.T.H.

Chapter 121

S. The Lord's Testimony to the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch.

The Lord’s Testimony to the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch.

W. J. Hocking. The question involved in the denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is not one of merely correct literary and historical criticism. if so, simple believers could well afford to let the critics of one school strive with the critics of the other schools, while they chose the better part of enjoying the Christ of the scriptures, Who is the theme of the Old Testament no less than of the New, and of the Pentateuch no less than of the Psalms or the Prophets. It is not however the soundness of human theories, but the character of our Lord Himself that is involved. For if Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible — "the law" — as our Lord asserted more than once, but which the advocates of "modern criticism" deny, then the Holy Son of God stands convicted of ignorance or error, if not deliberate deception. Such a horrible and blasphemous imputation to the Person of Christ, which it is painful even to repeat, needs only to be mentioned to be instinctively repudiated by every godly and devout soul. Can the saints of God allow for a single moment that He Who was emphatically the "Truth" was either imposed upon by the baseless traditions of the day, or ignorant of the true writer of the very scriptures He came to fulfil? Yet such is the daring and defiant position occupied by that which vaunts itself as "higher criticism." And as this inflated assumption of worldly wisdom is developing in pernicious influence upon the people of God, and widening its line of attack upon all that is holy and divine, it may be profitable to briefly examine the words of Christ in reference to this subject, and also the principal arguments of those who have the unblushing effrontery to refuse to accept our adorable Lord as even a credible witness in the matter. In the first place then it is proposed to refer to the direct statements of the Lord as reported by the Holy Ghost through the evangelists. In the latter part of John 5:1-47 the Lord Jesus is reproving the unbelief of the Jews. He points out the abundant witness to His Person and mission. John the Baptist testified to Him (verses 32-35). The character of the works He was doing in obedience to His Father testified to Him (ver. 36). The Father himself testified to Him (ver. 37). So did the Father Himself witness from heaven (ver. 37). And the scriptures, which it was their duty to search, likewise testified to Him (ver. 39). Yet in spite of this fourfold testimony they refused to come to Him. And the Lord thereupon solemnly warns them of the gravity of such an attitude of unbelief. Not that He would accuse them of hardness of heart to His Father; but the very Moses in whom they trusted and boasted would rise up in judgment against them. "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" (verses 45-47). Now it is submitted that the Lord here emphatically affirms that Moses under God was the author of those books commonly ascribed to him; "peri gar emou ekeinos egrapsen", "for HE wrote of Me." In fact nothing else can be drawn from the passage. Moses, not Christ, was to be the accuser; therefore the writer, Moses, must be referred to as much as the person of Christ. Thus no room is left for the objection that Moses is here used tropically for the writings which bore his name; for if such be true in some other places,

here, at any rate, Moses is expressly distinguished from his writings. "He wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, etc." Surely the most violent rationalist would never seriously contend for the interpretation, "the Pentateuch wrote of Me." So that this portion appears decisive in establishing that our blessed Lord accepted and confirmed the current belief of the Jews, that Moses was God's agent in composing the Pentateuch. Compare also Mark 10:5 with 12: 19

Further, the denial of Moses as the author of the first five books robs this appeal of the Lord of its entire force. He adduces Moses, the human founder of their system of worship, as a witness to Himself. And it is well known with what reverence Moses was acknowledged by the Jews; therefore of what extraordinary weight with them would be the evidence of one who was their leader out of Egypt, and their law-giver at Sinai? And where was his testimony to be found at that late day? Nowhere but in his own writings, as our Lord plainly states. Now if it be true, as the critics dream, that the Pentateuch was fathered upon Moses, centuries after his death, how can it possibly be said that he witnessed of Christ in writings which he never wrote? But such theories are neither true nor worthy, but self-destructive; and the truth is sealed by our Lord's words before us, and expressed as the ordinary belief of very godly Jew by Philip of Bethsaida when he said "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph" (John 1:45).

Moreover, this scripture — "he wrote of Me" — indicates a unity of purpose in the writings of Moses, as well as a prophetic outlook into the future which could be nothing short of divine inspiration. However many "documents" Moses may have used in the compilation of the Pentateuch, all were co-ordinated to subserve one dominant purpose viz. testimony to Christ. And "if Moses testified the truth of Christ some fifteen centuries before He lived and died, he was a prophet, and inspired of God in what he wrote; and if God gave him, according to the Lord Jesus, to prophesy truly of Him, is it credible that he has written falsely of that of which even an ordinary man might have written truly? If the rationalist speaks aright, the Pentateuch is not Moses' writing, but a bundle of tales true and false, and in not one word written really of Christ; else it would be bona fide prophetic, which the system denies in principle; because true prophecy implies God's supernatural communication, and this would be necessarily a death-blow to the criticism of the rationalist." * {* W. Kelly's "Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Pentateuch" London 1871, p. 19: et passim.} And the indication of this lofty object in the writings of Moses. is by no means confined to these verses. The Lord points out the same thing to His disciples after His resurrection. To the dejected and sorrowful pair wending their way to Emmaus He reproachfully says, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27). Thus the true spiritual nexus of those ancient writings, missed by the dissecting critics, is "Christ," as another passage in the same chapter also states, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). Here, too, the Lord alludes to the well-known triple division of the books of the Hebrew canon, viz. the law, the prophets, and the psalms. These together comprised the "scriptures" as the next verse shows, "Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures." So that as has been said, "we may accept the Hebrew scriptures from the pierced hands of Christ Himself in resurrection:" though it is

not hereby implied that His words were more true one time than another.

Other references in the evangelists also agree in teaching that our Lord added the whole weight of His authority to the generally received view of the authorship of the Pentateuch. When the rationalists of that day came to Him with their alleged difficulty about the resurrection, they said "Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die and leave his wife behind him etc.", quoting from Deuteronomy 25:5, and manufacturing therefrom a highly complicated objection, as they thought (Mark 12:18-23). The Lord, at once, utterly condemns their interpretation of Holy Writ, saying, "Ye know (me eidotes) not the scriptures nor the power of God." But it is important to notice that He does not condemn them for ascribing Deuteronomy to Moses, and He did not accept their fabulous interpretation. Why should He accept their fabulous authorship, if indeed it be fabulous, as the critics groundlessly imagine? The Lord, however, proceeding to instruct them concerning the resurrection, takes up the very one to whom they had just referred and shows that he was opposed to their erroneous and sceptical notions. Neither was there any excuse for their ignorance of this. If they had read Deuteronomy, surely they must have read Exodus which Moses also wrote* "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the hush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham etc?" The Lord thus directly appeals to the Pentateuch as the book of Moses. And this phrase means simply the book which Moses wrote. For the word of God in another gospel, as if anticipating the mouse-holes through which the critics would fain creep, entirely forbids any thought to the contrary, such as the "book containing the law of Moses." Accordingly in Luke we read in the same connection, "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed in the bush, (or "the place concerning the bush." R.V.) when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham" etc. (Luke 20:37). This indicates unmistakably that the human author was Moses, while the parallel passage in Matthew 22:31 adds a word as to the divine inspiration of the same. "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham" etc. And it should be observed that it is the written word which is thus authorised in this scripture. For though the words themselves were originally addressed by God to Moses, in the written form they are said to be addressed by God to them, being divinely preserved for the profit of all. Compare also Mark 7:10 with Matthew 15:4.

{* Leviticus is also quoted as of Moses (Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14)} In another place also the Lord again affirms in very precise terms that Deuteronomy was written by Moses. It was this time to the Pharisees, who, though they agreed with the Sadducees as little as possible, had at any rate no difference of opinion as to owning the hand of Moses in writing the law. They came to Him temptingly with a question concerning divorce. Jesus said, "What did Moses command you?" They at once referred to Deuteronomy 24:1. Jesus answered and said unto them "For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this precept" (Mark 10:3-5). Language can scarcely be more distinct and definite than this. So that we can but marvel at the audacity of men professing to be shepherds of the flock of God who appear to have no compunction whatever in contradicting their Master and saying "it is certain that Moses himself could not have written the book of Deuteronomy." * And again "on the dramatic hypothesis, Deuteronomy (was) not written by Moses but in Moses' name to incorporate the Mosaic tradition." "We may suppose Deuteronomy to be a republication of the law in the spirit and power of Moses put dramatically into his mouth."

{*Lux Mundi. London 1891. Twelfth ed. Preface: p. 22: p. 261.}

It is hoped (D. V.) to attempt next month to point out in more detail the real character of these and similar assertions contrary to the words of our Lord.

1892 74 In the previous paper it was pointed out that our Lord not only frequently referred to the Pentateuch as the law of Moses*, but that He unequivocally stated its writer to have been Moses (John 5:46, Mark 10:5). And surely with all simple and godly souls the word of the Lord is sufficient, but it is avowedly not so with the critics. They, forsooth, have their own opinions to maintain, and accordingly endeavour to evade the direct force of this evidence by expedients, the character of which more than strongly hints at the desperateness of their position. Their principal theories are two, and have been not inaptly described as (1) the adaptation theory, and (2) the self-limitation theory. The first of these involves an attack upon our Lord's moral character and the second upon His Person. And from this their ultimate origin is sufficiently indicated.

{*It ought to be borne in mind that "Pentateuch" is not a scriptural term at all. But in the N.T. the "law" (except in the abstract reasoning of the epistles) may be taken as being equivalent to the Pentateuch; since the O.T. consisted of three parts, one of which, known as the "law," contained the first five books of the Bible.} The "adaptation" theory, as the term suggests, asserts that our blessed Lord adapted Himself to the mistaken beliefs of those among whom He lived. It states that the Jews wrongly ascribed the Pentateuch to Moses, and that the Lord gave His verbal assent to the notion though He knew it to be false. Now, in order to show that this representation of the theory is not unjust, the following quotations are made. Referring to the words "He (Moses) wrote of Me" (John 5:46), it is said "We may regard them as an address ad hominem, as an incidental and temporary adoption of the conceptions and language of those to whom He was speaking, in relation to a subject foreign to His immediate purpose. We may understand Him as if He had said: 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for the books which, as you suppose, Moses wrote, concern Me.'"** "He accepted, as the basis of His teaching, the opinions respecting the Old Testament current around Him; He assumed, in His allusions to it, the premises which His opponents recognized"*** "It is not derogatory to our Lord's Divinity to maintain that it was necessary for Him to argue with the Jews from their standpoint without necessarily endorsing the truth of the popular opinion"**** The sentiments herein expressed are by no means obscure or difficult of apprehension. The assumption common to all is, as has already been observed, that the ordinary belief of the Jews of that day in the Mosaic authorship of the first five books was quite erroneous; and further that the Lord accepted this, together with other current opinions, as the basis of His teaching.

{**"The Pentateuch: and its relations to the Jewish and Christian dispensations," by Andrews Norton. London, 1863. p. 96.

*** Professor Driver's "Introduction to Old Testament Literature." 1891. Preface p. 18:

**** Dr. Wright's "Introduction to Old Testament," p. 76.}

Such an hypothesis is most serious to all who desire to he loyal to Christ; since its acceptance unquestionably casts no small slight on the moral character of our adorable Redeemer. For the Lord, in some cases, made the entire force of His argument to rest upon the fact that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. To refer again to but one instance; in John 5:45-47 the point of our Lord's remarks is that Moses witnessed to Him. He is not alluding to the scriptures as such, for this

He had already done (John 5:39). But here He takes up the great lawgiver himself as a personal witness. Moses would be their accuser, and that because they believed neither him nor Christ. Truly, if they believed not the writings of him who wrote of Messiah, how should they believe the words of Messiah? Thus Moses and Christ, Moses' writings and Christ's words, are so antithetically placed that to all unbiased minds there can be no manner of doubt that our Lord meant His hearers to understand that Moses himself had testified to Him in his writings. Now, supposing it be true, as the advocates of the theory in question allege, that the Jews were all wrong in thinking that Moses wrote the law, then we are at once forced to the abominable conclusion that our Lord (may He forgive even such a thought!) declared to them that Moses, their great leader, wrote of Him, when, at the same time, He was perfectly aware Moses did nothing of the kind. So that He, herein, resorted to mere artifice and unworthy cunning in order to win the ear of His opponents. He thus exaggerated before them the value of the testimony borne to Him and sought to take advantage of their ignorance to advance His claims. In short, if the "adaptation" theory be true, Christ is found guilty of duplicity! Where can be the reverence, not to say love, of those who brave such an issue as this? Once more the Lord is wounded in the house of His friends. Will they never cease their unholy handling of the Word of life and truth? Is it either wise or good to seek to degrade our Lord to the level of a mere rhetorical trickster, in order to sustain what is, after all, no more than supposition? On whom then can we rely, if not on Him, Who was the Truth? And the Lord was not only the fulness of truth in His Person, but His words were the expression of Himself. As He Himself said to those who asked Him "Who art thou?" "ten archen hoti kai lalo humin." Absolutely that which I also am speaking to you"* (John 8:25). This is a direct reply to those who charge Him with equivocation. He was, what none ever were before or since, in exact correspondence with what His words expressed. So that all notions of "adaptation," save that He became a man amongst men, sin excepted, amount to ignoble calumnies against His holy and blessed Person. It is incredulity.

*{W. Kelly's translation in the B.T. Vol. 11: 97.} But this theory will not bear the light of facts on record. The allegation that Christ accepted the opinions current around Him is entirely visionary and altogether opposed to the words of the evangelists. On the contrary, from the commencement to the close of His ministry, He invariably upheld the sanctity and divine authority of the law as originally given, and condemned the human fancies and speculations with regard to it which were prevalent around Him. Did He, for example, accept "the current opinions" of the rabbis as to what was or what was not permissible on the Sabbath day? Was it a "wise accommodation to popular views "when He drove out the traders from the temple courts at the beginning as well as the end of His public life? Was it a measure of conciliation to charge the teachers of the law with "laying aside the commandment of God" whilst "holding the tradition of the elders"? (Mark 7:5-8) Do we find that in order to gain general favour He spared either the hypocritical punctiliousness of the Pharisees or the proud scepticism of the Sadducees? On the contrary, it is made manifest throughout the Gospels, that, wherever the Truth went, error was necessarily exposed. And as such was His general practice, it remains for the critics to explain why there was this exception, if indeed there is an exception, as they groundlessly imagine. Had the belief that Moses wrote the law been a blunder, it would not have been attested but would have been condemned, like their broad phylacteries and their divers washings. But the theorists further assume, without warrant, that the "law of Moses" was the only name under which the Pentateuch would have been recognized; so that the Lord was obliged to speak thus in order to be understood. "Jesus must have alluded to the

books of the Old Testament by their recognized names, just as men will always speak of the poetry of Homer, even if the composite origin of the Iliad and the Odyssey comes to be universally recognized."* Unless He had violated the whole principle of the Incarnation by anticipating the slow development of natural knowledge, He must have spoken of the 'Deuteronomist' as Moses (John 5:46-47) as naturally as He spoke of 'the sun rising.'"** Now, it is not necessary to refer again to the applicability of the allusion in this passage to the "man Moses," and not to a fictitious "Deuteronomist." But it is quite an error for Mr. G. to assume that He must have spoken in this way, as if no other term were intelligible.*** A very slight examination of the Gospels would have revealed that the single word "law" was well understood by the Jews to refer to the first five books, and not merely to the decalogue. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets" (Matthew 5:17). "Have ye not read in the law etc." (Matthew 12:5). "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed" (John 7:49). If the addition of "Moses" was not necessary in these and other instances, neither was it at all necessary for purposes of distinctness. So that, if our Lord merely wished to avoid anticipating "the results of scientific inquiry or historical criticism,"**** He might, when referring to the Pentateuch, have uniformly made use of the word "law," and thereby left the question of authorship unaffected by His words, and escaped the condemnation of the critics. Neither would He, by this means, have been impaled on the other horn of Mr. G.'s dilemma; for silence on the point in question could not "have violated the whole principle of the Incarnation by anticipating the slow development of natural knowledge." Therefore the simple truth can only be that Moses wrote the law, and the Lord confirmed the belief in the same by His authority, using such words as could leave no other impression on the minds of those who heard Him.

{* Bampton lectures by Charles Gore, M. A. p. 196.

** Lux Mundi, Pref. p. 25:

***Our Lord refers to the inspired books under the only name by which the reference would have been intelligible to His hearers." Lux Mundi, Pref. p. 26:

**** Driver p. 18:}

Another statement in connection with this theory should be pointed out because of its misleading character. Professor D. says "There is no record of the question, whether a particular portion of the Old Testament was written by Moses or David or Isaiah having been ever submitted to Him; and had it been so submitted, we have no means of knowing what His answer would have been."* Now this is really throwing dust in people's eyes. There is good reason why no such question as "Is it true that Moses wrote the Pentateuch?", was brought to our Lord; for not even the sceptical Sadducees doubted it in that day (Mark 7:1-37 :, Luke xx). But though no such question was asked, the fact is affirmed under such circumstances that the testimony thereto is none the less certain. For instance, when the Pharisees came to the Lord with a question concerning divorce, they referred to Deuteronomy and said "Why did Moses command so-and-so?" Here was an opportunity for the Lord to have shown, if such were the case, that this permission was granted not by Moses but by the "Deuteronomist" who lived many centuries after him. However, instead of saying the "Deuteronomist because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives," He said, confirming their own words, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts etc." (Matthew 19:7-8). So that, in this instance, a particular portion of the O. T. is submitted to the Lord as written by Moses; and those who have no theories to maintain, like Professor D., will surely

agree that our Lord gave a verbal assent to it.

{* Driver p. 18:}

Even the advocates of these notions themselves appear to feel the insufficiency of the "adaptation" theory, and accordingly the "self-limitation" theory is also advanced. The real effect however is not the mutual support and consolidation of the theories but their mutual destruction. As the false witnesses against the Lord before the high priest were valueless because their witness agreed not together, so the critics, in their eager desire to silence the Lord's testimony against them, have overreached themselves and destroyed one another. The "adaptation" theory declares our Lord was aware that Moses was not the author of the first five books, but that He said so in deference to the teaching of that age; while the "self-limitation" theory declares that our Lord was ignorant of the true author of the Pentateuch, being restricted in His knowledge to the current opinions of the day. Thus one says He did, the other He did not know. But it is impossible for both assertions to be right, though very possible for both to be wrong. The following quotations give the terms of the latter theory in the writer's own words. "Now when He speaks of the 'sun rising'* He is using ordinary human knowledge. He willed so to restrain the beams of Deity as to observe the limits of the science of His age, and He puts himself in the same relation to his historical knowledge."** "He never exhibits the omniscience of bare Godhead in the realm of natural knowledge; such as would be required to anticipate the results of modern science or criticism."*** "Indeed God declares His almighty power most chiefly in this condescension, whereby He 'beggared Himself' of divine prerogatives to put Himself in our place."**** "Why should it be thought that He would speak with certain divine knowledge on this matter (i.e. the authorship of the Pentateuch) more than upon other matters of ordinary science or history?"

{* Is Mr. G. alluding to Matthew 5:45? If so, the quotation is hardly accurate.

** Lux Mundi, p. 265.

*** Colenso on the Pentateuch. The italics are his.

**** Allowing that hos is the true reading in 1 Timothy 3:16, the same truth is equally declared in John 1:1-14. The first thought that strikes one in reading these brief extracts is the utter want of reverence displayed for the Holy Person of Whom they speak. The very attempt to limit the knowledge of "God manifest in the flesh" is, to say the very least, audacious in the extreme. And when He is thus reduced to the level of a poor ignorant Jew for the sole purpose of proving the vast superiority of nineteenth century wisdom, it is high time for such wolves to be stripped of their sheep's clothing that the flock may be warned. What more flagrant dishonour than to take advantage of His humiliation to seek to prove that His manhood was not even perfect, but could be imposed upon by the blunders of the "uncritical age" in which He lived? Have they forgotten the solemn words of the angel to, Mary "That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" Luke 1:35? Will not the remembrance of His Deity (for in spite of His lowliness He was never less than God) stay them from laying lawless and defiling hands upon His Humanity? But the fact is the intellectual pride of men will not brook the thought that even the inscrutable mystery of the Incarnation is beyond their ken. Defying the Divine utterance, "No man knoweth (epiginoskei) the Son but the Father," Matthew 11:27, they "rush in where angels fear to tread," proving their own folly and worse. Let them remember Kirjath-jearim. Surely this, above all

subjects the most holy, demands reverence, not curiosity, faith, not speculation. Yet it is asked "why should we permit in theology what we ruthlessly exclude from every other region of science"? Therefore it is sought to enlighten theology "the most difficult of all sciences" (sic) by instituting an "honest inquiry" into our Lord's knowledge as a man. Is it any wonder that theories such as these under examination, are promulgated, when our Lord, instead of being revered as the Truth, is treated and discussed in the same manner as a fossil, a zoological specimen, or a cuneiform inscription? It really means that faith is thrown to the winds, and man's mind and will made the judge of all.

1892 90 Nevertheless, since the astounding fact is revealed that He, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5), was pleased to dwell among men in the "likeness of sinful flesh," there can be but one proper attitude for the soul of man in presence of such a marvel. That attitude is to bow in adoration before such an incomparable display of grace, and to receive in humble faith whatever God has deigned to place on record in regard to it.

Now a cursory survey of our Lord's life on earth as found in the Gospels yields abundant testimony to the truth that, though He appeared among men in lowly guise, the knowledge He displayed was ever superior to what was others' and was, in itself, a sufficient proof that He must be a Divine Person. It is proposed, therefore, to cite some of the most striking of such passages, in order to show thereby that it is quite a gratuitous piece of assumption to say that our Lord was ignorant of the true authorship of the Pentateuch. The first portion to which we naturally turn is Luke 2:4; Luke 2:6. There we read that, at the age of twelve years, "They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Afterwards His public ministry was such as to cause His hearers to exclaim "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" (Matthew 13:54); and again, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15). This shows that His knowledge was not apparently derived from the usual sources, that is, from rabbis or from writings, but was personal and intuitive. Further, His insight into men's hearts and motives (as it was said, "He heard men thinking") is so often evidenced that even the writer of "Lux Mundi" is constrained to allow this much in a footnote, page 265. Compare Matthew 9:4; Matthew 12:25 : Matthew 16:8; Matthew 22:18; Mark 12:15; Luke 9:47; Luke 20:23. When the Lord told Nathanael that He had seen him under the fig-tree, the guileless Israelite, accepting this proof of His Divinity, at once replied, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God" (John 1:48-49). The testimony of the Samaritan woman concerning Him was "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29.) Now if the Lord was thus acquainted with the past history of both Nathanael and the woman at the well, surely it is not too much to believe that He knew the history of the Pentateuch, including the name of the man used of God to pen its pages. Even a Samaritan knew that Messiah when He comes "will tell (declare to) us all things." Think of a christian, of a professed christian minister, lowering Christ beneath the standard of a Samaritan woman!

Moreover, in certain cases it is to be noted that His knowledge is especially shown to be most extraordinary. When, for example, His garment fringe was touched, He immediately knew "in Himself" that virtue was gone out of Him (Mark 5:30). Similarly Mark 2:8 and John 6:61 prove that His knowledge was of no human order but divine. It is also stated that He "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him" (John 6:64), and indeed "all things that should come upon Him" (John 18:4). He could and did indicate beforehand the

piece of money in the fish’s mouth, the whereabouts of the ass’s colt, and the man bearing the pitcher of water. He also displayed His knowledge of the future by predicting to His disciples, His betrayal, His denial, His crucifixion and His resurrection.

These scriptural facts are sufficient to show how utterly untrue is the statement that Christ in His Incarnation "beggared Himself of divine prerogatives."* On the contrary, it is clear that it was as man He manifested omniscience, knowing equally the past, the present and the future, and thus demonstrating, beyond question, that He was both God and Man. When therefore the Son of God says that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, we dare not doubt His word. Shall not the Judge of all the earth speak rightly as well as do right? He that searcheth reins, and hearts (Revelation 2:23)?

{* Compare also Mark 2:5-7. The "emptying Himself" in Php 2:1-30 : refers to the form, and not the prerogatives. He was in the "form of God" and He "took upon Him the form of a servant."}

However, as might have been expected, the critics have not advanced these theories without endeavouring to fortify their position with Bible texts. It will be remembered that the Jews quoted scripture against our Lord, and so did a greater enemy for a worse purpose. Therefore it is no matter of surprise to find that it is sought to support the dogma of our Lord’s ignorance in certain matters by the word of God. And it should be equally no matter of surprise to find upon examination that the passages cited refuse to yield the support claimed from them.

We are told that when our Lord "asked for information, it was because He wanted it" (Matthew 15:34, John 11:34), implying thereby that He was ignorant of what He asked about. The first reference is to the feeding of the four thousand when the Master said to His disciples, "How many loaves have ye" (Matthew 15:34)? On turning to John 6:5-6, the unworthy inference is entirely and expressly exploded. There the Lord on a similar occasion said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove Him; for He Himself knew what He would do." In the other reference (John 11:34) we have the question concerning the grave of Lazarus "Where have ye laid him"? And we are asked to conclude from it that, though the Lord became aware of the death of Lazarus without human intervention and came to awake him out of sleep (John 11:11), He was yet unaware of the whereabouts of the sepulchre! We prefer to believe that as the weeping displayed His human sympathy, so the question indicated that human interest in the departed so precious to sorrowing hearts at such moments. It is, therefore, denied that there is any ground in scripture for the assertion that when He "asked for information, it was because He wanted it," that is, because of His own ignorance. It needs no study of Socrates to know that a question may be put for the sake of the questioned. Luke 24:18-19 furnishes a sufficient illustration. When Cleopas said to the Unknown One, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" The Unknown One, Who was none other than the Lord Jesus, said, "What things?" not assuredly because He was ignorant of His own recent sufferings, but with a view exclusively to the instruction of the two disciples.

Again we are told* that the verse "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" Luke 2:52, implies that "He could not have had perfect wisdom in His childhood." It might be retorted that this is no proof whatever that He did not possess perfect wisdom in His manhood. But the intention is to show that our Lord’s knowledge was limited. Such a thought, however, is entirely foreign to the verse. The reference is plainly to that which was made apparent to an observer. An eye-witness would have marked an advance both in stature and display of

wisdom. Surely it is not necessary to explain to a Professor that wisdom can only be seen or known in its exercise. So that this passage leaves altogether untouched the question as to the extent of the Lord’s knowledge. It simply informs us that as to outward appearance He was found "in fashion as a man," and is significantly silent as to the secrets of that incomprehensible Mind.

{* Professor Adeney in the" Thinker," Feb 1892, p. 138.}

Further: incontestable evidence is supposed to be found in Mark 13:32; concerning which, it is said, "He declared His ignorance in regard to the date of a future event.* The passage is as follows: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." But even this, their citadel, yields to a careful and prayerful consideration. It is significant that the phrase, "neither the Son," is to be found alone in Mark who writes of the Lord as the Servant-prophet. It is therefore, as such, that He declares His ignorance of what the Father had put in His own power (Acts 1:7). This should not be strange to a reader of the N.T. Luke 13:25-27 is an example of official ignorance. The master of the house says to those who have eaten and drunk in His presence "I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." The word also to five virgins will be "Verily I say unto you, I know you not" Matthew 25:12. Thus the real point of Mark 13:32, is the exclusive knowledge of God in regard to the day and hour. Even the Son, in taking the place of subjection and service, had received no direction to reveal that time. For, as He says, "the Father which sent Me gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:49). See also John 15:15. The true inference therefore from the passage in Mark is not the limitation of the Lord’s intrinsic and divine knowledge, but of His teaching in the servant position He took for the glory of God. The propriety of the phrase, too, is striking. Seeing that the day refers to the time when the once lowly Son of Man will be manifested in glory, what more in accordance with His place of dependence than that He should be in an expectant posture till it pleases the Father to make His enemies His footstool?

{* Professor Adeney.} In conclusion: it has been shown that the Lord’s testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is definite and unequivocal: and also that the theories advanced to invalidate that testimony are purely hypothetical, having not a tittle of support from the Word of God, but tending, as all deep error does, to undermine, not scripture only, but the Incarnate Word and Only-begotten of the Father.

Chapter 122

S. The Minister of the Sanctuary

The Minister of the Sanctuary When the apostle is showing how the sympathies of our Great High Priest are in constant exercise towards His suffering and sorrowing saints, he shows, at the same time, how the Lord's own pilgrimage through this world perfected Him as the lowly and obedient Man for the performance of this blessed part of His present priestly functions. Hence, we read: "In that he himself path suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and, being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:8-9). In this manner the Spirit of God instructs the believer as to the perfect way in which the great Sympathiser is qualified to help him through a lifetime of suffering, which is the direct result of a life of pious obedience. The pathway of the lowly Nazarene, so incomprehensible to the ordinary Jewish mind, is by this means turned to account, as it were, for the saints' blessing. But there is another requirement of the Christian life which is contemplated in this Epistle, also forming in itself a contrast with what was true in Old Testament days. Just as the walk is one of adversity in contrast with worldly ease and prosperity, so the worship of the believer is spiritual and heavenly in contrast with what was carnal and earthly with the Jew. And the Epistle goes on to develop how the Lord Jesus, as the minister of the sanctuary on high, supplies every weakness and deficiency of the saint in this respect also. The believer learns, therefore, that if meekness characterised the Lord Jesus on earth, majesty crowns Him in heaven. He is our High Priest. But what a Priest! He has passed through the heavens and taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty there. The glory of the Aaronic priesthood, in spite of its impressive ritual, its brilliant robes and its venerable lineage, all paled before the splendours of the new Priest that had arisen. For the one saluted by God as High Priest was of the order of Melchisedec, and not of the order of Aaron at all. And the seventh chapter of the Epistle demonstrates the exceeding superiority of this order, and hence of Him who is pre-eminently of this order Jesus, the Son of God, our ever-living Priest before the face of God,

Now, the apostle shows how this heavenly Priest suits us, and that not because of the sorrows of our pilgrimage, but because of the dignity of our worship. It is our privilege to draw near to God, even into His immediate presence the holiest of all (Hebrews 10:19-22). How can we do so? How can we act becomingly in the sanctuary? Because we, poor and feeble ones as we are, have this great High Priest over the House of God, and "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto. God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). In coming near to God, therefore (for the verse, of course, applies not to sinners, but to saints), we are permitted to do so with boldness, because whatever the greatness of our infirmities He is able to save to the uttermost.

Because, therefore, of the intimacy of our heavenly relationships and exercises, we need such an One on high for us. Indeed, such a necessity is stated most strikingly in the scripture itself: "For

such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). The fact that we have been made holy, and partakers of the heavenly calling, in contrast* with the ancient earthly people, made it necessary for there to be one to represent us on high and to intercede for us in our approach to God. Such an One, exactly suited to the spiritual worship now introduced, we ever have in our adorable Lord.

{*The contrast is illustrated in Luke 1:9-10. While Zacharias was in the temple (naos, the holy place) the people were without "His lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord; and the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."}

Christ, then, is in the sanctuary above for us. His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron or Melchisedec, though it is of the order (not yet of the exercise) of the latter. The sphere of His priestly service is in heaven, not on earth, but in the holies above, the true tabernacles "which the Lord pitched and not man."

"No temple made with hands His place of service is; In heaven itself He stands, A heavenly priesthood His. In Him the shadows of the law Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw." An earthly sanctuary, therefore, has now no place nor meaning according to the Epistle to the Hebrews. The sanctuary has been changed as well as the priesthood. And the holy place on high is the sphere of the Lord’s service. His priesthood was not of the order that Ministered in the holy place below. "If he were on earth," the apostle says,* "he should not be a priest (Hebrews 8:4). On the contrary, He has obtained a "more excellent ministry" (Hebrews 8:6) which He exercises in the sanctuary on high.

{*The reference in this passage is not to the work of propitiation, which is a basis laid once for all by a unique and exceptional priestly act (Hebrews 2:17), but to the service of priestly intercession and aids now carried on above.}

"The blessedness of the ministry of Him who ministers for us in the true tabernacle, is, that it is entirely independent of us. It is by Him for us. Our conscious enjoyment of it will depend, indeed, on our walk, on our humbleness, on our self-judgment, on many things; but the ministry itself depends alone on our unfailing High Priest. He is a faithful minister, ever performing His functions in a manner well-pleasing to God." W. J. H.

S. The Mystery.

The Mystery.

W. J. Hocking.

{"The Mystery" by the Rev. E. W. Bullinger, D.D., Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1895.}

1896 124 The object of the author of this tract is to show that the "mystery" as used in the New Testament Scriptures has reference to God’s calling out, during the time of Christ’s rejection, a people from both Jews and Gentiles whose position, association, and hope are intimately connected with Christ on high. Of necessity therefore, he rightly condemns the traditional confusion of Old Testament and New Testament saints, which dates the church from the gates of paradise. Nevertheless he himself falls into serious aberration from the truth in regard to this very portion of the subject.

"The Old Testament Saints," says Dr. B., "are a great burden to Expositors of New Testament Truth" (page 50), So he very kindly undertakes to relieve them of this embarrassment once and for all. While the church forms the body of Christ, we are now told the elect saints of the Old Testament constitute the bride of Christ, the Lamb’s wife. He forbears to blame too severely those who have long held the identification of "the Body with the Bride," owning that "there is certainly some little excuse for its having been so generally entertained" (page 49).

Having duly noted and acknowledged this gracious remark of Dr. B.’s, we proceed to consider the scripture he advances to show that the Bride is the elect of Israel, and not the church which is Christ’s body. On page 49 we read, "The Bride in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea, is Israel, or at any rate the elect of Israel." This appears fair enough, save that his phrase, "elect of Israel," has an air of novelty, which amounts to suspicion when it is further explained to be, "those who were partakers of the heavenly calling in Israel." Dr. B. evidently wishes us to see that the O.T. prophecies concerning the Bride only contemplate a portion of the nation of Israel. He refers to Isaiah 54:5-8; Isaiah 62:4; Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:16-17; adding, "These and other passages clearly prophesy that an election of Israel shall be the Bride" (p. 50).

Now before passing on to the development of Dr. B.’s theory, a very slight consideration of the prophecies named will show that they speak of a time when Jehovah will re-assume the character of husband to her who is a widow, — when in fact Israel will be brought again into relationship with Himself as an earthly people. There is certainly nothing in the prophecies adduced to indicate that the subjects of them were "partakers of the heavenly calling" (a phrase Dr. B. has appropriated from the New Testament, not the Old, to bolster up his theory). Take his first passage, Isaiah 54:5. It says, "Thy Maker is thine husband" truly; but the very same verse gives Him another title, "The God of the whole earth." What is this but earthly blessing in the millennium? So also in verse 3 of the same chapter, speaking of Israel, "Thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." We are sure Dr. B., with the regard he continually avows for the congruity of figures, will not seriously connect "desolate cities" with the heavenly calling. But neither does

Isaiah 62:4 yield real support. We have there not a celestial but a terrestrial sphere. "Zion" and "Jerusalem" in verse 1 locate the promised blessings, and "righteousness" and "salvation" are for the saints in the "land." "Thy land shall be married" we read; and therein Israel shall enjoy the corn and the wine (verses 8-9). Does Dr. B. really expect us to credit that these prophecies refer to a heavenly Bride?

We turn now to Jeremiah 3:14, "I am married unto you." This chapter treats of the still future restoration of the Jews to Palestine. We are unable to trace the slightest reference to "the partakers of the heavenly calling." But treacherous Judah and back-sliding Israel repent and come to Jerusalem, the throne of Jehovah. They will come out of the land of the north to the promised land; and all nations even shall be gathered to Jerusalem (verses 17-18). Can there be any doubt that the figure of marriage is here applied to the re-establishment of God's earthly people, and has no sort of reference to the partakers of the heavenly calling?

Hosea 2:1-23 is no less conclusive that an earthly people is the subject of the Spirit of prophecy. Earthly judgments first fall upon that guilty nation (verses 9-15); and then Jehovah promises to make a covenant for her with the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven, and to break the bow and the sword, and to make them lie down safely. "And the earth shall bear the corn, and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel" (verses 18-23). It is unquestionably pictorial of a scene of earthly blessedness under renewed relationship to Jehovah. The teaching therefore of the four O.T. prophecies to which Dr. B. makes reference is that a time is yet to come when Israel will be the "Bride" of Jehovah; and that time cannot be until the chosen nation is gathered into its own land under the sway of Jehovah and His Anointed.

Turning to Dr. B. we are astounded at the position he takes up. He coolly asserts (for it is really without either scripture or argument to support it) that "the elect Saints of the Old Testament will form the Bride," which is the "great City, the holy Jerusalem" of Revelation 21:9-27. This, he contends, "is the city for which all those who were partakers of the Heavenly Calling looked" (page 51); and he refers to Hebrews 11:13-16. As a matter of fact, after observing how many folks Dr. B. seeks to set right in his little treatise of rather less than sixty pages, we were scarcely prepared to fall upon such glaring inconsistency in the author himself.

For, observe, he will have it (page 50) that the saints of old who died in faith are those who form the heavenly Bride of the Lamb. But he quotes four prophecies (pp. 49-50) that refer to Israel's restoration to the land under the figure of marriage. And he knows these are yet to be fulfilled, because he tells us that Israel's blindness will come to an end (p. 10). When that is so, there will be the earthly Bride. So that if Dr. B.'s notions have any foundation, there will be two brides — a heavenly and an earthly. And he is found to hold the very thing that he himself condemns on page 49 (viz: — that there are two brides), and sets himself to disprove. It has rarely been our lot to come across such an instance of thinly-disguised self-contradiction as this. The truth is that there are two brides; only the heavenly one is the church, and not the saints who died in Old Testament times, as Dr. B. maintains without adequate support.

There were always, he says, those in Israel who lived "by faith" and "died in faith," and were "partakers of the heavenly calling." They looked for a heavenly country where God had prepared for them a city (Hebrews 11:13-16). Abraham also looked for a city which hath foundations. Turning now to Revelation 21:1-27. , we are reminded that the Bride is there introduced under the

symbol of a city. Now, exclaims Dr. B. in emphatic capitals, "what are we to understand but that this CITY — which is declared to be the BRIDE, the Lamb's Wife, is the city for which all those who were partakers of the Heavenly Calling looked; and that these elect saints of the Old Testament will form the Bride" (page 51)? We do not, however, understand the same from these scriptures as Dr. B., even with the aid of his capitals. It surely does not follow that because "city" occurs in Heb. and in Rev., it necessarily symbolizes the same truth in both places. We had not yet learnt that because we read of an "ark" in Genesis 6:1-22. and Exodus 2:1-25. and in Exodus 25:1-40. of the ark of the covenant, the ark of bulrushes and Noah's ark were synonymous terms. Indeed we must remind Dr. B. that on pages 13-15 he himself has shown that a single word (ecclesia) can be used in several senses. Why, therefore may not the word, "city," be used to convey two different ideas in two books? In Hebrews 11:1-40. the word is used to portray that established and permanent abode in heaven for which the Old Testament saints looked in contrast with their temporary and uncertain residence upon earth. Abraham awaited the time when he should exchange his tent for a city, and so did the other patriarchs. But in Revelation 21:1-27. the city symbolizes the saints themselves, just as in:Revelation 17:18. another city, Babylon, sets forth corrupt Christendom in the last days. Here then the Bride is the city: while the Jewish saints hoped to be in a city, that is, a glorious dwelling place on high. But the holy Jerusalem which John sees seems emblematical rather of a seat of government than a habitation.

1896 139 In the following page (52) we encounter some extraordinary statements indeed. On the gates of the city Dr. B. finds the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the foundations the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We should have supposed that the names of all the twelve apostles would have satisfied even a divine of the nineteenth century that the holy city was the church of God. But they are no match for Dr. B.; with one stroke of his pen he cuts off the whole band. We are familar with wholesale excommunications by arrogant popes; but even they were never bold enough to turn Peter and the eleven en masse out of the church of which they were the honoured foundations (Ephesians 2:1-22). But Dr.B. is troubled by no squeamish scruples. What can he do with his theory about the Bride if the apostles form part of the body of Christ? With rare effrontery, urged on by overwhelming zeal for the offspring of his imagination, he declares that the twelve apostles are "separated off from the church!" The church is part of the Bridegroom, but the apostles form no part of the bride! There is therefore, according to our author, not the shadow of a shade of a doubt that those who have regarded Peter and John, for instance, as among those whom God set first in the church, have been the unfortunate victims of an egregious delusion! The fact that the names of the twelve apostles are seen in the foundations of the symbolical city of Revelation 22:1-21. receives explanation from the Epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2:19-22). It indicates, in spite of Dr. B.'s reveries, that the apostles had a good deal to do with the church. So far from being outside of it, they are as closely connected with it as a foundation is with the building raised upon it. Saved Jews and Gentiles were and are being built upon a foundation which is not of the apostle Paul to the exclusion of the others, but "of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone." This building under the workmanship of the Holy Ghost is growing unto a holy temple in the Lord. In that same word the Ephesian saints, with other believing Jews and Gentiles, are viewed by the apostle as "forming God's house upon earth, God dwelling in it by His Spirit.

Here then in this Epistle, which specially treats of the mystery, the body of Christ is presented as a building having the apostles for a foundation, and growing to a temple in the Lord, but is even now God’s habitation in the Spirit (cf. 1 Peter 2:5-6); while in Revelation 21:1-27. a building is again presented to us, having foundations in which are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Now what more simple and unstrained than to see in both places a figure of the;church, the body and bride of Christ?

Nay, says, the author of the "Mystery," that cannot be. What are we to do with the promise of Christ to the apostles which has never been abrogated, that they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28) if they form part of the body of Chris (page 52)? But it is puzzling to see how membership of the body of Christ would hinder the apostles from judging the tribes of Israel, any more than it would hinder the Corinthian saints from judging the world (1 Corinthians 6:2), or the overcomer in Thyatira from ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26-27). Will Dr. B. amputate the body still further by cutting off the Corinthian saints and those in Thyatira? The sole justification for his monstrous excision of the apostles is a "comparison of Matthew 19:28 with Revelation 21:14." Let wise men examine for themselves. What necessary connexion is there between the names in the foundations and sitting on twelve thrones? On page 54 Dr. B. sums up in very decided terms, "What is clear and certain is that the church is the body of Christ Himself, and that the members of the body being in Christ (mystical) are PART OF THE BRIDEGROOM, and cannot possibly, therefore, be the bride herself."

Now it is hardly conceivable that our author is unaware of the common danger of confusing the sign with the thing signified. He surely knows also that it is a frequent and well-understood practice to compare an object in two perfectly dissimilar ways, for the purpose of illustrating two distinct qualities of that object.

We will give an example of this to make our point quite clear. Let us suppose that an impatient reader, referring to a treatise of inconsequential ideas and vain fancies, alludes to its author as "a goose," and subsequently as "a mule." By the first figure he would probably wish to convey the general vacuity of thought characteristic of the writer, and by the second his stubborn persistence in wrong notions. And though the figures might perhaps be more forcible than elegant, they would be perfectly admissible. But Dr. B. would contend that they must refer to two different persons. For, he would say, if a man is a goose how can he be a mule? One is a biped, the other a quadruped. One cackles, but the other kicks; and so on with other dissimilarities. But does he not forget that though a goose cannot be a mule, a man may be both a goose and a mule at the same time, inasmuch as it is quite possible for him to be not only foolish but obstinate as well?

Dr. B. keeps insisting that the body cannot be the bride, when the truth is that it is the church which is figured both as the body and the bride. While it is perfectly true that these figures are allied in character, they are nevertheless used to set forth distinct ideas. The "body" indicates that intimate degree of living unity existing between Christ and His members, and is used particularly of the church during its stay on earth. On the other hand, the foremost thought suggested by the "bride" is that of association. The church is to love and share Christ’s glory, reigning with Him. Hence where the professing church is shown as the false bride (Revelation 18:1-24), she is seen taking her glory from the kings of the earth with whom she enters into unnatural alliance. But the true bride awaits the heavenly glory of Christ.

We must, however, say a word as to Dr. B.'s treatment of Ephesians 5:28-29, which is another instance of his pitiful trifling with these sacred themes. Here, he says, "the great secret is employed as an argument to the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives. In neither case is it said that the church is the wife or that Christ is the husband. But that as Christ loves His body (the church), so husbands ought to love their bodies (their wives)" (page 54). Now Dr. B. admits in so many words that a man's wife is here spoken of as his body, but where the question is the church as both the body of Christ and the Lamb's wife, he is completely boggled. He simply shuts his eyes, and says the only thing "clear and certain" is that it cannot possibly be.

Now the point in the verses is that a bride is a man's body, that he and his wife are mystically "one flesh." This was literally true in the case of Adam and Eve; for the rib that God took from Adam He builded into a woman; and God called their name, Adam (Genesis 5:2). And these figures are applied by the apostle (we are not so concerned about "New Testament Expositors"), to Christ and the church. "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). So that the passage bases the love of the husband to the wife upon the identity (in figure) of his body and his bride; adding, that so it is with the Lord and the Church.

Dr. B.'s remarks on Matthew 25:1-13 afford another example of his riding a figure to death. The virgins cannot be the bride, because they are her attendant companions! We wonder if he objects in the same way to the Lord's similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew 13:1-58. Does he say it is "clear and certain" that the great tree cannot be the leaven hid in three measures of meal, any more than the latter can be the same as the treasure, because it is likewise "clear and certain" the treasure was hid in a field and not in the three measures of meal? The Lord, however, likens the kingdom of heaven to all three, however they may differ when compared among themselves. In point of fact, just as the types of scripture cannot be understood until we know the truths they typify, in like manner, paradoxical as it may seem, the language of scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without knowing the underlying thoughts. This the Lord said to the Jews, "Why do ye not understand my speech? (lalia) even because ye cannot hear my word" (logos) (John 8:43). The case of Nicodemus illustrates the same thing, for he utterly mistook the meaning of the Lord's words (John 3:4). But why does Dr. B., dwelling upon the nonidentity of the bride and the virgins, her companions, reiterate the ruler's question, "How can these things be?" Is it not best first to ascertain the purpose of the parable? This is supplied in Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." Now we can understand attendant virgins slumbering and sleeping but how incongruous would it have been to represent a bride falling asleep on such an occasion? Do not the "Spirit and the bride say, Come?" (Revelation 22:17) Beside half of them are shut out, a circumstance quite foreign to the figure of a bride, but faithfully illustrating the fate of the mass of professing Christendom, as we are taught in unfigurative language elsewhere. The ten virgins therefore set forth the mixed company of those who take the place of Christians, while the bride figures the church in glory associated with Christ in His public appearing and reign.

Dr. B. maintains (page 55) that Rebekah does not illustrate the church but the bride, that is, O.T. saints spoken of in Hebrews 11:1-40. The sole reason given is that the bride (Rebekah) was not to be of "the Canaanites," and "Gentiles were expressly shut out" in contrast with the church which embodies Jew and Gentile." But Dr. B. overlooks that amongst those expressly named in the "great cloud of witnesses" (to which he refers in Hebrews 11:1-40.) Rahab is included (verse 31), who was both a Gentile and a Canaanite. We think this fact rather spoils the symmetry of Dr. B.'s

argument; and it is undeniable that theories must give way to facts. The "better thing" (Hebrews 11:39-40) is said by our author to refer to the position of greater glory and honour the body of Christ will have than the bride; whereas it refers to the present blessing of Christianity which God has now provided for us and which we enjoy already, while they had only unfulfilled promises. Nevertheless both they and we shall be perfected together in the first resurrection (compare the use of "better," in Hebrews 7:19-22; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:23).

We have now examined the scriptures that Dr. B. has brought forward to show that the body of Christ is not identical with the heavenly bride of Christ; and we find that not one of them bear's him out in his misshapen theory. Being over-occupied with the nature of the metaphors employed, he has missed the truth signified. The "body," which indicates in a word the nature of present living unity betwixt Christ and the church, is characteristically found in the Epistles while the "bride" signifying the future association of the church, when perfected and glorified with Christ, is appropriately used in the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse. What is first His body becomes His bride, as in the case of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:1-25), which Ephesians 5:1-33 authorises as a picture of Christ and the church.

Until the nuptial day the church awaits with joyous anticipation. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17). How perverse to suppose that the Holy Ghost is moving the spirits of the departed saints of O.T. days, who are now on high, to cry, Come! The bride here can only refer to the church, which alone is the habitation of the Spirit. Besides it is the saints on earth, not those in the presence of Christ, who say, Come. The fact is Dr. B.'s theory does not accord with the truth as revealed. He has offered us bread, but we find it is a stone.

We propose (D.V.) to examine some further points raised by Dr. B. in this tract.

1896 155 Dr. B. informs us that the truth of the mystery, (that is, his explanation of the mystery) "removes another popular tradition — that the church dates from Pentecost! It is only a traditional interpretation on the part of man, and is destitute of any authority, unless it can be proved to be so from the word of God" (page 43). The reason he gives in support of his position is novel enough. It is a mistake, he says, to look for anything about the church in the Acts. This notion of which the Dr. seems not a little proud crops up here and there throughout the tract. He refuses to allow that the church is referred to in either the Gospels or the Acts. Thus, "In the Gospels and the Acts we have the kingdom rejected In the Epistles we have the interval, but chiefly in its relation to the church" (page 11, and similarly on page 15). The Acts "records the transitional history between the rejection of the kingdom, and the setting up of the church" (page 42). The Acts "is like the Gospels, a historical record of the rejection of the King and the kingdom of Israel (page 43). From an expression on page 44 we hoped Dr. B. only meant to emphasize that the doctrine of the church is confined to the apostles; and that he would be ready to grant that in the Acts we have the history of the founding and practice of the church. His expression is, "We must not read teaching concerning the Mystery into the Gospels and Acts" (page 44). But when he proceeds to expel the twelve apostles from the church (page 52), we know not what to think, except that he really means what his words imply, viz., that the church dates from the close of the Acts. If he does not mean this, then his words are without point or force. It requires but little critical acumen to know that an historical book like the Acts is not the place for unfolding the doctrines. Paul, not Luke, is the exponent of "the mystery."

Surely, however, Dr. B. knows that Paul wrote several of his Epistles during his missionary travels, which are recounted in the Acts. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, the two to the Corinthians, that to the Romans and that to the Galatians, were all composed by him before his imprisonment at Rome. And if these Epistles do not reveal the doctrine of the mystery as is done in those to the Ephesians and Colossians, it is because they were written for other purposes. Even these, however, are not without sufficient references to show that the truth was known by the saints.

Romans 16:25-26 is one of Dr. B.'s "three important scriptures in which the great secret is specially and formally revealed" (page 16). This passage, without referring to others, tells us that then, at the time the Epistle was written, which was certainly before the close of the Acts, the mystery was being made known by prophetic writings. And it is Dr. B. himself who says, "amongst the prophetic writings may be included four Epistles, those to the Thessalonians and Corinthians" (page 17). The fact is, therefore, that Paul (and others, too, receiving it from him) was making known by both voice and pen the doctrine of the mystery long before the period mentioned at the close of the Acts. This Dr. B. with characteristic incoherency allows or admits the possibility of. He is not certain, but he thinks "a special work connected with the mystery was about to be commenced," (Acts 13:1, page 42).

Now this is unsettling the mind of the saints for no purpose whatever. The trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound. Of what value is it to declare the church did not begin at Pentecost, if he does not know when it began, and even makes such conflicting statements as have been referred to?

We propose to bring forward briefly one or two considerations, which indicate that the day of Pentecost was the birthday of the church, the body and bride of Christ. In the first place, then, we find throughout the whole of the Acts that there existed a newly formed company of believers who were perfectly distinct and separate from both Jews and Gentiles. This company is called "the assembly of God, which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). At the very beginning (Acts 2:1-47) the assembly or church consisted of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, upon whom the Spirit of God was poured out baptizing them into one body. The same day three thousand souls received Peter's word of testimony and were added to this company already formed (Acts 2:41). And it became a daily event that the Lord was adding together such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).

Thus there was a new society formed altogether apart from the men of Israel whom Peter exhorts to repent (Acts 3:1-26). It is true that these believers were as yet drawn solely from the ranks of Jews and proselytes. But they were nevertheless severing connection with the ancient people of God. When Peter and John were dismissed from the presence of the Jewish council, they proceed at once to "their own company" (Acts 4:23). [In Acts 5:11, these saints are expressly called "all the church." Compare Acts 8:3; Acts 9:31 (especially in the critical text); Acts 11:26; Acts 12:1; Acts 12:5; Acts 13:1; Acts 14:23; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:22; Acts 16:5; Acts 18:22; Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28.] Further additions are made to this company (Acts 5:14); and the number of disciples multiplied (Acts 6:1-7) to the alarm of the Jewish authorities, The persecution comes and those of "the assembly" in Jerusalem are scattered abroad to strange cities. But wherever they are, they remain distinct from their former brethren according to the flesh, so that Saul can go off to Damascus to apprehend them.

Next, Samaritans are received (Acts 8:1-40) and Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). This is all the work of "the twelve"; and then Paul takes up the work (Acts 13:1-52) after the formal admission of the Gentiles. In this we see the wisdom of God. As soon as Gentiles and Jews were brought to meet together in one common assembly, Paul is commissioned to unfold to them the purpose of God in thus bringing them together. In this new relationship national distinction was obliterated, and Jew and Gentile were united to form one mystical "man," the church of which Christ is Head. This was called the "mystery," because it had not been before revealed that Jew and Gentile should be made sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. This doctrine the apostle doubtless taught all the believers wherever he went, and not merely the new converts. Dr. B. seems to think that those who believed before the revelation of the mystery did not participate in its blessed truth, not even the twelve apostles. But this notion is only another specimen of his unwarrantable mystification of the mystery. Paul tells us himself that he went up to the apostles at Jerusalem and communicated to them the gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:2). They gave him the right hand of fellowship in his work. And when afterwards at Antioch Peter would have denied the equality of Jews and Gentiles by withdrawing from eating with the latter, Paul withstood him to the face. Whether he preached the "mystery" or not, the apostle of the circumcision was as much bound to act upon it as any.

It is idle to suppose that Peter, James, and John knew nothing of the "mystery," because no writings of theirs on the subject remain. It was not committed to them to unfold it, but to Paul. Each apostle had his line of things given him; and in those days every man did his own work, but each of course in co-operation with his fellows.

However, from what is above, it is surely clear that in the Acts there are the plainest indications of the formation of a special assembly of people, composed first of Jewish believers to which Samaritans and Gentiles are added at later stages.

Now what is this company, if not the church? Oh, Dr. B. will say, they are in a transitional state like the disciples in the days of the Lord (pp. 42, 43). Nay, Dr. B.; you have overlooked a most important differentiating fact. In Gospel times the Holy Ghost was not yet given. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended to abide. And His habitation is the church (Ephesians 2:22). No doctrines (not even that of the "mystery") ever made the church, any more than the church ever made the doctrines. But the Holy Ghost is the raison d’être of the church. As long as He is here, so long will the church be here. When He came, it was to unite believers to Christ in glory. Thus the church dates from Pentecost, because of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Ananias and Sapphira are solemn proofs that He was then dwelling in the church (Acts 5:3).

There is the development of the peculiar features of the church as Gentiles are admitted; but this in no degree affects the truth that Pentecost was the date of the inception of the church. To hold otherwise is to dissociate the Holy Ghost from the formation of the church, an historical circumstance which is indicated with notable distinctness in the opening of the Acts; and also to confuse the fact of the establishment of the heavenly relationship of the saints with the revelation of that relationship. Would Dr. B. maintain that no one is a member of the body of Christ, unless he knows the truth of "the mystery?" And yet the sum and substance of his reasoning is to show that the date of the revelation of the mystery must be the date of the formation of the church: a conclusion for which no scriptural warrant can be found.

There are other points of error in the tract, but those already noted will suffice to show that the whole structure of the theory is raised upon an unscriptural basis. We trust, therefore, that Dr. B. will re-consider the whole subject; for we assume from the title of another tract of his, that he agrees with us as to "the importance of accuracy in the study of Holy Scripture." W.J.H.

Chapter 124

S. The Permanence of Divine Things

The Permanence of Divine Things Notes of an Address

"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings; for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene; of whom is Hymenaus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (2 Timothy 2:15-19, R.V.). In the latter part of this scripture we have truth that has already been brought before us today. For we have been reminded what are our duty and responsibility in the present condition of things. Only we have here a little more than a reminder of what is due from us. It is needful for us also to know what we have been made in Christ, and what we inherit in the things that God has given us and which we can never lose. If called to the path of duty we must have that which gives us strength. It is no use to go to an anaemic person and tell him to have strength; he needs it. Amid the wreck of Christendom what have we still remaining? Do we not find ourselves desponding oftentimes because we look at what we have not, instead of what is secured to us in Christ? This Epistle was written in view of what had come upon the church in apostolic times. There were those who had seen the fair scene in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when all were filled by one holy Personage. The astonishing outward unity was true not only in Jerusalem, but Gentiles were brought in, who forgot racial animosities, and the love of God was shed abroad alike in all their hearts. But how soon this faded! In half a century it was gone. In the days in which Paul writes, how much had come in to sadden his heart! It was a trial and a sorrow to such an energetic man to be shut up in Rome while tidings came in from all parts of the world that assemblies were departing from the faith, who forgot to love one another. Disciples turned away from him, forgot him, and were ashamed of his chain! If so then, what now? Men then were erring from the truth, and God’s providence overruled this for our profit, that in the counsel given for that day we might have guidance in paths of similar difficulty. Hence we have words in this Epistle which send a flash of light over the dark waters of strife and confusion. Men were misconstruing the word of God; and it was needful for a workman, if he did not wish to be ashamed, to handle it rightly. It is a solemn thing to take the scissors and the paste and seek to improve the word of God. Let us heed the warning of the apostle here, and be careful to divide rightly the word of truth. Men Paul knew who had missed the mark. People like something new, and so did Hymenaus and Philetus. They talked of the resurrection as having taken place already, and overthrew the faith of some. A man who speaks to others on any subject takes a great responsibility upon himself, but how much more do those who speak of the word of God? But the apostle has a word of cheer and comfort, and it is this which is on my mind tonight — the last words I read. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure," or, as it should read, "The firm foundation of God standeth." I think it a needed word at all times; and from what has been before those assembled here today it is clear that it is intensely needed at this time. In face of apostasy

the apostle turns to what is immoveable and imperishable. Never mind the fables of Hymenaeus and Philetus; you have what God has established and which abides evermore. In spite of all that is bewildering at the present time, this is as true and fresh today as ever; and there is as much power in it as ever. We need not want to go back to Pentecost. What have we got now? The foundation of God. What is it? Because it is not defined people begin to speculate. You have only to consult commentators to see what confusion is the result. Some would refer you to a concordance. A concordance is excellent when used as it should be, but it is not the Bible. It will help you to find parallel references to a text, but it will not give you its meaning. The foundation, I believe, refers here to that which God has established for the comfort of our souls. It is not one thing or another specifically, but a general word which comprehends those things He has given us in Christ Jesus. But three things are specially prominent among those secured to us in these days, and they have all been before us at various times today. In Haggai 2:4 we have Jehovah's word, "I am with you." The New Testament answer to this is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His fulness and sufficiency. And, blessed be God, this is not dimmed. The prophet spoke also of the Spirit and the word of God. And we still have all three (2: 5).

Think now what this implies to me and to you. We have Christ as He was given to the church at the beginning. Take John's Gospel. In John 5:1-47 the Lord is spoken of as the Giver of life, while in chap. 6. He is the Supporter of that life, its bread. And the believer whose hunger has been satisfied is the one who knows how to continue to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:56).

What gives support to the soul in days like this? We look back on One who was ceaselessly active when here, yet abiding in unbroken communion with the Father; and we have the privilege of hearing His words and seeing His actings to all sorts and conditions of men. As we read these things our souls are fed. In John 10:1-42 it is the Shepherd who cares for the excommunicated sheep of John 9:1-41. When through faithfulness to Him we find ourselves alone, is He not there to welcome us? He is the same today as ever. In John 13:1-38 we have infinite comfort. The Lord Jesus Christ just before He was crucified is in the midst of His own. They are only a very few, but a Judas is there, and a Peter is there, so self-confident. But are His loving words affected by what He sees in their hearts? He speaks to lead them on in the knowledge of Himself, liable as they are to temptation; and by words and illustration intended to fasten the truth on their hearts He washes their feet, removing the defilements of the way. Amid all the confusion of the present time we have One who acts for us in glory as in the upper room. We have Him still in this way; for amid all the wreck of ecclesiastical things this firm foundation stands. That is John. There are some who delight to set Paul at loggerheads with the other apostles, but he is not so in the scriptures, when read aright. Nor is he as to our subject. The apostle has a deal to say to the Hebrews about the Mosaic system set aside to make way for Christ. But though the Jewish system is shown to decay, in the first and last chapters we are reminded that Jesus Christ never passes away. "Thou art the same." "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 1:12; Hebrews 13:8). It is true that we ourselves have seen things and instititions fade away; but in the person of Christ we have One on whom change can never come; and He abides in ministry as at the beginning. In the Revelation, amongst the churches where is the Lord? Still there, walking among the candlesticks. But we have also the Spirit of God. The Lord promised another Comforter, or Paraclete; One who should be as much to them as He Himself had been here in this world. He should come down and remain until the bride of Christ is ready and the Lord comes for her. There

is a lovely picture of this in Genesis 24:1-67, where Eliezer convoys Rebekah across the desert to Isaac. Is it not the blessed office of the Spirit to cheer our onward way by the ministry of Christ? The great sin of Christendom is the practical denial of the presence of the Holy Ghost. If we realised His presence when gathered together for worship, how softly we should move, how slow to speak, how much we should fear to break the silence of the Spirit! He remains in all the sovereign activity He had at the beginning. Why do we not see more of His activity? Because we look amiss; we look for great things, and forget the still small voice. Two things ever characterise the work of the Spirit. He is here to glorify Christ, and is the power by which we worship the Father and the Son. And one absolute mark of the Spirit is this glorifying Christ. But this in itself might he misleading. Hence we have a criterion. The Spirit always works in accordance with the word. There is a threefold cord the Son could say, "I am . . . the truth" (John 14:6); so also, "the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6); and "thy word is truth" (John 17:17). If I find myself taking a certain course of action, how am I to know if it is in accordance with the Spirit? I have the word as a guide. And so we can try this on ourselves, only — we prefer to try it on others! A word now on the treasure we have in the word of God. This is only refreshing when we come to it, with human theories placed on one side. Some come with the set notion of supporting their own fancies, and look out texts accordingly. We need the word as a continual power in our own souls, and this alone can keep our souls in communion.

If we set up a religious routine of our own, it is possible for persons to fall in with it and trust to that routine for benefit to their own soul. A person may go to the worship meeting looking for a word, and, if there is no word, go empty away; and serve him right. We must go to the word of God for ourselves. Why do we not? Because it proceeds to set us right and to discover what is wrong with us. And this firm foundation abides, whatever the circumstances.

We must regard it as the word of the Lord, not one jot or tittle of which can fail. It is settled in heaven, and by it we are admitted into the counsels of the Most High. A great many think the Lord may speak to them of their personal ways, but apparently has no right to interfere with ecclesiastical matters. Some say, "I believe that where I was converted, the Lord means me to stay." We ought to he in our ecclesiastical associations only where we can, and do, obey the commandments of the Lord.

None shall overthrow the foundation of God. But it has a seal. A foundation is supposed to be out of sight, but the word of God is above the language of the schools. We have two metaphors here. A foundation is that which is unalterably settled, and a seal is the emblem of authority. Think of it in connection with the One who put it there. The seal is open to the inspection of all. There are great truths here in God’s seal and counter-seal, which all can lay hold of, and which indeed ought to lay hold of us. Without discussing the foundation, does it not come home to us as a power to comfort, that whoever may misunderstand us, the Lord knows us. The knowledge of the Lord is what we have ter fall back on in the present mass of confusion.

Peter was particularly instructed as to the knowledge of the Lord. He lent the Lord his boat to preach from and the Lord knew his circumstances as a fisherman, for He was not oblivious to the anxieties of a business man. "Let down your nets for a draught." "At Thy word I will — just one net." The Lord knew, but Peter did not know, or dream, how much the Lord knew (Luke 5:1-11). They enclosed a great multitude of fishes, but the net brake. The Lord said "nets," but Peter let

down one only. In John 21:1-25 there is an echo of a sadder scene his denial. When the Lord probed his heart to the bottom, he cried, "Thou knowest." How comforting to be brought back to this. We may be alone and scorned — "the Lord knoweth." When all doubt us, He knoweth.

One other word the apostle adds, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This cannot mean personal conduct, for if a man is a Christian at all he has given up unrighteousness. Are we then to set up to be judges of what is iniquity? We have both Guide and guide book as to this, and it is incumbent on us to depart from iniquity.

We are each building, according to the Lord's parable (Matthew 7:24-27). This is not preaching; but the man who digs deep is the one who is doing the will of the Lord. We are rearing a building in our individual lives, and now and again we shall have a storm, and then it will be proved on what we are building. If we are not building on the word of the Lord it will quiver, and shake, and go down.

Having received anything from the Lord, let us hold it fast for Him. He is soon coming, and He will then have something to say to us about our conduct. Whatever is not of Him will go, and go for ever. We have not to make a way for ourselves, nor to build up our own associations. The way is here for us in the scripture. May we keep His word, for His name's sake. W. J. Hocking.

S. The Power of Evangelising.

The Power of Evangelising.

Preaching the gospel is either a weak, strange, and contemptible thing, or the divinely given and honoured means of salvation to man, unto God’s glory. To preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified might appear an occupation well worthy of ridicule, were not Christ both "the power of God" and "the wisdom of God." In men’s eyes foolish, it nevertheless achieves success where man’s profoundest wisdom utterly fails: for, paradoxical as it may seem, the word of God declares, "After that in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

However, blessed as it undoubtedly is, to consider the dignified position of an evangelist as an ambassador of Christ, it is at present beside my purpose. Rather let us ask what is the power of an evangelist? For if the servant of God is not divinely intelligent as to this, a survey of the opposing forces will surely be discouraging; and probably unscriptural alliances will soon be sought to meet the supposed need. Is not the natural man in direct enmity with the truth of God? It is not only foolishness to him, but it stirs up his ungodly passions, as it did notably against our Lord Jesus Christ — the Truth — who was first envied, hated, despised, and then crucified. But, further, the unbeliever in his associations with the world finds there everything that ministers to his carnal appetites, and tends to make him settled down in his alienation from God. Again, Satan the god of this world is actively opposed to the Lord Jesus, using his consummate subtlety to hinder the work of the gospel and to drag souls to hell. And what power has the evangelist to overcome the man’s indwelling antagonism to his theme, added to which are the withering influences of the world and Satan? Verily, in himself none; he is powerless; still, in the grace and wisdom of God, he does not go a warfare at his own charges. The Lord Jesus, before His departure in bodily presence from His own who were to be His witnesses in the world, promised to send the Spirit of God who should be in the saints, and work through His chosen vessels. To what end? When He shall come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8). "Not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Corinthians 2:4).

Accordingly at Pentecost a Galilean fisherman, filled with the Holy Ghost, charges the Jews with crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, the approved One of God. The result of that testimony was the conversion of three thousand stiff-necked and hard-hearted Jews. Commencing thus, the testimony of Jesus in the mouth of the simple and unlettered is owned as the power of God unto salvation by Jewish priests and Roman courtiers, Ethiopian eunuchs and run-away slaves, imperial deputies and common gaolers. What was the secret? Simply, that men spake by the Holy Ghost given unto them (Acts 5:32). But there is another consideration. While the Holy Spirit is the great personal witness and the power of testimony for Christ in the world (John 14:26), the written word is the revelation of God to man, which shall judge him at the last day (John 14: 48). Coming as it does from God, it is fraught with divine authority and power. And to despise its unique characteristics is as calamitous for the preacher* as it is for the hearer. "The word of God" says the

Holy Spirit of God, "is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Nor is this power lost in the day in which we live. Rather, in contrast to the ephemeral things around us, the "word of the Lord endureth for ever." And "this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25). Let then the servant of God take heed lest he too lightly esteem that which is the Spirit's sword (Ephesians 6:17), and which alone can effectually work in those that believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

[*Nothing but immediate results are in question here.]

Thus it is evident that the power of testimony for Christ in the gospel must be the Holy Ghost operating through the word of God. Truly "we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). By prayer the servant of Christ confesses this and finds his sufficiency to be of God. See a remarkable summary of these elements in an honoured testimony for God. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost: and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). This fundamental principle of evangelisation — that its power is ever of and from God, and never of or from man — can never be too frequently before our minds. For to supplement this power by any human device, modelled either from the elements of the world, or from the wit or taste of man, is to impugn the sufficiency of that power and to ignore the solemn warning in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18 : against the mixture of light and darkness. That the great apostle of the Gentiles acted in entire dependence on the power of God is unmistakable from 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 : When Paul visited Corinth, he knew he had to do with people who were easily persuaded by gracefully worded sentences or impassioned orations, entirely apart from the truth or untruth of what was uttered. And if some mazy speculation or subtle abstraction of "thought" were presented in a philosophical manner, attentive and admiring hearers would quickly be gained. Here then were the means both to attract the Corinthians to his preaching and to make the gospel palatable and popular. How did the servant of God proceed? Let him speak himself: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing (persuasive) words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Paul knew that if they were drawn to Christ simply by his eloquence or reasoning, that is, by the world's "wisdom," they would be building on a foundation of sand. There must be a divine work to produce a divine faith; and therefore the apostle carefully abstained from the use of anything that might become under Satan a false basis for their souls. Has this principle no application today? Are the evangelists to adopt pleasant things of man, novelties of the age, or ought else to make the gospel of God attractive to the world? The gospel is indeed said to be powerful — the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Romans 1:16); but is it ever to be made "attractive"? The heart of man that rejected, not only the words and the works of Christ, but moral goodness and divine glory in His Person, is not one whit more disposed today to accept the grace and truth of God in the story of His love and shame on the tree. Men still lurk in darkness and hate the light. How then shall the truth be made "attractive" to them without perverting its character? Shall the preacher cleave to the

truth of God in its holy power and simplicity to awaken man’s conscience? or is he, in this nineteenth century of ours, to use means by which the carnal man shall be attracted, gratified, mollified, argued, and talked into an acceptance of the gospel? Surely, thus to compromise the truth of God is rather seeking to please men than fidelity to Christ and the gospel. How dare one so to trade with the testimony as to soften it down to suit the prejudices of the unconverted (2 Corinthians 2:17)? It is not even dealing honestly with the men to whom we speak, much less before the God whom we serve. But while this false principle underlies "attractive preaching," it equally leavens what may be termed the "attractive accessories" of the gospel. Music and singing have indisputably no small influence on very many people. Good, however, as they may be in their places, the greater the need of scripture warrant for their use. The Cainites, when driven from the presence of God, made themselves contented in the land of Nod with the harp and pipe, (if not "organ") (Genesis 4:21). See also Job 21:12. It may be urged that in the history of Israel, musical instruments played a by no means unimportant part religiously. This however was during the period when man in the flesh was invited to devote his best as man to God; therefore a beautiful house, beautiful decorations, beautiful music, and beautiful singing had their places. But have not these things, as before God, passed away? Are they not among the beggarly elements of the world, being but types and shadows of that Antitype, which has long since come and alone abides with us? Worship now is in Spirit and truth, not in the flesh or form. Melody is not in wind or stringed instruments, but in the heart, "Singing and making melody (psallontes) in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

Whether believers sing in the assembly, or at gospel meetings, are not their hymns the expression of their hearts to God? If saints do not sing to God, to whom do they sing? Is it really meant that they should sing to attract the unconverted? What is it to debase the praises of God as a bait to entice natural men to halls or meeting-rooms? Is it reverence and godly fear? Or shall we endeavour to combine the praise of God with the attraction of men in the same action? To state such a mixture of motives is really to condemn it; yet is it, or is it not, the fact? Is it to imitate the apostles and his companions? or are preachers wiser now-a-days? No! the principle of singing is, and must be, that it be to God. What room then for instruments and choral effects, or even solos? Leave them to such as preach little or no truth. It is a sin and a shame to bring into preaching the elements of the world and of Judaism, from which we have been delivered by the death of Christ (Colossians 2:1-23 :). I distrust the utilitarian argument, that is, of success in divine things, when our prime call is to obey God alone. But if music and cultured singing work powerfully on the feelings and imaginations of many, how often do they not supplant Christ in the soul! There were some in a bygone day, who came to the Lord out of mere nature in mind or sentiment. The word concerning them is solemn: — "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man" (John 2:23).

Some may set up the plea that, their object being the glory of God in the salvation of souls, the manner or the means becomes an indifferent thing. Is not this too like the petulant excuse of the sinner in Romans 3:1-31? "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why am I also judged a sinner?" Is this ground for mortal man to take? It is indeed the old fallacy of Satan, "Let us do evil that good may come."

Let then the servants of God beware lest they underrate the power of the Spirit and the word. And surely none will deny that there is much in this day that tends to lower the character of God’s truth. so that we slight and forget the power of God in the gospel. Appealing in various ways to man’s carnal nature makes the testimony of the great apostle of the Gentiles unheeded. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the falling down of strongholds): casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). W. J. Hocking.

S. The Priest to make Propitiation

The Priest to make Propitiation

W. J. Hocking.

One of the chief purposes of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to bring out the personal glories of the Messiah for the enlightenment and establishment of believers, particularly of those who were of that nation which so flagrantly dishonoured Him, even unto crucifixion and death. For there were those in the apostles' day who, while they believed in Jesus as the Anointed One of God, still clung to the veneration of the law and the prophets. Like impulsive Peter on the mount, they would make, as it were, three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Christ. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is the voice coming from "the excellent glory," as the heavenly rebuke did to Simon, son of Jonas, setting forth Christ as the Son of God; and since He is the Son of God, all the splendours of the ancient types and shadows fade away by reason of the radiant glories of the despised Nazarene.

Beautiful and instructive and impressive as the ceremonial observances of the ancient economy were, they, nevertheless, could not but be limited and imperfect, and not in any sense or particular "the very image" of Him Who was coming. And, because of the inherent defects of the Mosaic sacrifices and priesthood, the "glory that excelleth" in the Antitype becomes the more manifestly declared, and that, too, by way of contrast rather than by comparison.

It is certain that the degree of fulness and perfection (assuming for the moment that it is permissible to speak of degrees of perfection as is commonly done in reference to human things,) in the fulfilment of Old Testament type, depended altogether upon the Person who was the Fulfiller. Who was to be the Priest that should 'suit God and man in every particular? Certainly not one taken from among men, for all such were compassed with infirmity (Hebrews 5:1-3). Whatever a man "compassed with infirmity" did, must itself be marked with infirmity too, so that every priestly act of old was necessarily weak and inadequate. And for that reason it was the common thought of the Jewish worshipper that weakness and inadequacy were in some degree or other inseparable from the priesthood. Hence they were in danger of attributing these imperfections to the priesthood of Christ as well. The apostle, to correct such unworthy thoughts, brings out in the very forefront of this epistle the unsurpassable glory of Christ's person — Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-14), Son of man (Hebrews 2:1-18). Before a word is written as to His pontifical or sacrificial perfection, the truth as to His person is unfolded in a grand dioramic display. And is it not so presented in this order that our hearts may bow in worship in presence of the overwhelming majesty of the Son, ere we proceed to learn the blessedness of Christianity, based as it is upon the perfections of the Great High Priest and His sacrifice? We can always suffer to have our hearts enlarged as, to our thoughts of Christ. However exalted they may be, they fall infinitely below the mark. How needful, then, to have the mind of the Spirit, of Whom the Lord said, "He shall glorify me for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:14). The Godhead of the Lord Jesus secured a perfect performance of His priestly and sacrificial work, while His spotless manhood constituted

Him a perfect representative of those whose sins were atoned for. We read, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto, his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation* "for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:14-17).

{*It is generally accepted that the verb here (ilaskomai) should be translated "to make propitiation," and not "reconciliation." The converse applies in Romans 5:11 where "reconciliation" should replace "atonement."}

Now, on reference to the Old Testament ritual, we find that it was specially on the great Day of Atonement that Aaron officiated without those resplendent garments of "glory and beauty" that were his as the high priest. On that day he had to perform the solemn functions in the ordinary linen attire of the priesthood, and not in the beautiful robes peculiar to him (Exodus 28:1-3). The fact was, Aaron had to offer sacrifice for himself and the other priests ("his house"), as well as for the sins of the people. And, when clad only in the holy linen garments, he was to use the New Testament phrase — "made like unto his brethren." The gorgeous apparel proper only to Aaron would be resumed subsequently, after the propitiatory work was accomplished. The ephod, the breastplate, the Ufim and Thummim, were all connected with Aaron’s intercessory work for the people, to maintain them in that relation to Jehovah which was theirs in consequence of the blood being upon the mercy-seat. Thus the work of the high priest in the linen garments (propitiation) was introductory to the work in the glorious garments (intercession). And such is the order in which the work of the Great High Priest is set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews "(1) propitiation for sins (Hebrews 2:1-18); (2) intercession and help that we may not sin (Hebrews 4:1-16, etc.). And the tenor of the passage that speaks of the merciful and faithful high priest making propitiation for sins is that the Lord Jesus came down from above to do so. For this He was made a little lower than the angels; for this He took part in blood and flesh; for this it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. So that propitiation was His work in the days of His flesh. There is not a word that speaks of His going to heaven to propitiate (or make atonement for) sins. He descended in grace to work a work that sins might be atoned for, and many sons be brought to glory. And He Himself said to His Father of His work here, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

S. The Propitiation for our Sins

The Propitiation for our Sins

W. J. Hocking.

It is a striking feature of the writing of the apostle John that whatever God is shown to have provided, in His love, for His own glory and the need of man, is also shown to be closely bound up in and with the Person of Christ.

Paul reasons and declaims, setting out the believer’s blessing in the form 6f doctrinal statement. He, as it were, labours to instruct and convince by argument, formally refuting the objections as they arise. So the apostle of the Gentiles proceeds, for instance, in the Epistle to the Romans. But in the Gospel and Epistles of John we feel ourselves to be in altogether a different atmosphere. We are not so much watching the unfolding of truth in its various details, as we are gathered into the presence-chamber of a Person of ineffable grace and glory.

Both these modes of revelation are essentially needful. If the one provides contemplation for the renewed mind, the other awakens the adoration of the renewed heart.*

{*It will be understood that this is spoken only of what is characteristic. There are instances where Paul appeals to the heart, as John to the mind.} When Paul instructs as to the second coming of Christ, he gives many facts as to the manner of that return — how the dead saints will be raised, the living changed, the Lord’s descent into the air, the rapture of those for whom He comes, the shout and the trumpet, while also carefully distinguishing this event from the Lord’s public advent in glory. But John gives us only the general fact of His coming for us to be with Him and like Him. The Lord’s own words to His disciples, as repeated by him, were, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The all-sufficient fact of Christ and His company is presented that it may absorb our undivided desires.

Again, as is well known, Paul discusses the subject of the resurrection of the body very fully in a long chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, but a saying of the Lord Jesus sums up the doctrine in a phrase: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). We must duly receive the teaching of both, of course; but we therein see that distinction between the two parts of scripture, to which we are now inviting attention.

It is a propensity of the natural mind to become engaged in the consideration of the truth of God as if it were no more than some abstract proposition. The holy and divine side is thus altogether excluded. In such case the introduction of its connection with Christ’s Person introduces a more becoming attitude.

It was so with Martha. She believed in the resurrection in a general way, and quite realised that the power of God would resuscitate the body of her dead brother at the last day. But the Lord’s revelation of Himself as the Resurrection and the Life completely overthrew her theory. There was the One immediately before her Who could raise Lazarus there and then by a word. It was no

question of waiting for the last day. The question was whether Jesus was the Son of God Who "quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). For every difficulty of the human mind vanishes in the august presence of the Son from heaven. In like manner we may see that propitiation is, by John, associated with the Lord's person. He does not present it as the work of the Lord; this we have elsewhere. But in the First Epistle of the apostle of love we read, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2); and, again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Jesus Christ, then, is Himself the propitiation for our sins. This is as infinitely blessed as it is simple; for if I, as a poor sinner, needed a propitiation for my sins, and I am told that Christ is that propitiation (however little I may be able to explain the meaning of the term), I can rest assured in the fact that Christ being it, it will be 'more than adequate for my guilt. But we may gather more than this from the manner of the usage of this truth in John's Epistle. The fact is first introduced in connection with the breach of a believer's communion by a sin. "If any man sin [or, shall have sinned], we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." John had been showing the intimate place into which the child of God is brought — into fellowship with the Father and the Son. But when we walk thus in the light, it gives us. to see as nowhere else the fearful hideousness of sin. We are not to sin; but, if anyone does, and is then overwhelmed by the sense of the terrible nature of sin in the presence of the holy God, a provision has been made. Jesus Christ, as Advocate, undertakes our case with the Father, duly representing the confession of our sins on our behalf; moreover, He is the propitiation for our sins.

Thus, whatever satisfaction the righteous and holy nature of God demanded because of those sins, Jesus Christ is that satisfaction. And the value and efficacy of propitiation is, therefore, in effect, declared to be commensurate only with His Person. If, therefore, we wish to estimate rightly the basis of our restoration to communion, we must think of the eternal excellency of the Son. However we may magnify the heinousness of sin (and we shall never exceed the truth in this respect), we may be sure that it is more than covered by the propitiation of the Son of God. For He did, and He alone could, offer what our sins needed, and the glory of God. demanded. But we gather even more from these words in John; we see what a character of holiness is stamped upon propitiation. We are not left to, invest it with whatever degree of sanctity we please. The Spirit of God has hallowed the truth in the highest possible way, and in a way that the veriest babe in Christ can but recognise. The Son of God is the propitiation for our sins. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son, the propitiation for our sins." The work of propitiation is associated with all the Godhead glory of the Son. Can we attach too great importance to a doctrine that is set before us in such terms as these? In the mind of the Spirit, as expressed by John, the work is merged in the Person; and the value of the work is to be measured according to the intrinsic worth of the Son.

It is important for us to remember this, because the human mind is so apt to belittle the things of God. And how terrible to detract from the Person of the Son, Whom no one knoweth (Matthew 11:27). Israel in the wilderness sinned by limiting the Holy One in what He would do for them (Psalms 78:41). Shall the Christian with impunity set the bounds of time and space to the Son of God, Who is the propitiation for our sins, and especially by imposing human limitations upon Him in the performance of that particular work? If any would speak or think slightingly of propitiation, let

them remember that "He is the propitiation for our sins." W.J.H.

S. The Pursuit of the Christian Ideal

The Pursuit of the Christian Ideal Notes of an address by W. J. Hocking.

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Je sus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you: only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same [rule] let us walk" (Php 3:12-16, R.V.). In this chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, and particularly in the verses read, we are exhorted to the continuous and sustained pursuit of what we may term the Christian ideal. We are nowhere in the instructions of Scripture permitted to stand still in the career of faith, but, on the contrary, we are ever encouraged to strive to be making progress. Now in order to do so, it is essential that our efforts should be made in the right direction. Hence the scripture before us is one of great value in the development of legitimate aspirations within us. The apostle in these communications regards his own position as one in common with the followers of Christ. He alludes to himself as a saint of God, and in that sense, on a level with those whom he is addressing. Truly Paul was an apostle, and indeed the chief of the apostles, but besides discharging the exalted duties of his apostleship, he had to learn experimentally the necessity and the practice of Christian discipline, and the application to himself of the truth he so fully taught to others. And the experience he gained in this manner, and to which he alludes in this chapter was such as must necessarily help us immensely:

There is no epistle so full as this one of Christian experience, that is, the experience of the human heart in its acquaintance and communion with God. For this is the true experience of the Christian. People sometimes speak as if it were the knowledge and insight gained from looking at our own hearts.; but what we find there can never make us anything but wretched. The inevitable result of self-examination is the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" (Romans 7:24). Contrastedly, true Christian experience fills us with joy, for it is our personal experience of Christ, of what He is for us, and what He does to sustain the human heart under the most trying circumstances of life.

Let us now look more closely at the case of Paul at this juncture of his history. The apostle’s large heart, his wide mental capacity and his educational attainments had specially fitted him to become the prime minister of Jesus Christ. He had an extensive scope for his apostleship. He was a chosen ambassador to the whole world. He could use with the best of rights the motto which we have heard in recent times, "the world for Christ." Indeed this honoured preacher of the gospel had seen, in many parts of the world, crowds moved by his preaching to come out of the darkness of heathenism into the light of the gospel. But now Paul was in prison. He was laid on one side to learn the salutary lesson that God could carry on His work without the help of even the chief of the apostles. Distinguished as he was, the work could go on just as well without him as with him. In

our long retrospect today we may think that this was an easy lesson for him to learn, and we come to this conclusion because we are not in his circumstances. If we were set aside as he was at a time when everything seemed especially to call for his personal presence and activity, we should probably modify this view. It is more than likely we should have chafed under the enforced. restraint. Yet it was not so with the apostle, for there is none of his epistles so full of the joy of the Lord as this one, written by him when a "prisoner of the Lord." Paul had been proving within himself how fully the Lord Jesus Christ could sustain and satisfy and quiet the heart when outward things seemed all wrong and contrary. It may be easy enough when things are right to keep going forward in a spirit of energy, but it is not so easy when there is apparent defeat all along the line.

Now from our chapter we find the indomitable spirit of the apostle in active exercise. We have abundant proof that he was pressing on, reaching forward, pursuing an object. Being confined as a prisoner he had much time for contemplative thought. He looks at himself, and he looks at his Master. How far he feels himself to come short of the glory of Him whom he lo ves! He realises that he has not yet attained the end for which the Lord apprehended him. Though he will eventually be conformed to the image of God’s Son, how far he feels himself now from that happy issue! And the consideration of this goal ahead fills him with fresh energy and renewed earnestness.

Sometimes we think that the accomplishment of our ideal conformity to Christ is entirely a work of God, and that we ourselves have no part in it. We remember that it is He who has saved us and given us all our blessings, and we are therefore inclined to rest satisfied and content with what we already possess from that source. But is there nothing to strive after, no reaching out after greater blessings still? We find at any rate that such was the apostle’s attitude: and surely we need such an aim even more than he did.

What did Paul set before himself? He says, "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was undoubtedly a great apostle, but there was a greater attainment than the apostolate, and that was the "prize of the high calling of God." There was something before his soul which he valued above his service; he desired that he, the chief of sinners, might arrive at the knowledge of Christ. "That I might know Him," he cried, "and the power of His resurrection." He could not rest satisfied short of this attainment. It was poor wretched stuff within him that he had to work with, but he was nevertheless pressing forward. His words are, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

We may now ask, What are the special directions in which Christian endeavour should be in exercise? The third verse of this chapter may help us in this inquiry. We find there stated a threefold character of the followers of the Lord Jesus. They (1) worship God in the spirit, (2) rejoice in Christ Jesus, and (3) have no confidence in the flesh. Now the development of these qualities requires watchfulness and effort on our part.

(1) Taking the first, do we habitually worship, God in the spirit? The Lord’s words (John 4:24) instruct us that this kind of worship is imperative. It is true that the Holy Spirit is the power for worship, and the Revisers give us God’s Spirit in Php 3:3. But I am now speaking of the spirit —

the new nature within us with which the Holy Spirit bears witness and upon which His, energy is directed. True and acceptable worship towards God the Father springs only from the spirit. Let us recollect that this calls for our vigilance. I am to desire that my spirit may meet my Lord and my God. Indeed it should be the habitual experience of the Christian to have God continually before his spirit.

Take the worship-meeting: there the spirits of those assembled must be in action; audible words are not essential [ ] though usual. We should all know that there may be true worship without any words at all. Times of silence are not necessarily wasted moments.* We should not forget this, and chafe because there is no outward activity.

{*True; but what says 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 — 14? Compare 14: 16, 17. A silent meeting can hardly be spoken of as a Worship-Meeting! — Ed.} But it is not only on such occasions and in a collective capacity that we may worship God. Why should we not do so always? Worship-service embraces the whole Christian life. If in all, things I have Him before me, then in all things I shall worship God, and in this respect I shall be well pleasing to Him. Therefore let us strive that our spirits may be always before Him, and thus we shall be pressing forward. In a coming day of glory we shall worship perfectly and continuously; let us then begin the practice here and now.

(2) Then it is said that believers "rejoice in Christ Jesus." This means that we rejoice or boast in Him now. We glory in Him, esteeming Him the "chiefest among ten thousand." Once He was here in humiliation: now He is above in supremest majesty; but there is a link between the soul and the Christ of glory and power. To rejoice in Christ Jesus now is an education for our vocation in eternity. Then we shall praise Him most fully. Why not begin this service now, and thus be in this sense pressing on towards the goal?

(3) In the next place, the believer is to have "no confidence in the flesh." Now it is important that we should inquire what the apostle means in these verses by the "flesh." And we see at once that self, rather than our sins, is here in question. Self includes the natural advantages which a man may have or which he may acquire. They may not be necessarily wrong and sinful, but they are of this world, and are of no account in the realm of faith.

Such was the view of the apostle in verses 5 and 6, where he enumerates the circumstantial recommendations which were his as a religious man, and in some cases they were his by birth. He was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." None of these qualities were evil in themselves, except the persecution of the church, and that perhaps not so for him [?] in his unconverted days, for he did not then know it to be so. Yet so it was. [See Leviticus 4:1-35. ; Acts 9:4; 1 Timothy 1:13]. The qualities that Paul mentions are those which would be matters for boast among the Jews. But really they were very insignificant. How small they seem as we consider his enumeration of them What were they after all? And to what did his advantages lead him? They led to his being a man proud of his natural abilities. But now Paul learned from the Lord Jesus to have no confidence in the flesh. It was necessary that he should learn this lesson more thoroughly, to advance to see, if possible more clearly than ever, the foolishness and utter worthlessness of them all when viewed in the light of the glory of Christ. And the test applied by the apostle to himself is suitable to us all. We have only to look at the wondrous image of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ

to learn how little, in real worth, are the things usually held in high esteem among men. But there is another feature of this race: Paul was forgetting those things which are behind. And the forgotten things included not only his natural advantages but his conquests by faith also. Though, for instance, he had striven earnestly a year ago, he was still to strive; though his spirit had conquered a year ago, it was still to conquer. His habitual attitude was to be "forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before."

Sometimes we hear persons speaking of leaving their;;first love, as if this were a form of declension which could not be avoided in Christian life. But why should we leave our first love? Surely it is a misapprehension to think that we should love the Lord more when we were first converted than we shall ten, twenty, or thirty years later. It is more in accordance with the law of spiritual progress which Scripture enjoins that we should now be loving Him more, rather than less, than we did at first. The Lord regarded it as a matter for rebuke in the church at Ephesus that there had been such declension. They had backslidden, for they had left their first love. They had in fact turned away from the Lord Himself who is the Alpha and the Omega of our love as of all besides. It is not wise for us to attempt to take out our love, as it were, and look at it to discover whether it has grown greater or less. The Lord alone can rightly determine such a matter. And He will test and estimate our love, and tell us the truth about it, as He did Simon Peter in that memorable interview of old (John 21:1-25). The things behind therefore are better forgotten, while we ought to form the habit of reaching out to the things which are before. Is this our constant attitude? If we consider the things beyond, we shall be thereby better fitted to endure the things around. The apostle’s eye was upon the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. What is this prize? Surely it is our likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this likeness is the consummation of the Christian race. There is a reward for works certainly, concerning which we are instructed elsewhere, but here we have what is the common aim of all believers. We are not any of us apostles; we are not all teachers; and some of us are nothing at all. But eventually all the children of God will be like Him. And we all should be striving to attain this end. In this competition we all get prizes, if we do not take our eyes off the goal. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you; only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk." W. J. H.

S. The Resurrection and the Life

The Resurrection and the Life Notes of an address on John 11:19-46

W. J. Hocking. In this chapter we have set before us another view of the comprehensive subject of life which runs throughout this Gospel. We shall notice also that the profoundest teaching with respect to resurrection and to life (the latter being intrinsically of even superior importance to the former) is developed in connection with a common event of human history. This feature, too, is a characteristic one in the Gospel of John. The heavenly is here closely linked with the earthly. The common events of daily life, such as hunger, sickness, bereavement and the like, are associated with some of the profoundest truths of revelation, showing that the scriptures are intended to be a source of heavenly light for the practical uses of man’s life. However they may be abused, they were not given to provide the readers with subjects for vague theorising or with matter for formulating religious creeds, but to enable persons to meet bravely, and to understand, the hard facts of daily existence. For life is full of facts which seem cruel and inexplicable apart from the light afforded by God’s word. It behoves us, therefore, to study the scriptures with the object of discovering the clue for unravelling the many baffling circumstances in which we so often find ourselves. When God in heaven looks down upon this world so full of tangles, as it seems to us, all things are clear to Him. He has a definite scheme. But it is only His word that will enable us in any measure to catch His purpose, to get some glimpse of His plans. Failing this, however, we may be assured that His eventual aim is good. All earthly events are converging to a final goal of beneficence. And the revelation which offers this assurance is the antidote to the great lie current in the world that all things are working together for evil. This lie emanated from Satan in Eden, and its effect remains among men today. Even pious persons, when things seem to go athwart, are apt to think so. Many Christians, when hardly treated, are inclined to think so. Hence the value of God’s word in its assurances to the contrary, for by believing its statements on this head we may be spared much needless anxiety and sorrow. The Bereavement The story in this chapter is a pathetic one, and its details, while of common occurrence, contain those perplexing elements to which allusion has been made. And it is most interesting and instructive to observe how the subject of eternal life is interwoven with that of the bereavement. In the previous chapter the Lord presented Himself as the Good Shepherd. He spoke of His sheep who were called to cut themselves adrift from the old associations of Judaism and to follow Him. Now to the Jew the ordinances and the institutions of Moses seemed of all earthly things the most stable. But the Shepherd called His sheep by name to follow Him outside the Jewish fold, and thus to leave all the ordinances in which they trusted. In exchange He gave them His word and His promise. And His solemn promise to every sheep was eternal life, and complete immunity from destruction: "I give unto them [His sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). This gift was superior to anything the legal enclosure could offer. The Jewish fold was not so secure as the Good Shepherd’s hand. He who holds the universe has strength to hold His sheep in the face of every foe. And His promise assures the possession of eternal life to every sheep and protects them equally from corruption within and from foes without.

In this chapter we have the case of one of Christ’s sheep visited by death. This was a startling calamity in the eyes of the pious Jewish sisters, because the legitimate hope of the godly Israelite was length of days. The reward of godliness according to divine promise was long life in the land.

Hence from the point of view of Mary and Martha, it seemed inexplicable that their brother should be cut off in the prime of life from the happy home of Bethany. Why had death come up "into their windows," and ruthlessly plunged the devout God-fearing sisters into bereavement and mourning? Though Lazarus was one of Christ’s favoured sheep, the king of terrors, the foul enemy of mankind, had despoiled them of their beloved brother. It was a sorrowful trial to them; and it is one incessantly repeated before our eyes, perhaps in our homes. How often the godly seem selected to be stricken down! Consider indeed that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was cut off in the midst of His days.

How were the sisters to understand this calamity? How were they to reconcile the death of Lazarus with the Lord’s promise with respect to eternal life? Lazarus, so much beloved by them, so needed in the family circle, their earthly source of comfort and joy, was suddenly taken away. And the Shepherd, though appealed to, did not interfere to save His sheep from an untimely death. They had expressed their allegiance to Him, yet He did not hasten to save the sick man. They could see nothing before them but a life of mourning and sadness for one loved and irretrievably lost. The Lord came to these broken and bleeding hearts, and in His beautiful manner disclosed to them a new and profounder view of eternal life, while at the same time He restored to them their lost one. He showed them that in spite of appearances death cannot touch eternal life. He, in fact, revealed Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, not only by way of doctrine bur by a practical demonstration at the graveside. Its Practical Value

It is helpful to observe how this great truth is here associated with circumstances of sorrow and bereavement in such a manner as to exercise a beneficial effect upon all the redeemed. As the grief-stricken hearts of the sisters were comforted, so all who are similarly situated may be soothed, encouraged and strengthened by the details recorded here. In this chapter another precious feature of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is made prominent. We see His perfect and matchless sympathy with the tried and suffering women. The Lord performed an act of infinite power, but He did so in the gentle and sympathetic manner which was characteristic of Him. And His demeanour in this respect stands out the more markedly in this Gospel where He is presented as the Eternal Son. We do not find Him entering abruptly into this scene of sorrow and restoring the dead man with a word, as when He quelled the stormy forces of nature on the lake of Galilee.

Here we see irresistible might breaking down the prison-bars of death, but with it is coupled the wondrous force of sympathy. The Lord in the gentleness of His infinite power comes to the weeping women, enters into their sorrow, weeping with them as He wipes away their tears. How marvellous the sight to behold the Son of God shedding tears! The Home at Bethany The subjects of this narrative formed a particularly-favoured trio. Their home had become, if we may so say it, the Lord’s home in Judea. In the other Gospels His ministry in Galilee is prominent, even as that in Judea is the main topic of John. And it is recorded that while He taught in Jerusalem He sought rest and refreshment in Bethany at the house of Lazarus and Mary and Martha. This was the circle into which death entered. At the commencement of this chapter a parenthesis referring especially to Mary is introduced in the narrative. We read in the second verse, "It was that Mary who anointed

the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick." So that the event fully described in the following chapter is here historically anticipated. Why is this? The reference seems to be something more than a note of identification of Mary of Bethany. And I would suggest that the sentence is placed here because it was the sad experience related immediately afterwards in this chapter which supplied the circumstances under which Mary learned how to act as she did at the feast in Simon the leper's house. That Mary had learned something from the Lord even previously to this bereavement we may gather from references made elsewhere to His former visit to Bethany. Mary then sat at His feet and heard His word. She was then taught something concerning the true nature of Messiah's mission, and on this occasion she learned something further concerning the greatness and grandeur of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mary possessed a different temperament from her sister. She was a quiet, meditative person, and, while Martha rushed at once to meet the Lord at His coming, she remained in the house. We cannot always anticipate what these quiet, self-restrained persons will do, but they frequently act rightly because they have received the needful training in seeking to learn the mind of Christ.

Martha had a more active disposition than her sister, and was naturally in a great hurry, a busy person with no time for reflection. When the Lord first came to Bethany she prepared things for His reception and His becoming entertainment. This was good service, and was not reproved. But Mary was conscious that it was the event of a lifetime for the Messiah to visit the house where she was. Such moments therefore were so precious in her eyes that she desired to utilize them in hearing the many things He might choose to tell her. She sat down at His feet to listen,

Now in her sorrow Mary felt that it would be best for her to wait for her Master's word. She sat still till He called for her. Then she went, and saw, as Martha did, His power over death as the Resurrection and the Life.

Six days before the passover the fruit of Mary's training at the feet of Jesus and at the opened grave of her brother was made visible. Then it was that in the midst of the feast at Bethany she anointed the Lord beforehand to His burial. She was not one of those who subsequently sought the body of Jesus at the rich man's tomb. She knew He had risen. By the restoration of her brother she saw that He was the Resurrection and the Life. How could the grave hold Him who had said, "Lazarus, come forth." If she would anoint Him, she must do so before His burial, for she was persuaded she would never find Him in the sepulchre. She acted becomingly therefore at the feast, and all the world is now aware of the fitness of what she did.

Mistaken Thoughts

If time permitted we might profitably consider the mistakes of various persons recorded in this chapter. Not that these blunders are presented for the entertainment of other persons, but that it may be seen how graciously the Lord Jesus corrected the errors of those about Him, giving them at the same time credit for what they intended to do. The knowledge of this is a great comfort to a person who is acting in sincerity before the Lord, honestly seeking to do His will. It is only a self-satisfied person who supposes that any act of his is in itself worthy of the Lord's acceptance. The person doing a perfect action and offering it to the Lord for His acceptance is yet to be found. However, though after our best service we are all "unprofitable" servants, the Lord accepts according to the intention of the heart. When the Lord spoke of going to Bethany, blundering

Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (verse 16). Regarded in the light of the previous revelations which he and others had received concerning the Son as the Giver and Sustainer of life, the apostle's remark was foolish and unbelieving. But he was sincere in his desire to accompany his Master at all risks, and the Lord did not upbraid him.

Similarly the Lord knew the impulsive character of Peter, but He also knew his ardent love and devotion. Outwardly there was an incrustation of self upon which Satan worked, but inwardly there was an intense affection for the Lord. Peter meant what he said in his passionate outburst, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death" (Luke 22:33), but he did not know his own strength. And the Lord arranged that in due time he should lay down his life for his Master according to his own expressed desire. The Word of Hope

1913 315 Before the Lord's arrival at Bethany four long days had passed, and during those days the anxious, sorrowing women had one source of consolation. The Lord sent them a word of assurance. He told their messenger, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." This word was therefore carried to the weeping anxious women — the sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God. The faith of the women was tried by this delay. The Lord waited in apparent indifference, and did not go to the comfort and help of these distressed ones; though He sent them His word of assurance. And after all was not His word a sufficient basis for trust? He gave them His guarantee that the glory of God would be the final result of their brother's sickness. However unable they were to understand how this could be, the promise was given to sustain their hearts until the moment of deliverance came." This history represents a condition of things which still recurs. And our great solace in the hour of trial is the word of the Lord. Some do not exercise faith until they are well out of their difficulties and sorrows. Then they are apt to exclaim, "Ah, I knew all would be well." But up to the moment of deliverance they had been torn with doubts and fears. Yet there is the plain, general promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"; though we seldom, if ever, see at the time how they are working together for good, any more than the sisters at Bethany saw how their brother's sickness and death could be to the glory of God.

God's word then is given us for the strengthening of our faith. It is a sure means of comfort, for comfort signifies making the heart strong to endure. It enables the believer to lay hold upon his resources in God and to trust in them, the result being the possession of peace of heart in the midst of the most trying circumstances. The disciples in the storm saw the winds and the waves stilled by the word of Jesus. Their agitated minds were then set at rest, but they might have been so before, for they were equally safe when the waves were raging. Our great difficulty is to view such matters in the abstract, and see the future result in the present. Confidence seems. easy when we consider either the troubles that are past or that are to come; but when we are face to face with them it is not so simple. However it is during the trial of our faith that the fine gold is brought to view upon the surface (1 Peter 1:7). In due time the Lord arrived at Bethany, and the truth of resurrection was demonstrated in the case of Lazarus, and death was robbed of its prey, Martha ran to meet Him, saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. But I know that even now whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it the "(verses 21, 22). She believed Jesus was the Messiah, and she associated His personal presence in the chosen land with long life for the righteous. The Lord said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." But Martha's answer was, "I know that lie shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (verses 23, 24). In

each of Martha’s replies she stated what was absolutely true, but she found no comfort. She lacked the knowledge of the right truth. True comfort is based upon the particular truth suited to the circumstances of the moment. For this purpose the word of truth must be rightly divided. It is no question of rule or routine, but the Lord Himself in our trials and difficulties brings out of the Scriptures what shall he for our immediate benefit.

Clearly from what Martha said she did not realize that the Son of God was able to give life, to abolish death, to overcome him that had the power of death. So when the Lord spoke of her brother rising again, she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." This was a view that only tended to intensify her sorrow. Resurrection seemed so far off; it seemed long to wait until the last day. But the Lord had something to reveal which would suit her present need. In effect, the Lord showed that the key to her difficulty was with Himself. She was looking at the resurrection as an act of power at the end of all things. But Life was there before her. Life had come into the world, for "in him was life." The Son was the source of it, the bestower of it; He possessed it as truly as He was a Man from Nazareth. He was the Resurrection and the Life; and it was not at all a question of God answering prayer as in the case of Elisha and the Shunammite’s son. But though what the Lord stated was a recondite doctrine, He gave it what perhaps may be called a personal form. He simply set Himself before her as the object for her heart. If it were a question of resurrection He was competent to undertake it and carry it through. Death introduced no difficulty to Him. One greater than all the universe beside said to Martha, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." The Lord Jesus Christ therefore at the graveside issued His command, "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead man came forth at that word. Previously He had declared, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice [the Son of man’s] and shall come forth." He was then speaking of a day that is yet to come. But here at Bethany He demonstrated that His power was then present, and the bystanders witnessed the dead brother of Mary and Martha respond to the voice of Him who was the Resurrection and the Life. The General Application The Lord in this revelation communicated a great truth, but one which is of general application. It was the habit of His ministry not to confine the scope of His words and deeds to the particular case in hand. Here the Lord came to restore by resurrection Lazarus to his sorrowing sisters, but the words He spoke have a far wider range than that domestic circle. The fact that He was the Resurrection and the Life was spoken not only for Martha and Mary, but for all who should believe in Him. In His presence a dead person should live since He was the Resurrection, and in His presence a living person should never die, since He bestowed what is called "life more abundantly," that is, a life that death cannot touch. Hence He said, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (verses 25, 26, R.V.). The doctrine of this passage is more fully expanded in the Epistles, where the effect of the coming of the Lord upon those who believe is set forth in greater detail. When He comes for His saints it will be in connection with the redemption of the body. If a believer is dead or "asleep" as scripture terms it, His resurrection-power will be exercised. The Lord will speak; and the effect of His call will be that the dead in Christ will rise and come forth from their graves.

Thus Lazarus is a type of the saints who will be "asleep" when Christ comes. Others beside Lazarus were dead and lying in their sepulchres at Bethany, but the Lord only addressed the one whom He knew and loved. He made a selection among those who were in the grave. And when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout, only those who know that voice will respond. Those

whom the Shepherd knows and who know Him will hear His voice and will issue from their graves in the glory of the first resurrection.

Believers who will then be alive will likewise be affected by His coming. Only the order will be that which is indicated by the Lord's words — the Resurrection and the Life. First the dead will be raised; then the living will be changed, for those living and believing in Him will never die according to His promise. Those therefore who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not have the precedence of those that have fallen asleep in Christ. The apostle dwells upon this theme when writing to the Thessalonian assembly (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It was a great concern of theirs that some of their number had "gone before "into the grave; and they feared that they would, in consequence, miss the joys of Christ's coming. But the reverse was the case. The departed would gain and not lose. They would rise first and then the living would be changed. The victors over the grave would have the precedence of the victors over death. And this order is in perfect correspondence with that of the Fourth Gospel. At first sight we might imagine that Life and Resurrection is a preferable sequence, since the Son speaks of giving eternal life to the believer now. And this of course is true. Only a different line of things is before us here. The Lord is dealing with man's body — the corporeal nature. Therefore the exercise of His power is first of all in the way of resurrection. But there was a greater wonder than resurrection, and this the Lord unfolded when He said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?" Martha was a believer truly, but she did not understand the Lord's meaning in this revelation. However she did trust the Lord, and this trust she expressed in her reply, "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (ver. 27). Though she failed to penetrate the depths of meaning in this truth, her great safeguard was her faith in the Lord which indeed qualified her to participate in the great blessing when He comes. The Lord passed on to exemplify the truth of what He had uttered concerning Himself as the Resurrection. He raised Lazarus, but before He did so He showed sympathy to the full with those who were suffering in this sore trial. He felt the sorrow of this havoc which death had wrought at Bethany. Here were two sensitive sisters bowed down and broken-hearted by their brother's untimely decease. Death had robbed them of their loved one. And the Lord entered fully into the intense sadness of this bereavement. In His groans and tears He displayed such feelings of agitation that even the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him" (verse 36).

Some might possibly conceive that such manifestations of sorrow on the part of our Lord were needless, seeing He was about to raise Lazarus. But think what we should have missed if there were no record of His groaning and shedding tears. Now we may see how He knows "our frame." As the prophet said of Him, "He bare our sorrows, and carried our infirmities." He not only ministered to the sick and afflicted, but He did so with the truest and most effective sympathy.

If we seek to sympathize with the suffering it is needful that we should take their sorrows to our selves. Merely to speak a word of condolence to others is not genuine sympathy. We must appropriate the trials of others and carry them upon the spirit. For such a service we need to have the Spirit of the Master within us, learning first His comfort for ourselves as displayed here, and then ministering the same to others. In the consideration of this passage we have seen some glimpses of its beauty and instruction, but we may be sure that in every further contemplation of it we shall behold something fresh and something comforting. W. J. H.

Chapter 130

S. The Salvation of God

The Salvation of God Notes of an address on Exodus 14:13.

W. J. Hocking.

1915 265 The first part of the verse is that to which I would draw your special attention this evening: "Fear ye not," said Moses, "stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today." The salvation of God is a matter which concerns everyone of us, and concerns us in all the practical matters of our daily life. It is a truth which will be for our help and blessing if we make it our own; if, in the words of the text, we see for ourselves, according to the teaching of God's holy word, His great salvation.

It is a great error to suppose that salvation is only concerned with the days that are to come, that it is only a provision we need in immediate view of eternity, when we are leaving this world behind and passing to what lies beyond. No. Salvation concerns us now and here just where we are. The particular way in which salvation is of value for the present moment is shown us in this Scripture. The truth herein foreshadowed is applicable particularly to those who have already considered the matter of their personal salvation, and have to some extent taken up a stand for Christ here in the world. They must, in the terms of the historical allusion here turn their backs upon Egypt, and their faces towards the promised land of God. And it is to this class of persons that I particularly wish to speak this evening. You will remember that this nation had, according to the direction of God, come out from Egypt. And indeed they had been brought out of Egypt in a marvellous way. I want you to think for a moment of the last night that the people spent in that land of bondage. They were there in an attitude of expectation, waiting according to the instruction of Jehovah for the event which He had told them would take place that night. He had told them that the angel of judgment would pass through the land of Egypt. He would be there by way of bringing down upon men the judgment that they deserved on account of their sins.

It was not then the time for the judgment of God to fall in its entirety upon the whole population of that land. But God was about to show His power and His right to execute judgment by passing through the land, and in every house where there was a first-born son he would be slain, with this exception — such as believed the word of Jehovah and prepared for this visitation of judgment in His appointed way, and took shelter that evening under the sprinkling, on the door-post, of the blood of a slain lamb, should be exempt. They should be free in the hour of judgment. They should be absolutely safe, for the word of Jehovah said it. And so it came about on the night of the passover. The wail of suffering rose from Egypt's houses, but Israel was free. These were delivered, not because they were better men than the Egyptians, but because they had obeyed the word of Jehovah, doing exactly what they were told to do by the servant of the Lord, Moses. And they were then brought out of their slavery. But now the people of Israel were here in the wilderness, for such it was. They were led there by express direction of God, the pillar of cloud going before them and leading them to a particular place, and to a place which was beset with difficulties. They had before them the waters of the Red Sea; they had to the right and to the left of

them unscalable cliffs, mountains being to the right and to the left of them. And it was there that the army of Pharaoh, which pursued them, came in sight of them and threatened them that they should be brought back to slavery, and it was then that their hearts ached with fear. They were a vast host — six hundred thousand men beside children. Behind them the cavalry of Egypt came on in furious haste. They were a great crowd, but what resistance could they make in their own strength? They knew how to make bricks, and even how to make bricks without straw; and to bear the whip of Egypt's taskmaster. But to fight him with the weapons of war they were unable.

What, then, was the feeling in the hearts of those men and women? 'This is a lost cause: we have started on a journey in error; we have come out on a mission which is doomed to absolute failure. We have no strength to meet this host of Egypt. It would have been better for us to have died in Egypt than to have come out on this fool's errand.' Then it was that the word of God came to them "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD which He will show to you today." And their salvation came. The power of God opened up a way of escape for them through the Red Sea. We are not here tonight to discuss the means by which this was done. We do know that the power of Jehovah worked on behalf of His people, and that His people escaped from their enemies, and that the Egyptians were overthrown. But you ask, How does that fit in with my life? How does that come by way of help to me? Dear friends, if you have considered truly and earnestly that you would be a Christian, that you would walk in the ways of the Lord, that you would follow the meek and lowly Nazarene through this world, and if you have been but a little time on that way, have you not already encountered your difficulties? Have you not found that because you are a Christian, and just for that and for no other reason, everyone is against you? And there is a hostile power, and though you know not what that power is, or how it works, there is, I say, a power that baffles your way, and you fail. You are shown your path and you say Yes, I will go forward.' Monday morning comes and the difficulties arise, and in the evening you know you have disgraced the One whom you wished to serve. There is, in short, a power within and without antagonistic to you.

Many a time, perhaps, you say to yourself, It would have been better for me if I had never made a start: I am not worthy to be called a disciple of Christ,' and you perhaps feel ready to throw it all up and go back to that bondage, that terrible slavery, to sin and Satan, in which once you were held. I read this word to you tonight, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD."

There was a man of whom we read in the New Testament, a man who knew something of the temptations of the world. He was strong in his own strength, a man of earnest passions and feelings — an impetuous man, a man full of love and devotion for the Lord Jesus Christ, a man who felt that he could fight and resist any temptation because of the love he had for his Master. He made a bold profession. When men turned away from Him, he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And this man it was — Simon Peter, going forward to meet the power of the world in his own strength, who made a miserable failure. His great error was that he under-rated the power of the world, and he over-estimated his own strength to meet it. When the Lord spoke to His disciples on the night of His betrayal and told them that they would leave Him alone and turn from Him, Peter, strong in his devotion, said, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will not I." "I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death." And yet, before many hours were passed away, he had denied his Master with oaths and curses. He went in his own resolution to face the power of the world. He entered the high priest's palace and mingled with the soldiers of

the high priest, associating and fraternizing with the world. He was standing in his own strength, and he denied that he knew the Lord, denied with oaths and curses any knowledge of Him.

Beloved friends, do you believe that there is a power in this world which is ever waiting to assault your fidelity and insult the cross? Do you believe that that power of the world and the evil within your own heart is more than you can master in your own strength? If not, you may find it so to your deep sorrow and shame. When Peter had denied his Master thrice, he suddenly found the eyes of his Master upon him. The Lord looked upon Peter, and Peter went out weeping bitterly. He felt how grievous was his fault. The Master said, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice," but Peter would not be warned. He went to face the power of Pharaoh and his host in his own strength, and he failed. Yet the word came to him, as it were: 'Fear not, Peter, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.' He had fallen to the dust,but there was One ready to lift him up and give him further power. And afterwards we actually read how the man who denied his Master three times went forth in the face of Jerusalem and the 'whole world, boldly declaring the salvation of the Lord. This divine power for salvation is what I want you to see. It is one thing for a man to find out his own weakness. It is another thing to find out the power that wishes to drag him back into bondage. It is yet another to find out how great is the power of God and His salvation.

I like to think about this aspect of salvation in connection with the glorious person of Him who was the Saviour. I like to read, too, of the scene presented to us in the second chapter of Luke, when that little Babe was brought in to the old man Simeon, who had waited long, hoping that the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah might be fulfilled in his day. And when they brought in the Babe Jesus, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

There it is for us: the infant Jesus, the salvation of God. Do you not see it there in that blessed person? There is no power elsewhere. So far as the world judges, you would not look at a babe for power and strength, but it was just there that God's power, God's grace too, was seen by faith in the person of Jesus. But you have to look farther on in the history of that Blessed One, and consider another scene. The angel said, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And if you look elsewhere you will see that name emblazoned upon the cross of Calvary: This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." So far as the world was able to see, there was never such a spectacle of weakness as was presented in Jesus on the cross. There was Jesus who had raised the sick, healed the leper, given sight to the blind, stilled the waves of the sea — there He was between two malefactors. The very heavens were darkened above Him. Those shoulders uphold the worlds, yet was He nailed to the cross! Beloved friends, the salvation of the Lord was nevertheless there in that Nazarene. He is the salvation of the Lord.

There was a man who, in that tragic hour, found out this truth, a man whose life had been blasted by sin, and there he turned his face to Jesus. He looked in dim faith to Jesus, and there was power in the Crucified to change that blackened soul, and to cleanse him from all guilt, and to give him an entrance that day into the Paradise of God.

Beloved friends, Christ, the power of God, was there! And He is a power stronger than the power of the world. I would have you to look further still. I would have you look up to the right hand of the throne of God. Who is there? The same Jesus, the One who died; the crucified One is now in glory; and this is the One to whom also you are called to appeal for needed power. Are you in your

sins? There is the cross, and the blood that cleanseth from all sin. As the man who was an Israelite could look back to the blood of the paschal lamb and know that that blood shielded him from God's judgment, so now you may look at the blood of Jesus Christ that God may cleanse you from your sins. But you must look up to the throne of God to see One there who has conquered Satan, who rose and ascended triumphant over death, and is there to help you here in the daily struggle in which you engage against the power of sin and Satan. Will you be enslaved by your own sinful habits? Will you be carried away by the lusts and passions of your own evil heart?

If not, you must stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. I know that there are a great many who look continually at the cross alone, and therefore know nothing of the deliverance of grace. They listen to a single text of Scripture — "I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and refuse to heed any other. Hence they are ignorant of the peace of God.

You ought to know also the power of the living Christ; to know that the man Christ Jesus can supply you with every needed strength, grace and wisdom which you may require in your path here. You have all that and more when you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One to whom you can look for succour and blessing under all circumstances. Hence you may take the word of Moses to yourself, "Fear not"; fear no evil, and fear no terrible thing. The fear of temporal power and of national disaster now is great and wide-spread, but what is the fear of the forces of this world? What is the fear of those that kill the body? Would that there was more fear of him that wars against the soul. Men follow one another heedlessly in the paths of sin, they drink deeply of its pleasures, only to find the misery it brings. They quickly learn that the impelling power is so great that they cannot resist it. They hate their habits and despise themselves, and you find them driven to utter and hopeless despair, and tempted to end their wretched existence of bondage to sin. They often vainly seek some refuge in the grave, for the power which is impelling them seeks their certain destruction.

Take the herd of swine at Gadara, for instance. It was driven to destruction by a malevolent evil power. We read that the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and perished. It is often the same with men, and they have no power to help themselves out of their enslaving and debasing habits. They think nobody cares for them, and they go swiftly, madly down to death.

O dear hearer, let me tell you there is a mightier power for the Christian, for Christ is the power of God. Some do not realise how they need the Lord Jesus Christ every day. They think that though they need Him in the matter of their sins, they do not need Him in the matter of their daily life. But it is not enough to look to Christ for forgiveness for all you have done. It is necessary to look to Him for guidance and victory every step of the way. Beloved friends, you know not what tomorrow may bring forth. You know not when your end may arrive, but whatever the period of your journey may be, the apostolic principle is the only safe one for us all: "by the grace of God I am what I am." It is only by His power and by His grace any of us can be preserved. "Fear ye not," then "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

Now, what is meant by standing still? We must beware of a possible misapprehension of these words as if they imply that we have nothing whatever to do, as if it were sufficient for us to drift with the stream and let things take their course. There is something to be done, and you find later in the narrative that the people of Israel were told to go forward, even though the sea was in front of

them; they were not on any account to turn back. Egypt was behind. They were never to think of retracing their steps with the strength that God would provide. What, then, does He mean by standing still? I think the word implies that they were to consider calmly their position from the divine standpoint. They were to dismiss their anxieties, they were to give up every fear, and to contemplate what power there was in Jehovah. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The flower of Pharaoh's army was surely something not to be despised, as it was viewed humanly.

They might well fear that armed host. And the mountains were not to be scaled, and the sea was impassable, measuring both by human standards. Their position to a faithless man seemed hopeless, but let them only bring in God as their Helper, and "if God be for us, who shall be against us?" Do you know what it is to have proved His divine power for deliverance in your daily life, to have God bringing you through a sore trial or temptation. Beloved friends it is a grand experience to be able to look back upon one's past and say, "God brought me through that great crisis: how I got through I cannot explain, but I got through, and it was God who brought me through."

I must leave this matter for your serious consideration. It is of practical importance, and concerns each one of us. So long as we are here in this world we are liable to come in contact with sinful men, with sin and the tendency to sin. We know the temptation to sin is very dangerous to a holy life. We have to be constantly on the watch and very vigilant. And we must continue to be on the alert, and further than this, we have to look with a fixed gaze in that direction alone from which help can come. Then in the moment of trial and in the moment of difficulty we shall find that help comes.

Men pride themselves in these days on the wonders of wireless telegraphy, but the wonders of prayer are far greater. Prayer ascends to heaven with more than lightning rapidity, and brings instant relief. This then is the manner in which you must "stand still." You must cease from your own efforts and rest, in faith, upon the power of Christ. There is a moment when there is nothing for you to do. You must cease from your own works, and let the power of God work for you.

"Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." How long will it take us to contemplate the entire extent of this salvation — to know it fully? The progress will be gradual. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that we can ever grow into this knowledge by vague dreams of the great power, goodness and love of God. There is the practice as well as the theory. We need continually to look upon Him as revealed in His word, but also in the hour of our need we should not fail to prove how ready He is to help. The true Christian life is not something to which we resort in moments when we have nothing else to do. When Sunday comes, because it is respectable, many are found in some place where the Bible is opened and read, and they hear of the delivering power of the Lord. But in the home, in the workshop, in the battle of life, everywhere we may learn by actual instance how the power of God is exercised in response to the person who waits upon Him.

Let me ask, Do you really believe that, in the matters that press most against you every day, God will interfere for your help and blessing if you only look to Him? Be assured that He will protect you from the greatest power that can oppose you — the power of Satan. The ways of the great enemy are subtle. Satan did not display or show himself in that instance to which I referred just now. No! The servant-maid was the means in Satan's hands of causing Peter to deny his Master. But the

Lord had said before to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

Consider the two. There was on the one hand Jesus looking upon His disciple with a heart full of loving solicitude, and on the other hand Peter, passionately devoted, but full of self-confidence, thinking that he could overcome the spiritual Pharaoh and all his forces. And, indeed, he was carried through eventually. But, oh! that failure! Oh! the sadness of it, that the Man of sorrows should have had another anguish added as He saw what sin could do with a man who had turned away from the world and become His follower, that it could find an entrance into the heart of an apostle who had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that it should cause him to disgrace himself and deny his Master. It is so. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Never seek to meet the power of the world, the power of sin and Satan, in your own strength; but "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." W.J.H.

S. The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep.

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep.

W. J. Hocking.

1. The Blindness of the Jews.

John 9:39-41. No scripture can be divorced from its context without losing somewhat of its force and beauty. And the well-known passage in St. John dealing with the Good Shepherd is, like all other inspired writings, only a single link in the chain wrought by the Spirit of God for His own ends and purposes. It may therefore be profitable to meditate upon it with this thought before the mind. The eighth and ninth chapters of John show in considerable detail both the inability of the Jews to appreciate in any measure the testimony of God which was being given them by the Lord from heaven, and also the enmity of their hearts against the One Who by His words of truth disturbed the serenity of their hypocritical ways. He was among them as the "Light of the world" (John 8:12); but this did not aid their moral perception; for to them noonday was no better than night. The light shone; but alas! they were blind. Had they confessed their true state then, as they will do in a later day, they would have said "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as in the night" (Isaiah 59:10).

Neither would such blindness then, any more than now or ever, have been a bar to blessing. For the prophets had testified beforehand that it was a characteristic work of the Messiah to open the eyes of the blind (Psalms 146:8; Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 35:5; Isaiah 42:7). And this the Lord did, both in the temple (Matthew 21:14) and by the wayside (Luke 18:35). And what He did for the natural sight was but an earnest of what He would do for the spiritual eyes. Those that saw not should see and their sin be put away; but, in their pride of heart, the nation, by the mouths of their responsible religious leaders, said "We see" and thus their sin remained (John 9:41).

Proof of Blindness.

It is important to observe that at the close of chap. 9:, according to the teaching of this Gospel, the complete rejection of the Lord by the Jews is definitely marked. This is indeed indicated in a general way in the first four chapters, but from thence it is shown to increase in intensity. In John 5:16 they persecute Him and seek to slay Him because He healed the impotent man on the Sabbath day. In John 6:66 many of His disciples go back and walk no more with Him because of what He was teaching. In John 7:32 the Pharisees and chief priests send officers to take Him because many of the people believed on Him. In John 8:1-59 : He argues with the Jews as only that One could Whose words were truth as well as spirit and life. But they do not understand His speech, because they cannot hear His word (John 8:43). Being full of all contumaciousness, they interrupt Him and oppose; failing in argument, as error must in presence of truth, they resort to abuse and say He is a Samaritan and has a demon (John 8:48). When His words still pursue them, piercing and cutting more keenly than a two-edged sword, laying them naked and bare before His very eyes (Hebrews 4:12), they take up stones to cast at Him, and thus drive Him from

their midst (John 8:59). They could not endure Him because of what He says, because He tells them the truth (John 8:40). Their blindness is thus proved. Would they but own this, they need not despair; for in John 9:1-41 : the Lord shows that He can open the eyes even of one born blind. This act however provokes the Jews to further hostility. They, first of all, strive to make it appear that there was no miracle at all. Defeated in this, because the man is simple and honest enough to abide by the fact that his eyes had been opened by Jesus, they spitefully cast the poor fellow out of the synagogue as a disciple of Christ.

Thus the Spirit testifies in chaps. 8 and 9 that the Jews would not believe in what He said nor in what He did. His words and His works were alike offensive to them. They want neither Him nor is followers. This miracle would not have created such a stir if any but Jesus had done it.

Herein was the true condition of their hearts made manifest. As the Lord Himself said "For judgment I am come into the world" (John 9:39). Not of course to pronounce the sentence of final condemnation as He will do by-and-by (John 5:22; John 5:27; John 5:29); for He was here as a Saviour not as a Judge (John 3:17; John 12:47.) Nevertheless His presence afforded a very conclusive proof whether they could see or not. He was in their midst as the Light of the world, as the Dayspring from on high to give light to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke 1:78-79). The Light verily shone in darkness; but instead of being enlightened (Isaiah 60:1 margin), the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5). Indeed this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

Wilful Blindness. And this perversity made their state so much the more solemn. They were not only in darkness, but they loved it; they were not only blind but angry with the One Who would have healed them. The Lord had come that they which see not might see. But the Jews declined to own such a thing and gloried in themselves; in fact the dispensation was in its Laodicean stage. They said, like Christendom today, We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and they knew not they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Revelation 3:17). Oh! if they had but come down from their loftiness, and cried like the beggars of Jericho "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, Thou Son of David" (Matthew 20:30), their eyes might have been opened and they would have seen beauty in their King that they should desire Him. But no! so infatuated were they, so under the power of the enemy who blinds the minds of the unbelieving (2 Corinthians 4:4), that they not only took the ground of being able to see for themselves, but assumed to be guides to the blind and lights to those in darkness (Romans 2:19).

Inflated assumption! what could they be but blind guides at the best, as the Lord said to them (Matthew 23:16-17; Matthew 23:26)? And if the blind led the blind, what could they do, but both fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14)? And this was surely the unhappy result, when the chief priests persuaded the people to ask Barabbas and crucify Jesus, Whose blood rests on them and their children unto this day.

Judicial Blindness. And this climax of iniquity was reached by the Jewish nation as the inevitable outcome of their persistent refusal to acknowledge the Lord and to own their real state before Him. And in John 9:39 we have His solemn warning of such a thing. Whilst He had come that those which saw not might see, the effect of His presence would also be that those who saw not would be made blind. It was dangerous for them to dally with God’s offers of mercy. Grace and truth had

come in His Person: to reject Him was to bring down upon them that judicial blindness spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed" (Isaiah 6:10). The Lord was the Great Physician come to heal them. And of His power and readiness so to do, He had given repeated proofs. But they "would not" (Matthew 23:37), and accordingly their blind eyes were more blinded.

Isaiah's Prophecy.

It is instructive to note that in Matthew as also in John we have the above named prophecy from Isaiah quoted. Matthew 13:14. And there, as in John 12:40, it is made to follow the rejection of the Messiah, not being quoted till they had ascribed His power of casting out demons to Beelzebub the prince of demons (Matthew 12:24). And it may also be helpful in this connection to mark that this order is invariably observed in scripture. It is not till man's will actively opposes God's that He manifests His sovereignty. It is when man will not that he cannot. This is shown clearly enough in this Gospel (John); and, in direct sequence to the scripture before us, we read "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed"? (John 12:37-38). Plainly they would not believe (John 5:40), though ample proofs were afforded. Then the passage proceeds, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart and he converted and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him" (John 12:39-41) So that we see they could not believe because they would not. However this hardening was but national and was not apart from mercy; for it is immediately added "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him"

Thus the Lord's words (John 9:39), may be taken as describing the twofold result of His mission here "that they which see not might see and that those which see might be made blind." He filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He sent empty away. And, remembering the glory and worth of His Person, who shall measure the blessedness of the blind who received Him? Or, on the other hand, who shall measure the condemnation of those who rejected Him?

"Jesus said unto them If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41) Here the Lord states that they were responsible for the profession they were making concerning themselves. If they confessed their blindness, they would have no sin. For penitent sinners there was mercy and forgiveness. But if they said, We see, they were responsible to walk in the light and would he judged accordingly. If they could see as they said they should have recognized the Good Shepherd when He came. This the Lord develops in the parable of the sheepfold at which we may look on another occasion (D.V).

2. The Proverb of the Sheepfold.

John 10:1-6.

1893 247 The parable or proverb in these verses is a continuation of the Lord's discourse to the Pharisees begun in the previous chapter. He had spoken plainly of their actual blindness in spite of the pretence they made of seeing. Then, under the figure of a shepherd entering his fold and

calling out his own sheep, He showed the effect of His presence in Israel. But these men, wise in their own conceits, knew not what the Lord was saying, though His words were especially directed to them (verse 6). This inability to understand the Lord's meaning could not have arisen from the strangeness of the figure thus employed by Him. Shepherds and sheep were continually before their eyes, and the comparison of Israel to a flock is common throughout the Old Testament. And, in one of the prophets, the metaphor is even elaborated throughout an entire chapter (Ezek. xxxiv). But, having failed to recognize the Person of Christ, ever the key of all divine teaching, the professed spiritual leaders of the people were blind to the real meaning of the Lord's words. Had these Jews but bowed to the long-promised and then-given Shepherd, all would have been plain. But though the Good Shepherd had come to His fold, they knew Him not and heard not His voice. Hence, as indeed the Lord told them, hearing not His word, they understood not His saying, John 8:43. The Lord, speaking of Himself in relation to the sheepfold, gave three distinguishing marks by which the true shepherd might he known:

1. — He enters by the door;

2. — To Him the porter openeth; and 3. — The sheep hear His voice.

These marks were of the simplest order, and were available for the simplest souls. Yet this very simplicity would he a sufficient reason for them to be scouted and despised by those vain pretenders to a wisdom which was far from them. Their pride of heart and of mind would not brook the grace that classed them with the people that knew not the law (John 7:49). Not content with what suited the humble, they demanded a sign from heaven (Matt. xvi). Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Entrance by the Door. The Eastern sheepfold consisted of an enclosure formed by a circular stone wall with a door for entrance. Here the sheep were driven at night and at other times for safety. In the Old Testament the figure of the fold is used to express the security and privilege of that people whose God was Jehovah. Thus looking on to a future day, the Lord of Israel says, "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase" Jeremiah 23:3. Then again, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep. . . . And I will bring them out from the peoples. . . . I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be" (Ezek. 34: 12-11). "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold" (Micah 2:12). These scriptures remain to be fulfilled in their entirety. For not until the millennial rest shall Israel dwell peaceably in their own land secure from the inroads of every foe. In the parable before us, the fold undoubtedly refers to the separateness of the Jews from other nations, which was still true of them. The Romans had not yet taken away their place and nation. And though they had lost the inward sense of God's presence and favour, they had many of the outward and visible signs of God's ancient people. They had still the temple and its service, the sacrifices and the feasts, the priests and the Levites. When the Good Shepherd came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He came to the fold. He had not then to seek them among all nations. They were not then, as now, scattered over the face of the earth. And when He presented Himself to the sheep, it was in no surreptitious manner. On the contrary He submitted Himself to all that had been ordered of God of old and strictly prescribed in Old Testament prophecies. There the

mode of the entry of the Good Shepherd was foretold in the plainest terms, that the simple of the flock might not be deceived. The Spirit signified beforehand that the Messiah should be supernaturally born of a virgin. This was fulfilled in Jesus. He should be of the house and lineage of David. This Jesus was proved to be. He should be born in Bethlehem of Judah. There the shepherds found the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. He should be called out of Egypt. Thence He was brought after Herod’s death. But why add more? Do not the evangelists, especially Matthew, give in detail how the Lord fulfilled in Himself what had been spoken before by the prophets?

It was thus easy for the simple and godly Israelite with the scriptures in his heart to recognise the Good Shepherd when He came. There could be but One Who should fulfil the promises of God. The question therefore was whether the shepherd was entering by the door, or whether he was forcing an entrance contrary to the testimony of the holy oracles which were in his hands. 1f he answered to the witness of the scriptures, he was the Good Shepherd. If he was climbing in some other way, he was a thief and a robber whose object was to pillage the flock. To Him the Porter Openeth.

John 10:1-6.

1893 263 In the absence of the owner of the sheep occupying the fold, a porter or watchman was set at the entrance, one of whose duties it was to admit no one but the shepherd. Obviously therefore if he opened the door to anyone, that one must be the shepherd of the sheep.

Now when the Lord came to the fold of Israel, He did not come unannounced. The door was opened for His admittance. The Holy Ghost Who gave the promises of old through the prophets raised up a special testimony at the coming of Him Who was to fulfil those promises. He Who had inspired no prophets since the days of Malachi, after an interval of 400 years, spake by the mouth of Zacharias the priest concerning his infant son John. "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways" (Luke 1:76). Isaiah had long before foretold the forerunner of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). That herald was now come. On the banks of the Jordan, John the Baptist delivered his message concerning the Christ coming after him Whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. He plainly told all enquirers that he himself was not the Christ. He had come baptizing with water so that the Sent One might be "made manifest to Israel" (John 1:31). And when the Spirit descended like a dove and abode upon Jesus of Nazareth, and the voice from heaven proclaimed the divine Sonship, John testified that this was He Who should baptize with the Holy Ghost.

Thus did the Spirit of God open the door for the Shepherd, by giving an ample testimony to Him by Zacharias immediately previous to His birth, and also by John the Baptist at the commencement of His public ministry. The Sheep Hear His Voice. The recognition of the shepherd by the sheep proves two things:

1. — That He is the Shepherd of the sheep and

2. — That they are the sheep of the Shepherd. Thus in ver. 3 the fact of hearing His voice is used to distinguish the Shepherd from strangers, while in vers. 26-27 it is used to distinguish the true from the false sheep. In Israel there were some who heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. At His coining there was a little flock expecting Him. These were waiting upon God for the consolation of Israel. They were diligently studying His word. So that when Christ appeared among them, they

were not unprepared.

Aged Simeon discerned in the Holy Babe the Salvation of Israel. Anna gave thanks to God at the sight of Him and carried the glad news to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. The guileless Israelite of Cana in Galilee, hearing His voice, said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." Others, whom He called, left all and followed Him; for they knew the claims of the One Who called them. He was their Shepherd. His Own Sheep.

It is of peculiar interest thus to observe that while the Jews generally lapsed into blind rejection of Christ there were a few who received Him. Such are here designated "His own" sheep. This description points to the close and inseparable link between the Shepherd and the sheep. His own people ref used their King. For "He came unto His own (things), and his own (people) received Him not" (John 1:11). However His own sheep did not revolt against Him, their Shepherd. They were His own particular property; as the Lord said to His Father, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17:6). Therefore they heard His voice and they followed Him. And while the little flock as a whole is His very own, His love and interest are directed toward each individual sheep. He knows the name of every one; for He calleth His own sheep by name. He called Zacchaeus by name from his hiding-place in the sycamore tree. He saw Nathaniel secreted under the fig-tree. He knew the past history of the Samaritan stranger. He had compassion on the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, knowing he had been a long time in that case. But more than this: besides the authority which calls them "His own" and the loving concern which calls them "by name," He constitutes Himself their Guide. They should no longer be as sheep without a shepherd. He places Himself at their head. He leadeth them out. When He putteth forth all His own, He goeth before them; and they follow Him.

Having heard and recognised the voice of the Good Shepherd, it was now the part of the sheep to keep close to Him. If He led them out from the lifeless forms of Judaism, it was enough for them to be with the Shepherd. The voices of stranger shepherds, such as the Pharisees in John 9:1-41 :, might decoy or threaten; but the sheep would neither hear nor heed them. They looked only to Him Who was to prove His love by laying down His life for them.

"This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them." Are there any so blind today? The Door.

John 10:7-16.

1893 278 After the break indicated by the sixth verse, the Lord resumes His discourse concerning the sheep and their relationship to the Shepherd. In the previous verses He had spoken in a general way of His own advent into the sheepfold. He now proceeds to reveal what a bountiful provision there is in Himself for the poor of the flock who welcome Him. In Him the sheep would find their all.

He was indeed the Shepherd, but He was also the Door of the sheep (verse 7). And it cannot but be noticed that the Lord, here and in ver. 9, abstains from saying that He is the Door of the fold. There is however no need to resort to hazardous conjectures as to the significance of the omission. The context shows that the Israelitish fold with its legal system and fleshly ordinances was virtually abandoned. The Shepherd leadeth His sheep out. But not a word is heard of a rival fold. The truth is that a new order of things was at hand, into which the sheep might enter through

the Door, that is, Christ. But the hour had not then come to make this known. Neither were the hearers able to bear such an announcement. Hence the general terms employed which allowed fully for the future revelation of the wide display of the grace of God to Jew and Gentile alike.

Even here, in verse 9, it is intimated that the blessing was not to be restricted to Israel. He had announced Himself as the Door of the Jewish sheep; but the gracious truth is repeated with unlimited scope. "I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture."

Thus the Lord calls the faithful in Israel, nay in every place, to find their sufficiency in Himself. He definitely substitutes Himself for the ancient earthly fold. He does not proclaim Himself as the Door to another earthly system,* but says "I am the Door"; and if curiosity enquire of what He is the Door, dove rightly surmises there is nought beyond the Door besides Himself.

* Note that in verses 7 and 9 not a few commentators have been bold enough to supply "fold" in their over officious zeal to make the figure run on all fours. However, the fact is, the Lord brought both Jewish and Gentile sheep into "one flock," not fold, of which he is the one Shepherd." See verse 16.} Salvation, Liberty, and Pasture. In Christ alone the sheep would find suited salvation. They had suffered from false shepherds who pillaged the sheep, from the thief who came to steal and to kill and to destroy, and from the wolf who ravaged and scattered the flock. But they needed to be saved from more than these. They had inward faults as well as outward foes. They had all gone astray. Everyone had turned to his own way. And upon the One then speaking to them Jehovah would lay the iniquities of them all. As the Shepherd, so soon to be smitten by the sword of divine judgment on account of the flock, He guarantees salvation to any who seek it at His hands. "If any man enter in, he shall be saved."

Further, in contrast with the bondage gendered at Mount Sinai, they should be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free. Sin and Satan held men in hard and hitter slavery, and the law of Moses could remove the masterful power of neither the one nor the other. But at the cross the Lord Jesus annulled the power, not of one only, but of both. This emancipating fact, after its accomplishment is fully unfolded by the Spirit in the Epistles. Here the Lord only says they shall "go in and out"; for it was the Spirit's office to chronicle the glorious effects of redemption, it was the Son's mission to perform the gracious work.

Moreover, He promises they shall find pasture. It was a special charge of Jehovah against those who, of old, professed to be shepherds of Israel, that they fed themselves and not the flock. But not so the Good Shepherd. Now that He had come, the sheep should no longer want. He would make them lie down in green pastures, and lead them beside the still waters. According to Ezekiel's prophecy He was Himself that "Plant of Renown" which God had promised to raise up for His sheep, so that they might no more be consumed with hunger in the land (Ezekiel 34:29). Thus the Lord Jesus is Shepherd and Door and Pasture and All. The Good Shepherd. By means of a single epithet of the simplest character, the Lord contrasts Himself with all the false and unworthy hirelings who had gone before. He is the Good Shepherd, and "good," in that absolute sense which applies to God alone (Luke 18:19). Among men there is none good, no, not one. But the goodness of the Shepherd of Israel was such as would undergo the supremest test. No love could exceed His. He would lay down His life for the sheep. This phrase, "laying down the life," as an expression of love, is characteristic of John, being found in the Epistle as well as repeated in the

Gospel (see John 10:11; John 10:15; John 10:17; John 15:13; 1 John 3:16). The same transcendent act is also given in Romans 5:8 as the proof of God's love. "God commendeth his (own) love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But while Paul and John use the same unparalleled fact to demonstrate that truth which would otherwise be beyond human conception, the difference in their standpoint is plainly observable. The apostle of divine righteousness emphasises the sin and guilt of man. He points out that it was when we were "ungodly," "sinners," "enemies," that Christ died for us. He thus displays the beauty of God's grace upon the dark background of human guilt. But the apostle of divine love dilates upon the Person of the One Who thus died. He enforces his words by the consideration of Who He is and not so much of what man is. The Holy Ghost by Paul sums up what we were in a few pregnant words; but the main theme of John's Gospel throughout is the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father Who laid down His life for us. Paul often discourses from the brazen altar, and we weep with shame at ourselves as we consider that He died for such as we. But John leads us into the holy place, and there, before the veil, effulgent with the Shechinah from the throne beyond, we worship with reverent joy as we learn that such an One died for us. We cannot afford to neglect either the one or the other aspect of this blessed truth. In yielding up His life for the sheep, the Lord showed Himself the very reverse of the menial shepherds before or since. Their slender interest in the flock vanished at the first roar of the lion or growl of the bear. Such pastors as they were bargained for wages not for wolves. Their care was only for themselves and not at all for their charge.

Indeed this was the general character of those of old who were set up to feed God's sheep. Even David through his folly caused 70,000 of Israel to fall of a pestilence (1 Kings 24:) On account of Solomon's sin, the kingdom was rent in twain in the days of his son Rehoboam. Hoshea filled up the measure of iniquity until Ephraim was carried captive by the Assyrian to the uttermost parts of the earth. Under king Zedekiah the people of Judah were removed from their own land to serve seventy years in Babylon. Of such rulers, Jehovah said "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" (Jeremiah 23:1.) But the Good Shepherd had now come. The sheep were His own; He loved them and laid down His life for them.

Mutual Knowledge.

"I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father." So the Revised Version reads, showing the true connection between verses 14 and 15, which is not so apparent in the A.V.

It is perhaps a matter of little surprise to learn that the Lord knoweth them that are His: but it is a matter of great wonder and of greater thankfulness that the sheep should know the Shepherd. And it is upon this particular manifestation of divine life in the soul that John is inspired to dwell in an especial manner. Of the world the Holy Ghost says, that it "knew Him not" (John 1:10, 1 John 3:2); and in that which is most properly described as the "Lord's prayer," the Son declared" O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee" (John 17:25; compare John 16:3). So of the Pharisees in this chapter. "They understood (lit. knew) not what things they were which he spake unto them" (John 10:6). But when speaking of those who are "not of the world," we read "The Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:20). This knowledge characterises the babes as well as the fathers (1 John 2:13-14). And it was exemplified in the case of Simon Peter, when he said "We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One

of God" (John 6:69. R.V). This reciprocal knowledge of the Good Shepherd and His sheep is here most strikingly compared — "even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." Without pretending to say whether this refers to the measure or the manner of our knowledge, or to theorise in any way with regard to that which seems a fitter subject for meditation than for exposition, one remark may be permitted by the way. We may surely gather from this analogy that the knowledge of Christ's sheep in this respect is neither uncertain nor obscure; for it is the knowledge of a Person, not about Him. Knowledge concerning the Lord is undoubtedly progressive; but knowing Him is that which marks the veriest lamb of the flock, as not being of the world which knows Him not. One of the robbers at Calvary recognised his Lord in the One crucified at his side; and said, "Lord [Jesus], remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Herein was he distinguished from his fellow malefactor, both in this world and the next. Verily, it is not so much what we know as Whom we know.

Therefore Doth My Father Love Me.

John 10:17-18.

1893 342 We have here an instance, unparalleled in the history of all time, of One who afforded a motive and an occasion for the Father's love. The unique character of God's gracious love towards sinners is elsewhere described as triumphing over the extreme repulsiveness of its objects (Romans 5:8). Here, on the contrary the object of love is in perfect accord with the One Who loves; for the Lord declares of Himself, "

Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again" (John 10:17). In this act was unqualified obedience to the commandment He had received of His Father. And it was by such obedience that the Father's name was glorified and His love drawn forth. For the Son's obedience was unvarying in His life and, moreover, consummated in His death, as the word says of Him, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php 2:8). Small wonder, then, if such unrivalled perfection of thoughts and ways should become (speaking after the manner of men) an adequate cause for the satisfaction and complacency of the Father Who alone could estimate its true worth. This divine delight in the Messiah was foretold in the prophets. For instance, Jehovah says through Isaiah, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). In like manner, it was announced by the angelic host to the shepherds of Bethlehem, when on that I memorable night they praised God and said "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good pleasure in men "* (Luke 2:14.) The first man, together with everything God made, was pronounced very good (Genesis 1:31); but the Second Man, the I Lord from heaven, is herein declared to be the object of the fulness of divine delight as well as the medium of its display to others. Subsequently a voice came from heaven, not then of angels, but of the Father Himself, not once only but twice, "This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5). And when, in obeying unto death, He finished the work given Him to do, His soul was not left in hades (Acts 2:27), but, by His exaltation to the throne, He was demonstrated to be the One Whom God delighted to honour. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" etc. (Php 2:9).

{* The word translated" goodwill" in Luke 2:14, and "well-pleased" Matthew 3:17 et al. is identical in the original, making the connection between the passages more apparent. "In men" is preferable to "towards men," giving the sense of mankind as the sphere in which the "good

pleasure" is displayed, while the on heroines the Archetypal Man Who is its principal object. It is interesting to observe that the newly-discovered Syriac MSS. are declared by Professor Rendel Harris to afford additional weighty evidence against the strange reading of the R. V. "peace among men in whom he is well-pleased."}

It is well to remind ourselves in considering these divine testimonies to the excellence of the Man Christ Jesus, that they were given not to command our admiration, but rather our worship. We are called to admire many a worthy in the Old Testament as well as the New; but we are to worship One only, Him Who though fully man was never less than God. It was when Peter sought to class the Lord Jesus with Moses and Elias, that the voice came from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear Him." In His very lowest stoop of grace, as well as in the height of His exaltation, no rival so much as appears. In all things He has and must have the pre-eminence.

Now the witnesses we have heard, the prophet, the angels, the Father Himself, all combine to show that the words uttered by the Lord in John 10:17 are, in point of fact, an echo of what had already been declared of Him. In comparing, however, the act of laying down His life as spoken of in verse 17, with verses 11 and 15, a difference is at once noticed. The Shepherd first spoke of laying down His life for the sheep. In this aspect, His death is given as an irrefragable demonstration of His love and devotion to the flock as well as His substitution for them since they had all gone astray.* But in verse 17 the sheep are not so much as mentioned. It is here a question of what the Father sees in the death of the Son. It was to Him a source of love and delight, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. So that this phase of Christ's death is the Antitype of the burnt offering (Leviticus 1:1-17 :). There as well as here is seen that, when the Son yielded up His life, the Father found therein an abundant and acceptable portion. Compare also Ephesians 5:2.

{* Though expiation is not so much the subject here as love for the sheep.} Power To Lay It Down.

It has often been remarked in these pages, as well as elsewhere, how fatal it is to the true understanding of scripture to set one passage against another, and to endeavour in an excess of misdirected zeal, to effect a kind of reconciliation by adding to or subtracting from the plain statements of the Word. It is in fact, only the faith which accepts the words of the Holy Ghost as they stand, that is the true solvent of so-called Biblical difficulties. This much is prefaced because some have professed to see a sort of contradiction between this word, "I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again," and such passages as follow, "This Jesus hath God raised up" (Acts 2:32), "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), "Christ . . . , being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1. Peter 3: 18). In regard to these and similar places, it should be needless to say that there is no necessity whatever for adjustment of any kind, but faith is called to reverently receive the whole as the truth of God. So that while the mysteries of the Trinity are and must be inscrutable to the creature, the believer clearly discerns, because it is revealed, that in the mighty act of resurrection, Father, Son and Holy Ghost each bore a part. And these various aspects are severally given in suitable connection with the context and with the design of the Infallible Inspirer of Holy Writ. The connection of this declaration of the Lord's (John 10:18) with the general design of the fourth Gospel is evident. For He here speaks as the Son of God Who indeed is God. And throughout John He is made to appear in this character.

He takes a place with regard to His life and death, that a mere man could never take without the most daring presumption and the most blasphemous usurpation of the supreme authority of God. To the Jews the Lord said, speaking of His resurrection, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). And again, referring to His atoning death, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). It is also surely not without its significance that in this Gospel alone it is recorded that, when the armed men sought Him in the garden, He, not waiting to be found of them, but as the Giver-up of His own life, went forth and said to them "Whom seek ye?" The betrayer's kiss of the synoptists is passed over and replaced by the holy dignity of the Son Who knew all things that should come upon Him. From the majesty of Him Who said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself," the constables with their swords and staves recoil in abject impotence, prostrated to the very ground (John 18:4-5). In like manner, the Incarnate Word announced from the cross with regard to His own work, "It is finished." Only One could so speak of what He had done and so yield up His spirit (Mark 15:39). It was that One Who said, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And surely it is the possession of this right to which He thus asserts His claim as the Son, that so incalculably enhances the value of His act in laying down His life in obedience to the commandment He had received from His Father. The creature, as such, could never have the power of choosing to do the will of his Creator*; when man obeys, he does no more than his duty and is therein no more than an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). The Son, however, being equal with God, was able to announce His own acquiescence in the divine will and purpose, saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). It was His prerogative, in contrast to the mere creature, to thus signify His assent. A servant could not choose to be other than subject to the will of his lord. But it was the will of the Lord of all to become the Servant even to the laying down of His life; hence the immeasurable worth and acceptability of this incomparable act.

{* Without, of course, incurring the penalties of disobedience.}

We hear of another in this Gospel, who spoke of giving up his life. Simon Peter, in the impetuosity of his character, consumed with zeal for his beloved Master, exclaimed on the very night of His betrayal, "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (John 13:37). For the son of Jonas did not then understand that the very reverse would be the case according to John 10:11-15. Neither did he then believe what the Lord immediately told him of the instability of his own heart, that, before an hour or so had passed, he would be denying with oaths and curses that he so much as knew the gracious Master Whom he now seemed prepared to follow to prison and to death. But so it was that a share in such a disgrace and death proved too much for one who trusted in his own strength.

Still, though he fell so shamefully, the Lord credited the desire of his spirit. And after his restoration he was called by the risen Lord to follow Him, and assured of the death by which he should glorify God (John 21:18-19).

3. The Sheep.

John 10:24-30.

1893 359 This section relates in a summary manner to the characteristics of the sheep of Christ, as contrasted with the unbelief of the Jews. The latter display their utter blindness to all the Lord

had previously said and done, by their question, "How long dost thou make us doubt?" "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (ver. 24). In reply He charges them with positively rejecting both His words and His works, as John 8:1-59 and John 9:1-41 respectively show in greater detail. He told them Who He was, but they believed Him not. His works bore witness to the same, but neither did they believe them, because they were not of His sheep.* The very fact of asking such a question at such a juncture was full proof of their spiritual status.

{*Internal evidence seems to require, and external evidence is said to justify, the omission of the phrase, "as I said unto you" (ver. 26). This omission is made in the R.V.} The Lord thereon turns from the unbelievers to the believers. He speaks of the sheep of which He is at once the Owner, the Shepherd, and the Guardian. They had heard His voice (ver. 27). He had cried unto Israel, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Psalms 95:7-8); but the mass of the nation would not hear, and accordingly their foolish hearts were darkened. There were however some who heard the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard lived (John 5:28). Of such He says, "I know them." But to the faithless ones He will say, as to the foolish virgins, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not" (Matthew 25:12); and to many who have prophesied and cast out demons and done many wonderful works in His name, He will profess "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

Moreover, those who heard the Shepherd’s voice followed him, as He said before in a somewhat different connection (ver. 4). Here His words are, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me." Not so the rich young man, who anxiously enquired of the Lord, how he might inherit eternal life. Though outwardly moral and inwardly sincere, he absolutely failed to answer to this claim of the Master. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). But he went away grieved. Whatever else he may have possessed, he undoubtedly lacked this distinguishing characteristic of the sheep of Christ. He was not constrained like the disciples to leave all and follow the poor, the lowly, and the despised Nazarene; it is therefore clear he had not heard the Shepherd’s voice. To him the path, with its apparent darkness and chilly gloom, was forbidding and repellent, as indeed it must be to all who have not the light of life (John 8:12). The Gift of Eternal Life.

"I give unto them eternal life." The Good Shepherd, Who laid down His life for the sheep, gives eternal life to the sheep. He had come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10); for it is the will of Him that sent Him, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have everlasting life (John 6:40); and the Son had received power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17:2). Other passages in this Gospel show that it is given consequent upon faith in God and in Christ. (See John 3:15-16; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:47; John 6:54). But here all mention of faith is omitted that our gaze may be concentrated upon eternal life as the priceless dower of divine love and goodness.

While the effects of the possession of eternal life are many and blessed, it forms in itself the essential basis of the intimate relationships of the children of God. Foolish is it, and fruitless of aught save wild and dangerous speculations, to attempt to analyse this precious gift. The subtle terms, in which it is expressed and referred to, effectually elude and baffle the researches of mere

prurient curiosity after explanation and definition. The unraveled mysteries of even the natural life should serve as a sufficient warning to those who would intrude into what is not revealed concerning the spiritual life. It ought not to be forgotten that to exceed the scripture tends to destruction, even as ignorance of it tends to debility. Not one inspired word on this or any other topic can be overlooked without loss, neither can one word be added without the gravest peril. The Security of the Sheep.

"They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." It has often been pointed out that this promise is of a double character, assuring the saints against both corruption and disruption, against internal decay and external foes, against their own harmful weaknesses as well as the rapacious power of the enemy.

Truly, "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). And this unqualified promise is such an impregnable citadel for the timid believer. For the Good Shepherd herein pledges Himself and the honour of His glorious name* that the very feeblest of the flock shall never by any possible means perish. So, speaking to His Father of the twelve, He says, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost (same Greek word) but the son of perdition"** (John 17:12).

{*Compare also the Lord’s subsequent words "Holy Father, keep through thine own name" (John 17:11).}

{** It is well to note that the Lord here (xvii. 12) refers to the twelve not as "sheep," but as apostles. Judas, though an apostle, was evidently not a "sheep;" a "son of perdition," not a child of God.}

Further, the place of safety for the believer is not symbolized by an earthly fold as in former days, but by the hand of the Good Shepherd. There, in the shadow of His hand (compare Isaiah 49:2; Isaiah 51:16) are they securely hidden from every foe. That hand of invincible might (which redeemed the ancient people from the iron bondage of Egypt, preserved and defended them through the desert and brought them into the promised land flowing with milk and honey) will environ the frail and feeble sheep and protect them from every attack of the enemy. Though the wolf seeks to ravage the flock, the Good Shepherd leads the sheep of His hand (Psalms 95:7) into those green pastures where they may peacefully feed beside the still waters. The Father also graciously concerns Himself in their guardianship. "My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one." This unity of interest in those who received the Lord is also shown in John 17:11-12. The Son there prays the Father to "keep in thine own name those whom thou hast given me," adding" while I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." And when the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered, the Father turned His hand upon these little ones, according to the prophecy of the Spirit (Zech. 13: 17) and the prayer of the Son (John xvii); for it was not His will that one of the little ones should perish (Matthew 18:14).

Thus the Father and the Son constitute themselves the Protectors of those who trust them for salvation. Could the ground for confident assurance be made firmer? Away with those who depict the child of faith as scantily-attired, clinging with numb fingers to a slippery sea-girt rock, while dashing waves threaten every moment to engulf in a watery grave. Scripture teaches us to think of such a one held in that hand, in Whose hollow the waters were measured (Isaiah 40:12). W. J.

Hocking.

S. The Sorrowing Sisters of Bethany.

The Sorrowing Sisters of Bethany.

W. J. Hocking. No comfort can be true and divine and consequently effectual, that concerns itself alone with the trial and sorrow. It is truly a welcome relief to the aching heart to find another heart entering into its grief; but this is sympathy rather than comfort. The characteristic of comfort is that it strengthens the soul to bear its burden with fortitude as well as resignation; and it accomplishes this result by considering the trial in the light of the glory of God. When sorrows overtake and overwhelm the soul, it gives itself many a bitter pang by reiterating the question — Why do I suffer this? Why has this come upon me? And under these circumstances there can he no real comfort, until such a one lays hold by faith upon the fact which scripture abundantly reveals, that the clouds and storms are but agents in the development of the beneficent purposes of God. All things are working together for the accomplishment of good; and this to those who love God and who are the called according to purpose. This we had not known but for the word of God; but He has given it for our comfort, and that we may thereby trace His hand in each event, minute or mighty, which befalls us. Leave God out, and all is confusion and anarchy: a crowd of pitiless misfortunes grinding man to the very dust of the ground from whence he was formed. Bring God in, and the man of faith can rejoice in tribulations also. The incident at Bethany (John 11:1-57 :) with its touching and pathetic details illustrates how the golden threads of divine purpose are interwoven with the darkest texture of the lives of God’s saints. It was undoubtedly written for the comfort of those of His own who are called to face what is perhaps the bitterest of all the sorrows of this vale of tears.

Bethany was a place of particularly sweet and precious associations in the life of our Lord. It was in Bethany, the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, that the Lord found a retreat from Jerusalem where He was hated and despised of all. It was there that Blessed One found the excellent of the earth, the saints in whom was all His delight (Psalms 16:3). So that we read "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:5).

It is of great moment to note this last fact, stated as it is at the very outset of the narrative. This family was not simply a part of those of "His own" to whom He came, but they were of those who received Him and believed on His name (John 1:11-12), and who thus became "His own" in a higher sense. And in that circle of favour and blessedness the trio of Bethany, had by their faith and love, their piety and devotion, advanced to such eminence that they are described like a certain other disciple, as those whom "Jesus loved."

It might be supposed that such a favoured household would enjoy a complete immunity from the ravages of sorrow, sickness, and death. So they would think who knew not that Messiah the Prince was also the Man of Sorrows. And where He is the Guest, it should be no matter of surprise if afflictions attend in His train. And so it came about at Bethany. A mortal disease laid hold on Lazarus, who doubtless was the least to be spared of any in that household. To him the sisters clung in womanly affection; on him they rested in womanly dependence. In their distress they

appeal to Jesus. He was not in their vicinity, but they send a message, brief but full of faith and implicit confidence. "Lord," they say, "behold he whom thou (dearly) lovest is sick." It was not an importunate passionate petition, but calm and restful in the assurance that the Lord's interest would be at once awakened. It rose above the prayer of the leper — "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Assuredly the leper had not reached beyond faith in the Lord's power, while the sisters knew and believed His love as well as His power. And it was this sense of the love of the Lord that imparted to them a firm trust that He would speedily and effectually help them. They put it to themselves whether, supposing they had the power to heal their brother, they would not fly to his deliverance. How much more then would Jesus, seeing His love for Lazarus exceeded even their own!

Yet although the Lord loved the sick man (so much that even the unimpressionable Jews said when they saw Him weep at the grave, "Behold, how he loved him)," and although the message from the sisters displayed such reliance on His loving interest, the Lord abode two days longer in the place where He was. It was not His wont so to receive the petitions for aid addressed to Him. Usually the answers came swift, and sure, and abounding. The touch of a woman in the crowd, the message of a Roman centurion, the cry of a Syro-Phoenician woman, all received an immediate and suitable reply. But the desire of these, His very dear friends, received no direct response.

Truly His thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither His ways as our ways. For while the Lord's ways were human they were at the same time superhuman; while they were natural, they were also super-natural. Right affections have swayed servants of God into wrong paths; but never the perfect Servant. Patriotism might take Jonah to Joppa instead of to Nineveh, and human relationship along with kindly benevolence might influence Barnabas to choose his nephew John Mark, in site of the apostle Paul's judgment; but close friendship did not open the lips of the Lord to speak a word of healing on behalf of dying Lazarus. There was no honey in the meat-offering (Leviticus 2:1-16 :).

One consideration alone regulated the movements of the blessed Son here below. As the glory-cloud was the guide of the ancient people of God through the wilderness, so the glory of God was ever before the Lord Jesus. Hence the word spoken on this occasion, showing what was governing His actions then as at all other times. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." And it was essential for the due accomplishment of that glory, that He should sojourn two days longer where He was. And nothing, whether obstacles or enticements, could swerve Him from the path of perfect obedience. And here we see the perfection of the Lord. Who but He could maintain intact the rights and claims of God at such a moment of deep sorrow? Who could love and perfectly sympathize with the aching hearts at Bethany and yet calmly await the slow approach of the moment when, and not before, the glory of God might be accomplished along with the restoration of Lazarus to his bereaved sisters? There was but One, and He, the Son of God. And as He was perfect in His subjection to the glory of God, so may we not say He knew perfectly the administration of comfort to His soul. As He says in the Psalms, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." May the contemplation of his excellence produce a counterpart within us.

1895 324 When the Lord arrived at Bethany the body of Lazarus had lain four days in the grave. For those four days the sisters had been mourning the loss of their beloved brother. And not the

least bitter ingredient in their cup of sorrow was the thought that He who could most and best help and comfort them remained absent. Why did He not appear to their relief? What made Him disregard the message sent Him? Could His love really he so great for them as they had supposed? Others had been blessed, strangers and sinners alike, all classes of sick and infirm. The widow's son and Jairus' daughter had been raised to life. But for those in Bethany there appeared neither word or deed.

Such doubts might unbelief suggest, but how dishonouring would they be to Him whose love is as unchanging as His power! His 'heart was with them all the while, carrying their sorrows, and at the proper moment He would come and give them back their brother from the very tomb. And while these sisters were waiting for the coming of the Lord, they had His own word to comfort their souls during the interval of His absence. They might not have known that Lazarus in his grave would even then hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth before their very eyes. But at any rate they had the Lord's own message sent by Him to sustain their souls: "This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." In what way was this calculated to comfort their hearts? By lifting them above themselves and directing their attention to what they and we are so prone to forget, viz. — that our God and our Father controls and guides all things to bring about His own wise ends which include our ultimate and ineffable bliss. They were not to think therefore that they were the victims of a "fortuitous concourse" of untoward events, but on the contrary the chosen instrument in God's hands for the display of His glory.

It is such a consideration as this that ever imparts strength to hear and nerve to endure under similar circumstances. It gives what truly deserves the name of "solid comfort." And it is to be observed further how closely the glory of God was bound up with their relief. For it was the quickening of dead Lazarus that was the occasion whereby God was glorified in His Son. Here was a man not only dead but corrupt: at the word of Jesus he issues from the tomb perfectly restored to life and health. Who but One could so speak and bring it to pass? It was none other than the Lord from heaven; for the resurrection of Lazarus clearly marked Him out as the Son of God. But this very act, which so redounded to the glory of God and His Son was the very act needed to remove the burden from the hearts of Mary and Martha. To raise Lazarus from the dead was the most effectual way of wiping the tears from their eyes. And thus the one act ensured at one and the same time the high claims of God and the relief of the mourners. But we are not to suppose that, because the Lord did not hasten (as we might speak) to the help of Mary and Martha, He was on that account insensible to their anguish of heart. There is enough in the scripture before us to indicate that the Lord entered into the sorrow in a far deeper way than they did or could. It was not His purpose to remove the sorrow, but He would fit them to bear it by assuring them it was for the glory of God, and also by the display of His tender compassion and perfect sympathy. He sent them His word from the first (John 11:4). And when He came He showed His loving interest which He had felt all the while. "When Jesus therefore saw her (Mary) weeping and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him . . . Jesus therefore groaning in Himself cometh to the grave" (John 11:33-38).

How beautiful is this! Had they allowed themselves to suspect the Master? The groans and the tears were the answer. His tender question of the broken-hearted sister, Where have ye laid him?

shows how gently the Lord lightened the burden of the sorrowing heart by causing her to see that His heart was just where hers was — at the tomb of Lazarus. To the widow of Nain the Lord said, Weep not. To Jairus He said, Thy daughter is not dead but sleepeth. In each case His purpose was to wipe away the tears. But in Bethany the Lord weeps with His saints. The grandest display of the power of the Lord to quicken the dead was accompanied by the greatest witness to His profound sympathy with the bereaved. When both Mary and Martha see the Lord, they both express the same thought, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Both were right in believing there could be no death in the presence of Jesus; but they both erred in common with many more of God's saints in assuming it would have been better for them if their sorrow had been prevented. If the Lord had come, they reasoned, they would have been spared their bereavement. But if so, they would not have seen the glory of God: as the Lord said to Martha, "Said I not to thee if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God" (John 11:40)? And at His coming they surely saw the glory of God. Lazarus came forth at the call of the Lord from corruption and the grave. What a triumph of the Lord's power was thus displayed in sleeping Lazarus! Jairus' daughter was raised from the bed, the widow's son from the bier, but Lazarus from the grave.

We can now see the gracious purpose of God in that which happened to this family. And what we see so distinctly portrayed in the history of these events might have been grasped beforehand by faith. But without blaming Martha and Mary for being weak in faith, let us remember we shall be more to blame in like circumstances than they, if we do not benefit by the record of what befell them and how God wrought by Christ for His own glory and their ultimate blessing. The Thessalonian saints were similarly troubled about those who had fallen asleep before the Lord came. What sorrow would have been spared them, if the Lord had come from heaven before their loved ones passed away! But the apostle shows them that, when the Lord does descend from heaven with a shout, even those in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth. Therefore they were not to sorrow as those that had no hope. Their dear ones had not taken a leap in the dark. The power of the Lord would gather up to Himself both the living and the sleeping saints at His coming. And while we like Mary and Martha at Bethany await the Master's coming, we have the unspeakable privilege of His present sympathy as well as the comfort of His word. For He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He Who wept and groaned at the sepulchre of Lazarus is not insensible to the tears and cries of His bereaved saints today. May we therefore seek to meet our sorrows with the unalterable persuasion that they must inevitably work out the glory of God and that we also have with us in the midst of the trial none less than the Blessed Son of God Himself! W. J. Hocking.

Chapter 133

S. The Sustenance of Life

The Sustenance of Life Notes of an address on John 6:47-63 In the previous chapter of John’s Gospel we have the subject of the source of life; in the one before us the subject is the sustenance of that life. In point of its origin eternal life is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; but after its reception by the believer, comes the question of its maintenance and development. Life eternal in its heavenly range is in contrast with our first life which has its sphere here, its purposes and functions being earthly.

Now we learn in this portion of Scripture that the Son who gives eternal life is also its preserver. There is, therefore, in this fact a strong contrast with the conditions of Eden. Adam was distinct in his life and image from the animals around him, having received his life by the direct inspiration of the Almighty. He was constituted the supreme ruler of terrestrial things, and had free access to the tree of life. The means of preserving his life was, so to speak, in his own hands. But by disobedience he forfeited that life for himself and for his posterity. In contrast with this precarious tenure of life at the beginning the Giver of eternal life is also its Preserver. He bestows eternal life upon His sheep, and He guarantees they shall never perish nor be plucked from His hands. The believer receives a spark of heavenly life. By the operation of the Spirit of God through the word a new nature is begotten in him — a life not previously possessed. Through this life a link is forged between the man here and the Father in heaven. By its means he is enabled in the power of the Holy Spirit to have conscious dealings with the Father and the Son. The Father’s love and interest and guidance and help become to him perpetual realities. These things are known in spite of the weary days, keen sorrows, stern difficulties, searching temptations which oppose the new life and tend to overwhelm it, "things present" threatening to swamp things spiritual.

Power Needed to Sustain Life

How then are we to make progress when we are in possession of eternal life? How is it to be kept secure and active? A great enemy presents counter-attractions and influences from without. There are evil passions smouldering within. There is opposition from every quarter. But we are instructed in this connection that divine love has provided efficient means for the maintenance of this life.

Indeed the same gracious loving Person who imparts eternal life supports and sustains it. It is by Him that the new life grows and develops. By Him it becomes vigorous and displays new traits of a heavenly character. Through energy supplied by Him the believer rises triumphant over his old self. Like Paul he can say, "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." For the believer is placed in possession of this divine life that it may manifest itself in thoughts, motives, words and deeds which resemble Christ’s. A person having life eternal walks through this world reflecting the life of Christ. How is this effected? Some say by a course of rigid self-discipline whereby a man may rid himself of his evil dispositions; having ground down the old nature, the new shines out. But it is not so stated here. It is by feeding upon Christ that the eternal life is developed into strength and activity. The Paschal Lamb Roast with Fire In connection with the subject of the appropriation of the Person of Christ as a means of sustenance for the spiritual life of the believer, the Lord

refers to the miraculous manner in which the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness by the manna which came down from heaven. But food was provided for them at the commencement of their journey as well as during its progress. There was the paschal lamb for the chosen people before the manna came down from heaven. The ceremony at the Passover included more than the blood on the door-posts. This was essential for the security of the people, since "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." By the blood, therefore, Israel was protected from the judgment which fell upon Egypt. Though in the vicinity death was ravaging every household the blood of the lamb secured divine preservation wherever it was sprinkled. And during the night watches the saved people were invited to make a meal upon the carcase of the lamb roast with fire. By this means they were to acquire strength for setting out upon their new journey to the promised land. When they subsequently reached the desert and still required food God gave them manna. And both the lamb and the manna are types of Christ. The lamb roast with fire typifies our Lord in His atoning death. Fire is a frequent emblem of judgment. And the Israelite was thereby reminded that the judgment of Jehovah which brought death to the Egyptians fell upon the sacrifice of which they were invited to partake. It was particularly specified that the paschal lamb was not to be eaten raw nor boiled; it was to be roasted. The reason for this stipulation is clearly because in this manner only could it set forth the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Victim who endured God’s avenging judgment against sin. The initial food prescribed for the Israelites as pilgrims was, therefore, the roast paschal lamb. The Christian should begin there also. Many persons affect a regard for the Lord Jesus Christ altogether apart from His atoning death. He is to them a great teacher, a martyr, a political sufferer, but not a Vicarious Victim. And those who degrade the Lord’s death in this manner can never derive any soul-strength from it. They lack the faith which appropriates the lamb roast with fire.

Hence the only accession of strength for the new life is gained by first feeding upon the slain lamb. In Him sin as an evil principle was judged by the fire of God: "He who knew no sin was made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And sin is the cause of the believer’s weakness, so far as experience goes. From indwelling sin spring evil desires. But the Holy One was "made sin." And in His death all that a believer was as a descendant of Adam was atoned for and judged. This is the secret of deliverance from its power. We are not commanded to eradicate the inward sinful will. It has received its utter condemnation. This truth is foreshadowed in the type of the paschal lamb, and the apprehension of this aspect of the death of Christ is a source of spiritual strength. The Manna

We may speak of the paschal lamb as the believer’s food in a negative sense, since it shows us that the old nature is not a source of power for Christian walk, it being judged and set aside as irreparably evil. In a similar way, it may be said in typical language that the manna is a source of strength in a positive sense. For from the living Christ Himself we obtain direct supplies of energy for the pilgrim journey. The manna represents the Lord who came into this world from above. He is the bread of God which came down from heaven. And while here He spoke of Himself as the "Son of man who is in heaven." It is important to remember that in the life of the Lord we have what is different from the lives of all mankind besides. He only of all men came down from heaven. This fact gave a character to His humble and dependent conduct such as was never seen before. The governing principle of the most elevated human conduct is an aim to do what is becoming to man. The familiar expression, "Be a man," embodies this idea. To be noble and dignified and truthful, to copy the salient characteristics of the world’s successful men is the general ambition of the more

thoughtful and earnest of mankind. But such aims, however laudable and proper they may be in themselves, are not essentially Christian conduct. Living the eternal life is the consequence of feeding upon the humbled Man in whom the life of heaven was displayed below. The contemplation of Christ is the true inspiration for the walk of the faithful believer. In Him we have the Son of God incarnate in an evil world. Once and again the glory of the Godhead emerged momentarily through the veil of flesh. Upon the mount His countenance was transfigured before His disciples, and a Voice from the overshadowing cloud proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear him." We see that glory exhibited again in the sudden stilling of the tempest with a word. Further, there was a display of His essential glory at the grave of Lazarus, according to His own word to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). From these incidents we learn that a divine Person was present, capable of exerting infinite power in His own right, yet withal meek, lowly, humble, gentle, to an incomparable degree. The voice that silenced the howling storm checked the widow's tears and blessed the helpless babe. This is the Christ upon whom we are to feed as the origin and the renewal of our spiritual strength. There is no need to seek the ideals of poetry and philosophy. We have the noblest of examples, a divine Exemplar. God Himself as Man shows us the ideal life. With Him before us our emulation will be rightly directed.

Christ in Death

1913 284 Without food we lose strength. Our food is Christ Himself. But we go on to observe that spiritual nutrition is obtained in more than one manner. We read of feeding upon Christ as the manna, that is, upon Christ as the Incarnate Son of God. But we are also called to partake of His flesh and His blood: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (ver. 53). This to the natural mind is a mysterious statement, as some said upon hearing it, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And to drink His blood was even more startling; for they knew this was an express prohibition under the law of Moses. Yet the Lord spoke definitely of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and moreover, was emphatic in stating its necessity. Apart from it, He said, "Ye have no life in you."

Now it is evident that while manna, the bread from heaven, has special reference to the life of Christ, the flesh and the blood must refer to His death. Blood circulating in the body is essential to life, while apart from the body it offers evidence of death. Hence when the soldier pierced the side of the crucified Lord, the issuing blood and water proved that death was there. Upon this witness Roman justice concluded that the legal sentence had been satisfactorily executed, and the same evidence appealed, but differently, to the sorrowing apostles and those with them.

Sacrificially, it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. The sin of man constituted an impassable barrier between the perfect life of Jesus and the life of the best of men. But the sacrifice of Christ was the judicial end of the natural man, and therefore forms the means whereby the believer can enter into and appropriate the life of Christ which He displayed here below. As a matter of history we find that not until the death of Christ was the characteristic life of Jesus in any sense reproduced in His followers. The incompatibility of the life of the disciples in its springs of action with that of their Master is frequently to be observed in the Gospels. In this chapter, for instance, we find that many were unable to walk with Him any longer. They were those who accompanied the Lord, heard His words, and witnessed His marvellous deeds, yet there was a

strange lack of imbibing the Spirit of Christ. See, again, the case of James and John when the Lord sent messengers to a Samaritan village that the inhabitants might receive Him. Upon their refusal these two foremost apostles said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). The Lord rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them." But their speech revealed the disparity between their thoughts and motives and those of the Master.

Even at the close of the Lord’s ministry this partition wall between their souls and Him had not disappeared. At the last Supper, with all its solemn associations and intimations, it was made clear that the apostles had not taken their Master’s yoke upon them. They were not, like Him, meek and lowly in heart; for they quarrelled there among themselves who should be the greatest in the coming kingdom. They were seeking for the pre-eminence, and thus showed that they had not fed upon Him who "emptied himself and became a bond-servant." They had not made His life their own. The truth is that only through the death of Christ could His life be manifested in His disciples. He came to give His flesh for the life of the world. When His blood was shed, the way was thereby opened for their union and communion with Him. After His resurrection, He breathed upon them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and be endued, in power, with that new life in the character peculiar to Himself.

It is thus taught that something more than mere acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ was necessary to become a faithful witness of Him. There was no union with Him in incarnation, but the link was in His death, and in the life which was beyond death, The Display of Life This important principle of conduct is not generally recognised. Perhaps the most common form of teaching is that Christian life consists in the study of the glorious example revealed in the Gospels and in meditation upon His words and deeds. But while this is true it is not the whole of the truth, and it is not the truth before us here. For we learn that it is by way of His death that we become associated with His life. And the display of that life is inseparable from eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The contemplation of the perfections of Christ coupled with the knowledge that they were utterly beyond our attainment in any degree would but plunge us into the mire of dark despair. His perfect example would be but a mockery to us. And apart from His death we could but miserably fail to walk as He walked. But in the knowledge of His death for us and of our death with Him there follows in measure the practical incorporation of His life in ours, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. In the Epistle to the Philippians there is a practical exposition of this manner of life. Paul, the "prisoner of Jesus Christ," pours forth the Christian experience of his heart. He sets before himself and others the embodiment of the mind of Christ as it was exhibited in this world (chap. 2). This is genuine Christian experience — not as some would have it, the realisation of one’s inward depravity, and of an ineradicable susceptibility to evil. The latter is the gloomy experience of self, true but not inspiring; it is in no sense the experience of Christ. This life shining through the apostle’s communications to the saints at Philippi takes the character of joy and peace and liberty and delight. This character is the more striking when we remember how all the energy of the writer in self-denying gospel service was frustrated by his protracted imprisonment, while his very chains alienated his fellow-believers from him. But in spite of this suffering and this spiritual privation his personal Christian joy beams forth with exceptional brilliance.

Why was this? It is evidently the result of his own communion with Christ at that time. He was then treading a pathway of suffering in close imitation of his Master who loved and served, and was hated for it.

During the ministry of Christ there was a heart here and there which recognised Him, but this was exceptional. The majority came to hear Him because there was something new, or they came to Him for healing, but there was no heart-exercise, no conscience-work. How did this astonishing apathy appear to the Lord Jesus Christ in whose heart there were supernatural energies of love and life? In His unparalleled service He was cramped and straitened by the obduracy of man, but there was no murmuring, no diminution in the intensity of His love and service for man. He was unchangeably the same. His was a voice, one would think, that would have commanded the fealty of all mankind; but this was not the result of His service. However, in spite of the repulse of His love, He went forward and administered the water of life to a single poor woman at the well. For the Son of God learned obedience in this way, "by the things which he suffered." But the light of this divine testimony, so perfect in Him, was not extinguished at Calvary: after His resurrection, it shone afresh in the lives of His believing followers, as we may see from the Acts and the Epistles. The Habit of Communion But while the Christian pathway commences with the appropriation of Christ in His death, it is necessary for this appropriation to be continued to the end: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (ver. 54). This statement looks on to the end of the journey when the ideals of the believer’s new life will be realised fully. But this involves the formation of the habit of eating and drinking continuously. There must be the bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal bodies (2 Corinthians 4:10). So the Lord said here, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him" (ver. 56). This implies the practice of this habit.

Here we have two things: (1) our dwelling in Christ, and (2) Christ in us. First, there is dwelling in Christ, which involves unbroken communion with Him, and this it is the privilege of every believer to enjoy. The habit of it is implied by the phraseology — dwelling, abiding; it is not to be intermittent and spasmodic.

Christ Himself walked thus in connection with the Father who sent Him. All circumstances found Him in the fullest heavenly intercourse. It was His meat to do the will of Him who sent Him. In a similar manner we are called to abide in Christ. Eating in scripture is a figure frequently employed for communion. The peace offering was the particular sacrifice which set forth the communion of Jehovah and of the priestly family and of the people of Israel. The sacrifice itself was dedicated to God, and the fat and the blood were Jehovah’s exclusively, while the character of what constituted the portion of the priests and the people was based upon its being a sacrifice, agreeing thus in type with what we have here, viz., that Christian communion is founded upon the death of Christ. In the New Testament, fellowship is enjoined as an essential feature of Christianity. And there exists a formal expression of this fellowship as well as the inner personal side, the latter being the subject of this chapter. The outward sign is the communion table which the Lord established as the central institution for His own. In meeting together for the purpose of eating bread and drinking wine in commemoration of His death, a visible expression of this fellowship is made by the church.

Again, in Luke 15:1-32, the father and the restored son are depicted at the same table, feasting together upon the fatted calf. They have found a common interest, a common joy, and the central feature of this communion is the slain calf, representing, of course, the Lord Jesus in His death, which is the meeting-place of God and the rescued sinner for the holy joy and rest of communion. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11). Through Him we have constant access into the Father's presence, and have, therefore, fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Christ in Us The necessary corollary to our dwelling in Christ is His abiding in us. If we are in Him for personal peace and joy, He is in us for testimony in the world. a Here also we must look to Christ Himself to learn the meaning of the phrase. Let us refer to that occasion when the Lord told His disciples that they knew the Father and had seen Him. Philip expressed incredulous surprise at such a statement, saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The Lord explained to the apostle His meaning: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . . . The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me" (John 14:8-11). In the life of Jesus Christ therefore the Father in His love was communicated to men. Looking at and through Him, so to speak, the realities of heaven were seen. This then was the wonder of that life, though but feebly recognised even by men of faith. For it was the glory of God that the Father should be thus amply displayed. In like manner the believer is called to live the new life, so that Christ, not self, is seen abiding in him. The power to effect this testimony is obtained by feeding upon Christ. There is no reference in this chapter to the Lord's Supper, which had not been instituted, when the Lord said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This cannot refer to partaking of bread and wine, since the possession of eternal life constitutes the antecedent claim to the commemoration of the Lord's death in the appointed way.

We have here not an occasional, but a continuous and habitual act. It is the quiet appropriation of the beauties and graces of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very contemplation of the Lord of glory is formative, and brings our lives into correspondence with Himself. This effect is not the result of conscious effort. When food is eaten the necessary assimilation of it by the body is not an act of will. It is a natural process operating automatically. So it is spiritually; we look upon Christ by faith as revealed in the word, and we become like Him. In ordinary life the force of the living example is fully acknowledged. And in the spiritual world it has its powerful influence in moulding the Christian character. In conclusion: the Son who is the only source of life is also its support and maintenance. Our part is to realise by faith the continual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and in proportion to the activity of this faith we shall be changed into the same image. W. J. H.

S. The Teacher's Prayer for the Taught

The Teacher’s Prayer for the Taught An Address on Ephesians 3:14-21.

W. J. Hocking.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints What is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto, him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:14-21). In these verses we have the prayer of the apostle on behalf of the saints of God that they might by divine help lay hold in some measure of the special truths that he was communicating in this letter. We know that this Epistle sets before the children of God their lofty destiny in the purposes of God, so far as this is revealed to the sons of men in the New Testament.

It is most needful for us, as well as them, to have some insight into God’s great plan in connection with this world, so far as that plan has been made known. We are not given complete details of this plan, but we are given in this Epistle the great principle of our present association with our Lord Jesus Christ on high, and of our association with Him in that future scheme of blessing and glory for the heavens and earth through the church. There could be no nobler theme for they heart of any of us than the share we are given as units in the accomplishment of God’s vast plan for the re-constitution of the heavens and the earth through Christ. Such a theme lifts us out of ourselves and our little circle, it lifts us out of the common matters of daily life; it lifts us above the abortive schemes and ambitions of men for the progress and glory of this world, and sets our outlook of hope in accord with God’s revealed mind and purpose in this matter.

We have some aspects of this great subject unfolded in this Epistle, but it does not follow that there are no difficulties in our appropriation of what has been revealed. The apostle was conscious that to lay hold of God’s mind and purpose was a serious matter for the family of God. They needed support, they needed help outside of themselves, they needed a strength superior to their own. For such transcendent revelations the believer needs a power working in him, a power which is of God, that he may apprehend them.

Hence the apostle bows his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would grant them the power of Christ by the inward strengthening of the Spirit, that they might believe the things to come that God has revealed, and having these things in their hearts there should be here upon the earth, some here and some there, in living touch and intelligent sympathy with the divine purpose of bringing about a sphere of universal blessing, of which Christ is the Centre and Head. No wonder that we need special strength from God to receive instruction of this sort. The apostle

prayed that such strength might be imparted to the saints whom he was addressing. How far the efficacy of his prayers reach to us we cannot say. But in order that we ourselves should participate in this blessing we must bow our own heads, and be ourselves in the posture of dependence upon God and His Spirit. We must ourselves open our hearts to receive these things that God has written by His Spirit for our learning, and while in this humble attitude of receptivity our souls will be exalted above the plane of mere worldly events, and will be enabled to view them in their true perspective. The apostle puts up his petition for divine aid for the saints, and the scope of his desires for them is "according to the riches of His glory." His words are: "I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole (every, is the better word) family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory," and so on. Who could measure the glories of Christ? And because of the vastness of these, the mind of the saints needs to be enlarged and strengthened by the power of God. This appeal of the apostle is made directly to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because the central theme of this Epistle is the glory of God's Son, the constituted Head over all things to the church. The Christ of God is the One ordained in resurrection glory to set all things right both above and below. The revelation of this simple but momentous decree at once gives us the key to the understanding of the purpose of God. We in our small-mindedness and our selfish tendencies are apt to consider man and his blessing, that is ourselves, as the central object of the purpose of God. and so we misinterpret the dispensations of God.

We should not underestimate the seriousness of this vitiating propensity, but seek to be delivered from its narrowing influence, and to be led to that view which is "according to the riches of his glory." In our shortsightedness we look upon man as the being for whose ultimate benefit God is working out His plans. The blessing and glory of man undoubtedly form a part of the truth, but not the whole nor the most important part of the truth. Even if we take the church, which is the body of Christ, and because of its intimate association with Christ the Head, assume it to be the governing centre of the administration of the fulness of the times, we lamentably err, because we thereby displace Christ. We fail to apprehend the unity of the scriptures whose dominant testimony from Eden to the eternal state is to Him, who will bring in and maintain the regeneration of all things. The decreed purposes of God are in connection with the glory of Christ. His ultimate object which has been maturing throughout the successive ages of the world's history is, as we find in the first chapter of this Epistle, to head up all things in Christ. At the conclusion of the ages all spheres of dependent life will be brought under the direct and manifest government of the Lord Jesus Christ, that lowly Man who was here for God yet was God, that exalted Man raised from the dead by the mighty power of God and seated above not merely earthly dominions and powers but above all heavenly ones. For the highest and most mighty dignitaries must all take a place of subordination in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the despised Nazarene. He must be above them all, not only above them as the object of universal adoration, but above them to sway and control and to gather up everything that is worth having in God's wide creation, centring them in Himself as the Head of the new creation in a perfection and glory never yet seen.

We gather from this revealed purpose a useful principle of truth for our present guidance: nothing is ever right nor will be right in this world nor in the next, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we not prove this in our experience day by day? We know as we consider our ways and circumstances that if we have Christ before our eyes, His will ever before our eyes, His presence

by our side and in our hearts, all is well, all is peace, all is joy, because He has His rightful place of supreme Love and rule in the life. As this is so now, so will it be in the wider circles of God's grace and government yet to come. The Lord Jesus is the central Figure before God's holy mind, and all scripture is found to point to Him and His glorious excellence as Prophet, Priest, and King.

We see then that the apostle in this Epistle is lifting up the hearts of those to whom he is writing to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory on high, not manifested but to be known by faith. And we surely know very well that it is difficult for us to have Him in His glory before our hearts, except as we are in the Spirit. We know that the glory of Christ in heaven blinded Saul of Tarsus. He could not face the Shekinah glory that shone down upon him from Jesus of Nazareth. Neither can our natural thoughts, unassisted, come up to Him where He is. Thought and imagination fail in the task. Our highest mental efforts cannot reach Him where He is.

We can therefore only bow ourselves in adoration and wonder at the all-surpassing glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, while we feel how much we, need the same strengthening power that Paul sought in his prayer for the saints of his day that they might be granted such strength in the inner man as would give them to know yet more and more of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We require this energy because the bent of our minds is to recur again and again in an all-absorbing interest to the petty things of the moment. The inner man should seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, should think of Him in His present glory, and of what God will do for Him yet. But our minds are too feeble for such flights, and our hearts too restricted and earth-bound to dwell above the stars. The apostle, however, has indicated our resource — let us bow the knees in prayer that we might "know Him and the power of His resurrection." But the apostle further implies that the attainment of this spiritual knowledge depends upon personal communion, for he desired that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. And we may be sure that it is only in this way that the saints of God will readily and effectually grow into the knowledge of God's things. And think what a regal way it is — Christ dwelling in our hearts.

If we think for a moment or so of Christ, of the glory that is His, the glory in which He is even now, the glory which He had with the Father before the worlds were, our poor hearts are humbled and ashamed before Him in the overwhelming sense of His greatness and of our insignificance. But the apostle shows that the One in whom the fulness dwells, the One who fills eternity, the One whose all-transcending glories must ever be beyond our conception, will dwell in our hearts by faith. Without a doubt Christ is on high in glory, but it is revealed in the word that you and I may have Him for ourselves — within our hearts, and therein not as a passing guest, but therein to dwell. Let us then pray for ourselves that, in the sense of this scripture, Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. This phrase, relating as it does to a personal indwelling, implies that the knowledge of which the apostle is speaking is not a mental exercise simply, but a personal acquaintance with the Lord of glory: He who once deigned to tabernacle on earth in human flesh and who circumscribed Himself so that man might, in His own presentation, see and hear and know the love of God, that same One will come to our hearts and abide there, being known to us by our faith. The Lord Himself before the date of the apostle's prayer had promised that there should be such visitations as these. You will recollect that when He was about to depart out of the world to the Father, He announced this imminent departure to the disciples, and they were filled with grief

and sadness in consequence. They could not bear to think that they should look upon His face no more. To comfort them in their sorrow He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also." In this promise we have the foundation of our hope of the personal return of our Lord. But in the same connection He went on to say to the apostles that He would impart to them the Holy Spirit who should come to thee world to abide. And having promised that the Holy Spirit should come to abide, He then added, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." This reference is not at all to His coming to receive us to be with Himself in glory, but to His coming to them that they might not feel themselves friendless and forsaken as orphans might do. Such a coming in the heart to dwell is not only a possible experience for us, but it is indeed the right of even, one of us. I say the right, because it is founded upon the Lord’s own promise. He proposed to come that we might not be left desolate in the world. And how is the fulfilment of this promise to be known? We know it by the inward ministry of God’s Holy Spirit. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith is not a subject of imagination but an object of faith. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ knows of a surety that He does make Himself known to us. Christ comes and manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world. And, if on our part we but keep His word, He will make His abode with us, dwelling in our hearts by faith. How far this is a matter of personal experience with us concerns us individually, But it should be a cause of joy to us that we know it at all. May we know it more.

Here in Ephesians divine interposition is sought not so much in the way of support for our fainting hearts and strength to meet the sorrows and enemies of the wilderness journey but rather strength for the knowledge which is not of this world, that knowledge which is truly spiritual. In this Epistle we have true spiritualism, a spiritualism which is not of Satan but of God. We are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and it is ours to acknowledge this truth and to glory in it. Besides other favours, we learn that the second Person of the Holy Trinity is pleased to dwell in our hearts by faith to lead us forward in this superhuman knowledge. He comes to abide with us and to sustain us while He unfolds what are His great, purposes. He who visited the home of Mary and Martha at Bethany and said things, which are not recorded, of heavenly import to Mary sitting at His feet, will also dwell in the humble home of our hearts, and will whisper to us of this mighty scheme which God is working out for His own glory here in this world which stands guilty of the crucifixion and death of His beloved Son. The One who was so humiliated by man in this world God has exalted to the very highest in heaven, and that supremacy will be manifested in this world also, when God brings in His First-begotten again. Let us acknowledge His supreme Lordship more completely than ever.

I wonder whether all present realise that this subject is one not to be confined to our reading and meditation. It is a definite element of the new life through the power of God’s Spirit. Is it not, therefore, of the first importance to you and to me that we should seek earnestly that Christ, the Mighty One, should dwell in our hearts by faith. The apostle petitions that his prayer might be granted "according to the riches of his glory," that is I take it, according to the riches of the glory of Christ. His eye is upon the Glorified One of God, and it is He who will come to dwell. Who can measure the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? In Him there is glory upon glory, for all possible glories are added to the Christ whom God loves to honour, to Him who glorified God upon the earth. While it is sweet to us to read and to know of the love of Christ, we should also desire to know the riches of His glory too.

It is a way of Scripture to use large-scale truths for the correction of our minor difficulties. And I suppose that one immediate cause of the apostle's exalted theme in this Epistle was the petty quarrels which arose at that time in the Christian assemblies between those of Jewish and Gentile origin respectively. They brought their native feuds into their new spiritual relationships, with the result that there was much striving with one another for precedence. To dispose of such disagreements among the saints, the apostle brings forward the great truth of their joint association in Christ Jesus. Th middle wall of partition between them that once was raised by God Himself was now destroyed by the same authority. According to the New Testament, revelation, Christ Jesus had made Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. There was now a unity of the Spirit, a unity which came about inasmuch as God had given both Jew and Gentile believers a place even while they were here below in and with Christ Jesus, not merely in His death and resurrection but in His exaltation also the apostle looks upward and sees, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, both Jew and Gentile quarrellers, united above, having already been made joint-partakers in the new creation. They were possessed of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, God having created them anew in Christ Jesus. In their new position, all racial enmity arising out of an earthly condition, should disappear —

Christ was the peace. He made peace through the blood of His cross, and in that death every national and carnal distinction would of necessity be obliterated. Hence in the next chapter the apostle proceeded to counsel them to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This bond is not a peace which results from ignoring the difficulties of the moment, the difficulties of walk, the difficulties that arise in assembly relationships, but it is that bond of peace which the Lord Himself made. It was the result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing men and women who believe into one body in a living unity before God by the Holy Spirit. This unity we are to seek to maintain in practice.

Well, the only way in which the full knowledge of these truths could be received was by the strengthening with might by the Spirit of God in he inner man, according to the riches of Christ's glory. It is to be noted that in the education and instruction of the children of God the Father and he Son and the Spirit are concerned. The prayer itself is addressed to the Father for His grant. The Son is to dwell in their hearts. And it is the Holy Spirit who by His might strengthens the inner man to receive the deep things of God. Our capacities it is true are very limited, but a little of our own can be made to go a long way when the Lord is with us. We can look out of a very small window, and yet see the wonders of the heavens. There we behold them far away in all their glories in the vast expanse above us. We have but a small power of natural vision, but we can look into the heights and depths of immeasurable space. And so it is in spiritual matters when our hearts are attracted in the right direction, the Spirit of God strengthens us by His might for our growth in knowledge, so shall we comprehend these things. The apostle continues, "That ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." It is of course not to be assumed that we shall be enabled to penetrate fully all these mysteries, at present at any rate. There must be much beyond us that we shall not know. But one important point to be clear upon is that, so far as the subjects of knowledge are concerned, nothing is reserved in the Holy Scriptures from us. All revelation is open to us, and the great purposes of God are there in their breadth and length and depth and height for

our interest, our meditation and our comprehension. They are for the present possession of our hearts, to make them our own as truly as the land of Canaan was for the occupation of tribes of Israel

One beauty of divine truth is that it is intimately bound up with spiritual emotion — love. The apostle says, "To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." We remember that John often couples the twin words — truth and love. For the apprehension of the things of God, we do not so much require a capacious mind as we do a loving heart. It is through the heart that the truths of God are communicated. Knowledge comes to us by way of our affections. The Lord loves to win our loyalty and homage and adoration for Himself, and it is in communion with Him by the spirit that we learn the love of Christ. The mere mental effort to apprehend the truths of Christianity is a very dreary occupation. Indeed, as we all know, nothing is more calculated to promote sleep than a theological disquisition, but when we have the Son of the Living God as our Teacher and Friend, we yearn to know more of His blest ways.

It is on the basis of Personal teaching, so it seems to me, that this petition in the apostle's prayer is framed. It was necessary for them that Christ should dwell in their hearts by faith in order that they might know the love of Christ. The full knowledge of the love of Christ does not imply that we get to the end of it, in the sense that we grasp it in its entirety. The knowledge of the love, of a person is surely a practical acquaintance with the working of the affections of the heart towards us. We do not measure the affections of another. They cannot be weighed, nor can we take the dimensions of even one of them, but yet we do know, without doubt, what a warm-hearted affection is. We never, imagine that we have got it; we know it. We feel its pulsations, and are conscious of the joy and preciousness of it. To get to the end of love would spoil the whole experience of it. Who would ever want to exhaust the love of a loved one? To know fully the love of Christ does not imply that it is an attainment easy of accomplishment. We, are not to expect that we can sit down quietly in the study, or go down upon, our knees and in an hour or two, or in any defined period, take to ourselves all the divine affections of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Nevertheless, we do know that moment by moment in our need and in our sorrow, we are finding how that all-transcending love is helping us and carrying us forward. And this love which is our enjoyed portion now will also be our portion throughout all eternity, and the love which we experience here in the face of the enmity of the world and of the trials of the present time is the same love which will also be our joy in the ages to come. But the apostle states that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. This must be so; the love of Christ must exceed our capacity. We know that the nature and extent of human love cannot be fathomed, and if this is true of the love of man's heart, what shall we say of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ? It passeth knowledge, but it is an inexhaustible fountain from which we may draw evermore.

"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The fulness was in Christ. It dwells in Him. All that God was and is He was and is, for He was God. In the fulfilment to us of the apostle's requests, we too may be filled with all the fulness of God. These are great words. They are words that we need inscribed upon our hearts, along with the prayer we have here, often repeated by us that we might be divinely strengthened in the inner man for such experience. The apostle expresses this thought in the conclusion of these verses. We sometimes think perhaps of verse 20 as though it were solely an encouragement for us in our general prayers, a thought founded upon a slight perversion of the text, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we

ask or think." But the phrase is not as it is sometimes erroneously quoted, "above all that we can ask or think." Hence the statement has not a strict application to the whole of our prayer-meetings. It contains, of course, the assurance of Omnipotent resource, which is always an encouragement to needy saints. But of what is the apostle especially speaking? Is not his phrase in direct connection with the subject of this particular prayer? Paul felt that the task of imparting these themes was a great one; he felt that the subject was so unlimited in scope that he bowed his knees humbly before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for aid, and in result he took comfort in the thought that there was One who was able to do exceeding abundantly above all that he was asking or thinking. And he has asked a great deal. To ask that "according to the riches of Christ's glory they might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," was not this a great request on their behalf? But the apostle says, The One to whom I appeal is able to do not only what I am asking for you, what I am able to think, but He is able to do exceeding abundantly above it. And surely, we too, as well as the Ephesian saints, need to have our hearts enlarged in this respect. When we come with our various prayers, we come to One whose power is utterly beyond our conception. And is not the reason why our prayers often fail in accomplishment because we have not realised whom we have been addressing? We know that one condition of success is that we must believe that we shall have the things for which we plead. But, searching our hearts, we sometimes find deep down that we are wondering whether we shall be answered. And going still further in our analysis we discover that we have mistrusted the almighty power and love, of Him whom we do trust. Although we should fear to put the doubt into words, there is the feeling that perhaps we are asking something that He cannot grant. Let faith grow within us, and it will grow in proportion as we have Christ the glorified before us in our prayers, and the Father too who could do all abundantly above what the apostle asked or thought. The clause — "according to the power that worketh in us" — shows us another phase of the subject upon the apostle's mind in this prayer. There was a power not of themselves available to work within them. It is well to be clear that there is a divine power that works in the hearts of believers as well as a divine power that works apart from them. God in heaven is for us, and if God is for us, who can be against us? This is the operation of His wisdom and energy outside of ourselves. But we ought not to overlook the power that works within us. For instance, we read elsewhere that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is a comfort to reflect, as we consider our own weakness that the Holy Spirit by His directing and controlling energy is fashioning our character and actions for that ultimate position which lies beyond us in accordance with God's appointment in the day of His purpose. This work is altogether distinct from the work of propitiation which is necessarily outside of us as to time and sphere of action. The atoning work of Christ at Calvary is complete, and nothing can be added to His sacrifice. His blood of eternal efficacy was once shed at the set time, and we, in consequence, stand justified by faith before our God. But the Spirit of God is now actively at work in us. Day by day, He, the great Architect, is busy with us, forming us for the place assigned to us in that holy temple which is growing up to completion as God's habitation, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner-stone. When the headstone is added, the whole building shall be revealed in flawless beauty, a wonder to Israel and the nations at large. Then in glory each living stone will be fitted to the place for which it was modelled in the great temple of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, to shed the lustre of Christ's glory upon the millennial world beneath.

Thus God has a purpose for each called saint in connection with the church of Christ when the day of His glory comes. We know that the church today lies dishonoured in the mire of worldly profession. It is not one body manifestly and expressively, and never will be such in this world. But it will be so seen and recognised when God's purpose is accomplished, and Christ is known to all men as the Head over all things to the church, His body. In that day also will be manifested what the Spirit of God is now doing in fitting us for that great consummation.

I think an assurance of this kind should cheer and encourage us in our outlook upon the depressing condition of Christendom at present, God will reconstruct where man can only mar further, not mend. Imagine that by some great council or convention, the divisions and sections of believers were unified by the force of human influence or power of government and organisation. What a hotch-potch the whole thing would be, when compared with apostolic teaching. Can man by reunion make the beautiful thing that was seen for one brief while at Pentecost? No, the oneness of the church is wrought not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the fact of the church's unity remains. The Lord amid the wildest confusion knows them that are His and the members of Christ are united with Him the Head, and nothing can sever living links in His body. Moreover, that unity, invisible today, will shine forth by and by when the Lord comes to present the church to Himself. Then, there will be a church in glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Who could bring about such a glorious consummation save the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit?

We ought to make sure that we understand this great purpose of God before we set ourselves to find what our testimony in church matters should be. If we follow our own ideas on the subject, we array land ourselves in great error. In this Epistle we have God's ideal; and what He means to do He will accomplish in His own time. Let us desire to know the truth in all its fulness now. If we have such a desire there is One who is ready to teach us and to give us the knowledge of the will of God. The dominating object of God throughout the succeeding cycles of time is expressed in the final verse: "unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." Paul not only looks up to the exalted Christ in His present heavenly glory, but he looks onward and sees in the ages to come in the sphere of heavenly glory the church, not Israel nor the Gentiles, who will have their fitting and allotted place upon the earth. Throughout the ages, world without end, the church will be the vehicle of glory to God.

There should even at present be a measure of that glory seen in the church. But how quickly the glory of unity faded after Pentecost, never to return. Where is it to be found today? God looking down sees the wretched and divided condition of His church. And there are some children of the Father, taught by the scriptures, who see the same thing. Indeed, any honest-minded man might see the ruin and its effects, but those taught of God see the original purpose, and know its future final accomplishment. W.J.H.

Chapter 135

S. The attitude of the Man of God in the Last Days

The attitude of the Man of God in the Last Days Notes of an address on 2 Timothy 1:8-14.

W. J. Hocking.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." This Second Epistle to Timothy is of special interest and concern to us as witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ in a difficult crisis. The apostle was writing to his young friend and convert to the faith, Timothy, a man probably of a retiring and somewhat timorous disposition, and his epistle is full of the mingled affection and wisdom that were peculiar. to Paul in his service as an apostle. He writes to cheer and to encourage Timothy, fearing that his courage might fail because of the dangerous times that had arisen. The days were indeed difficult for Paul and also for Timothy, and in the face of these difficulties, the inquiry naturally was, What is to be done? And the apostle writes not with the object so much of communicating a fresh revelation of truth, but to give counsel to Timothy out of the full love of his heart; and more than that, out of the rich enjoyment of the grace of God in his own heart, and for the real encouragement of his young friend towards God. And so the Epistle makes a special appeal to us in that direct and practical way which such communications always will do. The naked formal truth may convince our minds, but it does not always carry our hearts with it, and in the things of God we want not only to be clear in our minds, but to be devoted in our hearts.

Success and Failure The apostle himself evidently felt deeply the trying difficulties of that time, and I think if we consider his position for a moment, we shall not wonder at his concern. A prisoner of the gospel as he then was at Rome, he looked back over about thirty years, and he could see the great spiritual transformation which had been brought on the face of the whole world in that short time. At the beginning of that period the gospel of God’s grace through our Lord Jesus Christ was first declared to men in the power of the Holy Ghost, and what an immediate victory it everywhere wrought! It spread from city to city and from province to province, and across the seas, until it seemed as if the whole world would be subjugated to Christ.

Gentiles gave up their idols, Jews gave up the law of Moses; and they both met together in lowliness and meekness at the table of the Lord, and they felt within them the active power of the Holy Ghost. The selfish became beneficent towards others, and the fleshly lusts of human nature were overcome in the lives of men by the spirit of holiness. In this great missionary enterprise Paul had played a personal part in every direction, hence all this and more was before the great heart of the imprisoned apostle of the Gentiles whose burning desire was to preach the gospel in every place. And in Rome in his confinement he looked around, and instead of seeing that the victory of the gospel was still spreading, he saw failure and defection. Men were giving up the things of Christ and turning away from His servant, and from every direction and from every place news reached him of the apostasy of the heart and spirit of men in the churches. Again, the time was when he longed above all things to preach the gospel in Rome as well as in other places, but here in the metropolis his hands were fettered. And while other tongues were telling the good news, he had to be silent. Not Ashamed With all these things pressing on his own heart, Paul had to write and encourage Timothy whose faith seemed failing him because of the general declension. Yet in view of all the disappointment and suffering that had come upon him, the beloved apostle wrote these words which still ring out so confidently, and carry such a note of encouragement to us amid trials of a similar nature — "Nevertheless I am not ashamed." Weighing up all his sufferings as an apostle, and looking back on his career of service to Christ, he did not consider that his words and works had been spent in vain. He was not ashamed in the day of apparent failure; and why not? because he was following and serving One Whom he knew well and had fully proved. It would be good for us to take to our own hearts these words that Paul wrote to Timothy.

We find that the apostle definitely alludes in the twelfth verse to his suffering and to the shame and reproach that had come upon him and his labours as a servant of Christ. And I want you to think of his words of bold assurance in this connection. The fact that his work had to all outward appearances failed might seem to give ground for the suggestion 0f possible personal reproach. Was not the blame for the apparent failure resting upon his own shoulders?

Paul had given up a great many things for Christ. He had many advantages according to the flesh that people in the world boast about" circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin" and so on — but he had given them all up for Christ, and he still counted the sacrifice but loss for the knowledge of Christ, as he told the Philippian believers. But when his work seemed a failure, when the outward expression of the church seemed to be broken and ruined in men’s eyes, did not such a result cast reproach upon him as a labourer? Did it not seem that he was the one to be ashamed of what had happened? But if he ever thought that within himself, as being a man of like passions with ourselves he well might, he was fully sustained in the depressing sorrow of disappointment that would come upon a heart of broad and deep sympathy like his, a heart that was wide enough to take in the whole world.

Forlorn and forsaken Paul turned for support to the Lord whom he knew. There was One who had Himself learned what in its bitterest sense shame was here in this world. We know that the word "shame" may be understood in more than one sense. Shame began in the garden of Eden, when our forefathers forfeited their position by disobeying their God. How could they lift up their eyes and meet their Creator as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day? They were ashamed because they had sinned; they blushed because of their disobedience; they were like the man in the temple who would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,

saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The Shame Christ Suffered.

Such was the attitude of the man who had sinned, but the shame that was brought out in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ was of a different nature. Reproach took a character that it had never had before to the same degree. Take the lives of the Old Testament saints, such as Job, Elijah, Isaiah, they all had their failures and their hours of shame in the eyes of others; but why was this? It was because they all failed. They had turned into the pathway of evil, and because of their backsliding, outward judgment came upon them. But when you take the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, you see there a perfect path of devotion to God. There we have the Witness who never failed in doing the will of Him that sent Him. There is the One who would allow nothing to stand in the way of perfect devotion to His Father. But what to all outward appearances was the result of His fidelity and devotedness? Not success, but failure, not honour but shame. It was the Spirit of Christ who said through the Psalmist, "For thy sake I have borne reproach," "Shame hath covered my face." It was the suffering Messiah who was brought down into the dust of death. It was He who cried, "O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed, let none of mine enemies triumph over me"; but there was no answer of deliverance.

We know how the priests on Mount Carmel cried in vain to their god, Baal. They cried and cried, but there was none to hear. On the cross the devoted Servant of God cried, as the twenty-second Psalm foresaw, "Why art thou so far from helping me? Our fathers cried unto thee and were delivered, they trusted in thee and were not ashamed." The elders of the Jews taunted the crucified Lord, saying, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." But was He delivered? No, contrary to the experience Of the pious and just in Israel, Christ was left in the place of ignominy and curse, till reproach broke His heart. According to the prophecy of Isaiah, Messiah said, "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know I shall not be ashamed." Nevertheless, He was brought down into the dust of death for the glory of God, where He was as ever true to His God. In this pathway of suffering shame for the divine Name, Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And so in this world, those who are on the side of truth and righteousness, those who are Christ’s must expect to suffer shame for His name as Paul did.

Boldness in God

It must have seemed to many in those dark days at Rome as if they were trusting in a poor cause, as if God had forsaken His church, and they were left alone in a time of great peril with none to deliver, none to save, none to rescue. Beloved friends, I ask you whether you have not had similar feelings as you have seriously considered the difficult things about you today, not merely the obstacles in your personal pathway, but in those things that grievously affect the peace and concord of companies of Christians. When we look back over a period of thirty years or forty, as Paul did, what a saddening change we see. Some may say, Is it because God has hidden His face from us? Has He left us alone? Is He ashamed to call us brethren? The apostle, however, does not give way to dejection, but goes on to say, "For this cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed." What happened to Paul happened in a fuller degree to his Master; and should the servant expect to escape that which came upon his Master? If He cried and was not delivered, shall it not be perhaps that we in our extremity in church matters may cry

for deliverance, and no deliverance will come? If it be our experience that no remedy is forthcoming, can each of us still say, "I am not ashamed; I am going on; I am continuing in the pathway"? Why? Not because of my own powers of endurance, of my own clearness of view, but for the same reason as the apostle Paul went forward in such assurance. Because said he, "I know whom I have believed."

He thus threw the burden upon his Master. Paul had caught the spirit of the Servant of Jehovah as it is expressed in Isaiah, "I know that I shall not be ashamed." In the apostle's stout confession is, I am bold to say, the secret of the whole business. His was the spirit of confidence and courage. It is not for me to explain what this short sentence fully means, but I may say that it is for us to prove it for ourselves. The Knowledge of God To know in whom we have believed is the prime characteristic of the children of God. We find in the writings of John that the whole divine family know the Father. It is the function of the eternal life given to the believer to know the Father and the Son. What does this knowledge imply? Think of it in connection with everyday life. To know a person how much it means. Day adds to day; knowledge adds to our knowledge; we progress, we know more, we know better. But what long and intimate intercourse there must be before we can pretend to know the nearest and dearest in earthly relationship to us. Much more do all of us need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for it is the great key to soundness and security and stability in the Christian life to know in whom we believe.

It is the summit of the attainment of the fathers in Christ to know Him that is from the beginning. We have many of us been in the way with Christ some time; years of journeyings have passed, and do we not now know something about Him? Assuredly so. Let it, however, be still the aim of our lives to follow on to know the Lord, to be so habitually face to face with Him that in the intimacy of communion we get to know Him sufficiently and to rely upon Him for all things.

I think perhaps we pray more with regard to our own private family matters than we do about the matters of the church. That it should be so is a result of our weakness. Our private affairs come before us so freely and readily, and they come to us so that we cannot seem to escape them, but in the things of the church of Christ, we often seek somehow, either consciously or unconsciously to evade our responsibility, and yet, must not the cares of the church be ever before Christ? and if we know Him and the secret of His presence, can it be that He will never say anything to us about, the vicissitudes of His church? No. He that lives for His members and who gave Himself for the church — He thinks not merely of the units, but of the unity of the church. Ought not we therefore to mourn over disunion, since we are heirs with Him in all the things of His glory? It must be so if we know Him in the communion of the Spirit of God.

If we do not know Him in the sense that Paul wrote here, we shall most surely give way to unseemly doubts. The disciples on the lake were struggling to overcome the threatening waves, and their Lord was with them in the boat, but asleep. They, however, did not know Him, for they came to Him and said, "Carest thou not that we perish?" What an insult! He who was about to give up His life for them, not to care that they were perishing! He cared for every hair of their head, but they did not know Him, and they had yet to learn the wonders of His love. And so they said what afterwards must have been a shame to them to have said: "Carest thou not that we perish?"

Knowing the Head of the Church

1919 300 "I know whom I have believed." Let this expression of the apostle sink deep into our hearts as the great antidote to fear and despair. There is no need to fear nor to despair because of the apparent desolation we see in the assemblies. The church is Christ’s. He gave Himself for it. Not one of His members shall be lost, but all shall be with Him to share the church’s glory in the day of full redemption. Therefore, we need not fear what will be the ultimate result, because we, like Paul, know whom we have believed. We could not know the Lord Jesus otherwise than by faith. But faith in active exercise brings us near to Him and keeps us near to Him, and also gives us to know that He is near to us. We can say we did believe on Him, and we do believe on Him, and we will, through grace, go on believing Him until faith is no longer necessary.

"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Paul’s confidence was in the power of Him in whom he trusted, the Lord of glory who was able to keep that which he had committed to Him. It was in his view simply a question of matching powers — the power of God and the power of evil. It was impossible to doubt what would be the ultimate issue.

Withstanding the Power of the Beasts And this exercise is often needed in the history of faith. We find an example of this courage of faith, for instance, in, the case of those three Hebrew captives in Babylon in the time of the decline almost to extinction of the great system of national religion. The nation of Israel which Jehovah had called out especially to be His witnesses in the world had miserably failed, and had forsaken the true God for idols. Where was Jehovah’s beautiful house of Zion at that time? Where was it? In ruins, and its chosen worshippers were captives to the first great Gentile empire of Daniel’s vision of the beasts. And with these Hebrew youths, it was a question of comparing the power of the proud emperor with the power of their God who had allowed them to be carried into exile. With a view to political unity, Nebuchadnezzar set up the image in the plain of Dura, and instructed all the subjects of his vast empire to bow down and worship one thing and the same thing. The law of Moses, where was it? It was apparently under the heel of Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, common sense said to Shadrach and his friends, "Come, bow down and worship; you cannot resist the power of this all-conquering emperor. Submit to his decree, bow down and worship." But they stood upright; they would not bow down and worship the golden image. Was it mere stubbornness? was it mere obstinacy? Not at all. It was a calm and solemn conviction that although the temple was gone, and Jerusalem was in captivity, Jehovah was still the God of His people, and they would be true to Him in the hour of seeming defeat, for they knew Him and were convinced that He was able to save them. Before them was the furnace of fire, and there was the inflexible will of the emperor. But they in faith looked above to Jehovah, and stood fast. They trusted in God, and they were not disappointed. Who ever trusted in God and was disappointed? "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed." And so these men were cast into the fiery furnace, because they refused to bow down and worship the image. But the emperor saw the three men walking in the fire unhurt, with One whose form was like the Son of God. Shadrach and his friends acted with this calm immutable confidence because they were persuaded that God was able to keep that which they had committed unto Him. Was this not illustrated again in the days of the second empire, as we also learn from the same book of Daniel? The imperial decree went forth from Darius that there should no longer be prayer made on the earth to God in heaven. If anything were to be asked, let it be asked of the all-powerful emperor on his throne, but under penalty of death there was to be no prayer to another. Such was the decree

of this emperor on the advice of his nobles. The power of the world against a believer in the unseen God had thus arrayed itself in open conflict against Daniel. The question for him was, should he for thirty days effect a compromise with his piety, because the prohibition was but for thirty days; and after all it might be argued that prayer is a private communication between oneself and God, and means might be found of escaping the threatened punishment by praying to Jehovah in secret. But Daniel's heart was brave and true, and he scorned such subterfuge.

He knew his God, and he was able to look up from Darius to the God of heaven, and because he looked up he did not fail to bow his knees and to keep his windows open towards Jerusalem. He was not afraid of the vengeance of the Medo-Persian law, because he served God and not man. He was persuaded that his God was able to keep him, nor was he disappointed. He was brought safely out of the den of lions. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And here again is the power of the fourth Gentile empire persecuting the servant of God. Paul was exposed to an outbreak of the fury of Caesar at any moment. Any moment he might be summoned to lay down his life for his Master. Paul during his imprisonment at Rome had written to Philippi of his desire that he might have fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. And his desire was granted, for he had to meet the same world-power as his Master.

Dear friends, we must count on this factor in our lives, that owing to our discipleship of Christ we have a relentless foe in the world, who uses against us the vast resources of his power. The prince of this world is against Christ and His followers. In its opposition to us the worldly power may take many forms, but it is for you and for me to meet it unflinchingly in any and in all forms. To be victors we need, however, to be clear about one thing. Are we persuaded that He is able to carry us through every crisis? This may seem to us very easy and sure when we are in the meetings, but when we are actually face to face with the activities and distractions of life, how is our courage then? Let us at all times carry with us the assurance that He is able to deliver us, and that, as He is for us, who can be against us? To be calm and serene in the hour of peril will be the test of our faith. Let not confidence in God be a mere notion that we cherish at a time like this and then go away to our homes and forget to maintain it. Faith and assurance must be put into constant practice.

Church Affairs Committed to the Lord

I think, however, that the apostle has in view something further than his own personal security and blessing when he speaks of the ability of Christ to keep that which he has committed to Him. What was it that he had committed? The Corinthians first gave their own selves to the Lord. Well, Paul had committed everything no doubt. We too ought to give our own selves to the Lord. We ought not to give less, we cannot give more. But Paul had also committed to the Lord the affairs of the church. This was his special business, so to speak. The Lord Himself had set the apostle first in the church. He had made him the foundation of the church and entrusted him with the unfolding of that mystery. He had given him the gospel of the grace of God to preach. He had committed great things to the apostle of the uncircumcision, but Paul was not deluded by his own heart into believing that he was sufficient for these things. Paul had the humility to feel that the apostolic ministry was the Lord's work and service after all. He could undertake this labour or that, but it was the Lord who was directing his labours. As we find from his Epistle to the great metropolis, Paul particularly wished to preach at Rome, but he was not allowed to do so in the way he expected.

Perhaps no man living had a greater desire to preach the gospel than he, but at Rome he had to remain silent, while others preached the word of life. He had to do what may be good for us all to do sometimes — to be quiet and to rejoice that other persons are actively employed. The apostle had to do this.

Here he speaks to Timothy of what he as an apostle had committed to the Lord. I think that the words as they are here recorded comprehend this fact among others — that the apostle of his Master had given back to Him the care of the church, his apostolic responsibility, the work that he had received direct from the Lord of glory, saying, as it were, to Him, "O Lord, I cannot serve any longer, Thou halt put me here. Thou hast confined me in prison, but preaching and teaching is Thy work, carry it on, O Lord. The church is Thine; the sheep are Thine; care for them; guard them; feed them; lead them carry them forward." This was surely implied when the apostle wrote "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." For the apostle committed to Him all things without exception. This spirit should also be true of ourselves. We perhaps feel sometimes the heavy responsibility that the Lord has laid upon us in respect of what He has given us to do. We do our best, but we often feel that there is no sufficient response to our earnestness and effort. What is our practice then? Ought we not to take to our hearts the words of the apostle, to cast our care upon the Lord, and to assure ourselves that He is able to keep that deposit which we have committed to Him? And if you read at your leisure the great prayer of the Lord recorded in the seventeenth of John you will find that the blessed Master did the same thing. He was about to leave this world, but He thought of His disciples whom He was leaving behind in a hostile scene, and what did He do? He committed them to His Father. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Of those that thou gavest me have I lost none, except the son of perdition. All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." He was about to depart out of this world, but He first committed His followers to His Father. His Father had committed them to Him, and He committed them to His Father. What did this action display? What but that perfect union and communion between the Father and the Son which is the pattern of that between the servant and his Master. The Attitude Of The Man Of God In The Last Days

(Concluded) Against that Day

1919 313 There is a great day coming for us all. The apostle confronted with danger as he was, and saddened by the declension around him, was able to look ahead to that day, and we all know how frequently that expression occurs in his writings. He had a day before him, just as our Lord in His pilgrimage had what He called His hour before Him — the hour of darkness, of suffering, of shame. He was ever going on to that hour. But He has set before us not an hour of deep suffering, but a day of glory, a day of light and joy and manifestation, when the few will be many, when the humble shall rejoice with the Lord, when those who have been abased for Christ’s sake shall be exalted to the highest. And ought not we to let the light of that day shed its cheer upon our present pathway? The Lord who is "the bright, the morning star" meant that it should. He will not enter into the joys of that day without ourselves. He means that we shall be with Him and rejoice with Him in that day when the redeemed are at home. No power of evil can interfere then when the church is in glory. Let us seek by the grace of God to have before us that day which will make manifest those who have suffered shame for Him. The Deposit Made to Timothy

We have in this verse what I may call the personal conviction and assurance of the apostle amidst the darkness of the crisis that then was, and I believe that condition of things has its analogue in the present day. In the fourteenth verse we have what may be described as the special duties assigned to us for the present moment. We find that Timothy had a good deposit made with him, while there was also the deposit that Paul made with the Lord which has been our subject hitherto this evening. He had put all that concerned himself and the affairs of the church into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we learn from the succeeding verse that Timothy had a deposit too — "that good thing which was committed unto thee." There was something which the Lord had committed to him and which he was responsible to keep. Just as the Lord was keeping and guarding the deposit that the apostle had placed with Him, so Timothy is called to guard that deposit which the Lord had committed to him.

We have therefore our duties and responsibilities for the closing days. We have hitherto been referring to what may be called the sheet anchor of our position — that which gives us courage and stability because it does not change. The Lord, while He will maintain us to the end, has not absolved us from responsibility. We are not to be idle. He has made us competent to be something and do something for Him. We are His servants, bond-slaves to Him, and therefore while the Lord, through Paul, first speaks to us of, the privileges His grace has conferred upon us, He goes on to set before us our responsibility.

Holding Fast Sound Words In the thirteenth verse Paul writes, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." You must remember that the apostle’s writings for the most part were not at that time widely circulated. His spoken words however were inspired words. They were not words springing from man’s wisdom, but from God. They were spirit and life like the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a power in them to be found nowhere else. The apostle in effect says to Timothy, ’Be clear as to those sound words which thou hast heard of me. False doctrines are springing up, therefore be clear in your mind as to what I said.’

He is of course speaking as an inspired apostle. He is giving forth what the Lord gave to him, and we ought never to lose sight of that quality which the scriptures throughout possess. We are custodians of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are written here. They are written in book form because they are convenient for circulation, but we ought to remember that it is not sufficient to possess a copy of the whole scriptures. It is necessary for us to have the sound and healthful words of our Lord Jesus Christ and His servants in our hearts. They have the power to preserve us from evil. Moreover the words of our Lord Jesus Christ never become corrupt, because they are, as they are here called, "sound words." And it is especially noticeable that this particular phrase occurs several times in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, with regard to the words of inspiration. When evil was creeping into the church, the apostle exhorts the man of God to cleave fast to the words of Christ and of His apostle.

If you study false doctrines, which I hope you will never have to do, you will always find that they rest upon some novel interpretation introduced by expositors. Discussions and controversies arise from these human interpretations that are put upon the words of scripture. We have the words of Christ, why should we fear for the fate of truth? Why should we formulate a creed to preserve us from error? We ought not to need a creed or a tradition of any kind for our protection from error.

We have the words of scripture.

We may be helped and guided by the advice and conduct of others; that is, true, but it is the "outline of sound words laid up in our own hearts which is the great preservative from evil teaching. The evil taint is in the air, the germs of evil doctrine are everywhere about us. We want some preservative; where shall we get it? Only in the scriptures. And these scriptures are available for the weakest and feeblest. Some of the profoundest truths of revelation are expressed in words of one syllable. They are couched in the simplest terms, but they are of unfathomable depths. They are deep — so deep that none can fully comprehend, though all may enjoy them and be refreshed by them, and all will be preserved by them from those evil teachings that are about us. The Speaker of the Words

Let us then heed the apostle's advice to his son Timothy: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Is there not a beautiful and tender touch in the last phrase — faith and love in Christ Jesus? The Bible reveals Christ, and I am bold to say that, marvellous book as it is, it may appear dull and disappointing to those who read it without a sense of the living Person behind it. As a general attraction and power in the world, what are the scriptures apart from the Christ of whom they testify? Do not, therefore, let us be content with using the outward shell of spiritual things. We want to feel that living reality which gives us the knowledge that Christ is speaking to us through His word. Why do we not always find this in our reading? We think perhaps of the sentence, and not 0f the Speaker. Our thoughts are elsewhere, because busy things around us attract our attention. The multitude of daily cares drown the. sweet and gentle voice of the Master in His word.

Guarding the Deposit The fourteenth verse also gives the final exhortation: "That good thing that was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." No doubt the apostle's direct reference is to the particular responsibility that was laid upon Timothy as a custodian of the faith when he himself would be removed. There is a sacred deposit which is committed to everyone in the matter of rendering testimony to the truth of God. And by testimony I do not mean in the way of speaking and preaching. This latter service is confined to a few, for if all were teachers where would be the taught? We need to expound the scriptures to others in that most beautiful and powerful of all ways, that is, in our lives spent in close companionship with Christ. In those ways wherein we are likest Christ we shall never be proud of ourselves. To be like Him and to catch and reproduce His character we must come very low. We must bring ourselves down. He was humble, meek and lowly of heart, and to be like Him we must prostrate ourselves before Him, and then it is as we abase ourselves that we learn that joy which comes only from such communion with Him.

We are to guard with all our powers that sacred deposit by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us. There are many persons who naturally delight in conflict for the truth. They are like the war horse of Job. They scent the battle from afar with a fierce joy. But the apostle, I think, is not here alluding to that stern spirit. He is not speaking of contention for the truth nor of the delight of getting one's own way in an argument, but of guarding the deposit of truth by the Holy Ghost Who dwelleth in us. Against all the declension, of the present time the fact remains that the Holy Spirit abides here in the world. Moreover He is the Spirit of truth, and to have that truth in the heart at all we can only receive it by the Holy Spirit, for He has charge of the whole body of truth. The Holy Spirit, not Evil

Demons

You know how this Epistle speaks of the solemn times when the power of the evil spirits will be active to delude and lead astray. And this activity is prevalent now. I world raise a word of warning against the power of the evil one which displays itself in that particular way at the present time. Beware of the desire to traffic with the unseen powers that are not of God, nor of Christ.

You have the Holy Spirit, what else do you want? Do you want a legion of demons to maintain the faith once delivered to the saints? The Holy Spirit come down from above is guarding that sacred deposit that was first given by the selfsame Holy Spirit. We need not seek to invoke the unholy spirits that are about us. They are real and powerful enough for evil to a degree beyond our comprehension perhaps.

You have the Holy Spirit who never deceives. Beware then of the power of evil which always deceives. Satan knows that his doom is written in the scriptures, and he would turn you away from them. The Holy Spirit is with us. Listen to Him, but listen to Him with the word of God in your heart. He will not forsake you nor the church, until the Lord Himself comes and removes us all hence away into that blissful home He has gone to prepare. May God grant that these words of Paul to Timothy may abide with us for our profit and help until the glad day of His coming! W. J. H.

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